

22nd January 2026

To: Town Mayor and all Members of the Partnership Committee

Town Councillors: **M Herber, D Jones, C Slough, D Taylor**
C Alderman, S Goodchild, P Hamill, T McMahon
CBC Councillors **Mrs Hughes, Community Engagement Manager**
Co-Optees **J Anderson, D Gibbons, T Haines, C Regan, R Turner**

CBC Officers Copies, for information, to:

- Cllr Baker, Executive Member for Finance and Highways CBC
- Cllr Watkins, Executive Member for Business, Housing and Public Assets, CBC
- Cllr Smith, Deputy Leader & Executive Member Adult Social Care & Health, CBC
- Cllr R Goodchild, Deputy Executive Member for Town & Parish Councils and Town Centres, 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 27th January 2026** commencing at **7.00pm** 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**](#)



Clare Evans
Town Clerk

**THIS MEETING MAY BE
RECORDED ***

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS (to 7.05pm)

**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.

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; maximum 15 minutes) (to 7.20pm)

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).

3. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS (to 7.25pm)

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.

4. MINUTES (to 7.30pm)

Pages 5 - 19

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 21st October and 26th November 2025.

Recommendation: **To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 21st October and 26th November 2025.**

5. TOWN CENTRE BENCHMARKING (to 8.00pm)

Pages 20 - 72

By invitation, **Stephen Mooring**, Head of Sustainability at Central Bedfordshire Council will attend the meeting (virtual) to provide an update on town centre benchmarking.

Members can find attached a copy of the benchmarking report.

6. SCHOOL ORGANISATIONAL PLAN (to 8.15pm)

To provide an interim update to members on the CBC considerations of the School Organisational Plan progress as reported through Children's Services on 11th November and Executive on 2nd December, Members can follow these links:

A copy of the approved School Organisational Plan and the School Places Implementation Plan can be found here (Item 10): [Meetings](#)

Children's Services on 11th November Agenda: [Meetings](#)

Children's Services on 11th November Minutes (No. 15): [1 251111 Minutes of the meeting.pdf](#)

Executive on 2nd December Agenda: [Meetings](#)

Executive on 2nd December Decisions Digest: [251202 Decisions Digest - Public \(1\).PDF](#)

Of note this is an extract from the Executive agenda pages (p217)

18. The combined forecast for primary pupil places shows a surplus for the area. The need for new pupil places is not currently forecast in the next 5 years. The current forecast is reviewed annually and the next review is due in Spring 2026. The new primary school at Bidwell West (previously proposed for September 2027) will be monitored until there is an evidence base for the new places. Given the fluctuations in housing numbers, as set out in Table 1, the forecast is subject to change and will be monitored.

Given the timescales indicated it is suggested that a report back be requested at a later meeting in 2026.

Recommendation: **To formally request that the relevant officer attend a HR Partnership Committee meeting to update the committee.**

7. CBC UPDATE REPORT (to 8.30pm)

Pages 73 - 109

Members will find attached the CBC update report.

8. COMMUNITY BUILDINGS IN HOUGHTON REGIS (to 8.35pm)

The Committee's workplan includes reference to the following community buildings, an update is provided:

Project H / Unit 1 All Saints View (HRTC)

Lease negotiations are well underway.

HRTC is working with a wider project team to develop a tender pack for the fitting out of the property.

HRN 2 Community Building - A verbal update will be provided by the CBC Community Engagement Manager on the planned community centre in Bidwell.

Please note that where there is no further update to be provided, the community building has been removed from the list until such time as there is an update available.

9. COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE (to 8.40pm)

At a previous meeting of the HR Partnership Committee support was given to a report being presented to the October Partnership meeting on the Committee Functions and Terms of Reference (CF&TofR) (Minute 1092). Unfortunately, CBC were unable to provide advice on the appetite within CBC to review the CF&TofR and in what form the review should take place. This remains the case.

As previously discussed other Clerks from the Partnership network were contacted and although those Clerks were open to meeting for a discussion, there didn't appear to be strong enthusiasm at this stage.

It is clear that stronger direction and a shared commitment from the Partnership network within CBC are needed to create the momentum required to move this forward.

Further, the [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#) currently progressing through the House of Lords—which, if it receives Royal Assent, will introduce changes to local governance arrangements.

It is therefore recommended that the position continues to be monitored and that a review is pursued in due course.

This report is provided for information purposes.

10. PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN (to 8.45pm)

Members are invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan for 2025/26.

11. HOUGHTON REGIS SPORTS HALL USAGE DATA (to 8.50pm)

Following on from the Partnership meeting in October contact has been made with Schools Plus to follow up on the establishment of a Management Committee and on usage data availability. Schools Plus have referred the queries to Advantage Schools. If possible, an update will be provided at the meeting.

This report is provided for information purposes.

12. PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION (to 8.55pm)

Members are invited to consider whether they would like to explore the possibility of seeking to co-opt further 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.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP
COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PEEL STREET
ON 21st OCTOBER 2025**

Present: Town Cllrs: J Carroll, E Cooper, D Jones, C Slough
CBC Cllrs C Alderman, S Goodchild, P Hamill, T McMahon
CBC Officers: S Hughes, Community Engagement Manager
HRTC Officers: C Evans, Town Clerk
A Samuels, Administration Officer

Co-opted members: J Anderson, D Gibbons, C Regan, T Haines

Also in attendance: B Gaynor, Place Programme Manager, CBC (virtual)

Apologies: Cllr Herber, Cllr Taylor

Members of the public:

1099 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Herber (Cllr Carroll substituted) and Cllr Taylor (Cllr Cooper substituted).

Apologies were received from Cllr S Watkins who was unable to attend due to ill health. Cllr Watkins had been scheduled to speak on Agenda Item 5: Houghton Regis Sports Hall.

Stephen Mooring was unable to attend the meeting; Beverley Gaynor attended in his place.

1100 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

1101 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

1102 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 29th July 2025.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th July 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

1103 HOUGHTON REGIS SPORTS HALL

Members had been invited to submit comments relating to the current level of accessibility of the Houstone Sports Hall for consideration by CBC. Cllr Watkins had been due to attend the meeting virtually to provide a verbal response to the points raised but had sent his apologies due to illness.

The Chair and the Town Clerk shared Cllr Watkins' written response which addressed the areas raised by Members (*written response from Cllr Watkins attached*).

Cllr Hamill had composed a letter to Cllr Watkins which he invited Members of the Committee to endorse so that it was from the Partnership Committee. Cllr Hamill requested the opportunity to share the letter with Members so that it was recorded for transparency. It was agreed for the letter to be read by Cllr Hamill and circulated following the meeting.

Members voiced frustration on a number of points: CBC's response, which was not felt to address the points raised satisfactorily; the failure of CBC to send a representative; and the lack of any meaningful data being made available to Members.

It was questioned whether this topic was due to appear on the CBC agenda for Sustainable Communities Committee and when would be the optimum time to provide feedback to that committee. It was highlighted that it was possible to raise the matter at Sustainable Communities, even if it was not scheduled on the agenda; however, the Chair of the Town Partnership Committee could request that it was brought to Sustainable Communities. Members agreed that it would be better to do this once the relevant data was available.

The Town Clerk informed Members that Cllr Watkins had offered to attend a future Town Council or committee meeting in person. Members believed that it was unlikely to be beneficial without access to the usage data and information clarifying whether issues had arisen in respect of the booking system.

Members felt the data should be in the public domain and that an explanation should be provided if CBC or the management group were unable to supply the information. It was suggested that the data could be accessed via another route, e.g. Sports Plus in the first instance, or make a request under the Freedom of Information Act. Members agreed that the information should not be deemed commercially sensitive since it related to a public provision under the CUA.

The Chair confirmed that they would email Town Partnership a list of actions arising from this discussion (and other items on the agenda) so that these could be followed up by Members.

1104 TOWN CENTRE BENCHMARKING & HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTION

Beverley Gaynor, Place Programme Manager at CBC, provided an update on town centre benchmarking and High Street Rental Auction.

CBC was conducting a consultation process seeking views to define the area where High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) powers might be applied. The Local Plan

designated High Street, Bedford Square and King Street as the town centre within Houghton Regis.

The new powers would allow local authorities to auction leases for commercial properties that had been vacant in excess of a year, or over 366 days in a two-year period. This was intended to help bring empty units back into use in the designated areas.

The Town Clerk confirmed that HRTC had already submitted their response suggesting a more comprehensive area was covered. It was suggested that the Town Centre as designated in the Neighbourhood Plan would be a more accurate reference point.

In response to a question regarding accessibility to the auction process by charities and social enterprises, the CBC officer informed the Partnership that they would seek clarity on this point.

The CBC officer provided an update on the benchmarking surveys that had been conducted. The surveys covered: commercial offer; footfall, car parking; business confidence and user perceptions.

It was notable that 100% of businesses had reported increased turnover and were more optimistic than other nearby towns for the upcoming year. In respect of challenges, the main issues were appearance and safety. A full report was anticipated to be available in November.

1105 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS & TERMS OF REFERENCE

The HR Partnership Committee had supported a report being presented to the October Partnership meeting on the Committee Functions and Terms of Reference (CF&ToR) (Minute 1092).

The CBC Community Engagement Manager had sought advice on the appetite within CBC to review the CF&ToR and in what form the review should take place: would CBC support an individual CF&ToR or was the intention to roll out a consistent CF&ToR across all committees? CBC had been unable to provide confirmation and in the absence of this information it was felt that the Partnership Committee could not proceed at this time.

It was suggested that contact be made with other joint committees outside of Bedfordshire where the arrangement was working effectively. The Chair confirmed this would be included on the action list.

It was suggested that contact be made with other nearby Partnership Committees to gauge their appetite for changing the CF&ToR as a joint approach to CBC would be supportive.

Resolved: **To request that the Partnership Committees in Biggleswade, Dunstable and Leighton Linslade be contacted to explore their views on the suitability of the current Partnership Committee Functions and Terms of Reference.**

1106 SCHOOL ORGANISATIONAL PLAN

At the last meeting it was requested that a report be included on this agenda on the CBC School Organisational Plan. The Community Engagement Manager informed Members that Cllr Watkins had been due to make a statement to the Partnership. The Community Engagement Manager read out the statement which said that the School Place Planning Annual Review was being finalised and that it would not be appropriate to make a response before processes were completed.

Members said that this matter needed to be addressed by an executive member. Members proposed that a message was addressed to CBC Executive expressing disappointment with the lack of executive representation at Partnership, regarding both this matter and the sports hall. The Chair confirmed they would compose a draft for Members to comment on and approve.

Members of the Partnership respected the process but felt that an update on how the School Organisational plan was progressing was not an unreasonable request. There was an acknowledged need for a school by September 2027 in Thorn; however, communities had not received a response to requests for updates and no reassurance of CBC's commitment to the plan. Members were concerned that the commitments to a new school would not be met.

The Chair sought Members opinions on whether to address the sports hall and the School Organisational Plan in the same email or separately. Members agreed that the items should be addressed separately: one expressing disappointment at the lack of CBC representation regarding the sports hall; and the other inviting Cllr Owen to attend the next Partnership meeting to discuss the School Organisational Plan.

1107 TOWN CENTRE MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

Members were advised that it was with the HRTC Corporate Plan that at least 2 key action areas be identified. The Town Council had undertaken various pieces of work to support and enhance the town centre in line with the Action Plan, possibly the most apparent and visual was the planting and hanging baskets along High Street. Other ongoing areas of HRTC work also aligned with the Action Plan.

The Town Clerk advised Members that more detail was available in the update report from the Town Council.

1108 COMMUNITY BUILDINGS IN HOUGHTON REGIS

The Committee's workplan include reference to the following community buildings, an update is provided:

HRN 2 Community Building: Members were informed that work continued with the Houghton Regis Community Development Charity to progress the phased development of a community facility. Heads of Terms were being exchanged, and it was expected that the planning application for phase one would be submitted at the end of November 2025.

Townsend Centre: The works required prior to the relocation of the day service from the Townsend Centre to the leisure centre had been completed. Staff would move to

the new facility in November. No expressions of interest had been made for the Townsend Centre, and the property had been declared surplus; therefore, it would be put on the open market once it was vacant.

Cllr Hamill requested that regular updates were received once the relocation was completed in order to establish how successfully the service functioned at the new site.

1109 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were invited to consider the Partnership Committee workplan for 2025/26. This had been extended to include the following items:

- Sports hall provision
- Review of the Committee Functions & Terms of Reference

At the last meeting it was requested that Health remained on the Workplan; this was confirmed.

The invitation to Cllr Owen had been added to the workplan. The Town Clerk added that items likely to arise for January included a slightly fuller report on the town centre benchmarking exercise and an update from Cllr Watkins regarding the sports hall.

1110 HRTC UPDATE REPORT

Members had received and noted HRTC update report.

1111 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-OPTION

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

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.

1112 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 the 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 were any requested items for CBC's attention.

The Town Clerk questioned whether a representative from Highways would be attending the November 2025 meeting. The Community Engagement Manager confirmed that a member from Highways would be in attendance.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.59 pm

Dated this 27th day of January 2026

Chairman

DRAFT

Feedback from HRPC re Sports Hall

CBC responses in blue.

As members are aware the CBC Sustainable Communities OSC made a commitment to review the effectiveness of the CUA for Houstone Sports Hall in 6 months' time from its June 2025 mtg if it were deemed necessary. Link to the Minutes [1250612 Minutes of the Meeting.pdf](#), however for ease the Resolution reads:

RECOMMENDED that the Executive Member liaise with Houghton Regis Town Council to address the concerns raised during the meeting, with a future update being delivered to the Committee in six months to assess progress in line with the community use agreement if necessary.

Members of the HRPC were invited to submit their questions, comments, statements relating to the current level of accessibility of the Houstone Sports Hall ahead of the mtg. These were then collated them into themes.

1. Community Use Agreement

Has this been signed by all the relevant parties and completed?

The CUA has been completed, dated 22 July 2025 and is on the CBC Planning Portal [Case Documents - Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

Who is accountable for ensuring the Community User Agreement is implemented in line with its stated aims and community needs?

The Sport England CUA template provides the format for a CUA which will be operated and monitored in line with its provisions. Each school is responsible for operating the CUA in accordance with its conditions.

What mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Community User Agreement in serving the community

The CUA includes a process for self-monitoring and annual review, managed by its Management Committee.

The Management Committee is to include a representative from the School, the Council – officer and/or elected member, the Trust with oversight of the School, and the Management Company.

2. Joint Management Committee

Has the joint management committee been established? And if not what has caused the delay?

The joint management committee is to include a representative from the council and stakeholders. Has contact been made to secure this representation?

What is the timeline for this to be undertaken?

The CUA requires a Management Committee to be established within 6 months of the date of the CUA. The establishment of a Management Committee is the responsibility of the school. The CUA was completed on 22 July 2025, therefore a committee should be formed by January 2026.

3. Usage Data

What is the current level of community use of Houstone Sports Hall?

The Houstone School sports facilities are managed by Schools Plus on behalf of school. CBC does not have access to Schools Plus' usage information.

4. Access Arrangements

How easy is it for local groups to make bookings, and are there barriers (process, cost, responsiveness) that need addressing?

The online booking system is in place and operational. CBC does not have access to the Schools Plus system, but we have not been made aware of any issues.

How is affordability being safeguarded to ensure grassroots and volunteer-led groups can realistically access the hall

Sports England's guidance emphasises that Community Use Agreements should provide fair and affordable access. How is this being ensured in practice at Houstone Sports Hall?

The CUA seeks for facility pricing to be set at a commensurate level with facilities in the local area. The Schools Plus charges are commensurate with the facilities below.

Charges	Houstone School	Dunstable	Leighton	Sandy Sec School CUA	Sandy Sports Centre
Sports hall	£50 per hr	£32 (3 court) per hr £64 (6 court) per hr	£64 per hr (6 court)	£60 per hr (when managed via CBC)	-
Sports hall per court (like badminton)	£12.50 per hr	£9 per hr*	£9 per hr*	£9 per hr*	-
Astroturf pitch: full pitch - half pitch -	Full size adult pitch £120 per hr £60 per hr	-			Full size adult pitch £79 per hr £39 per hr
MUGA	£30 per hr	-	-	-	-
Activity Studio	£35 per hr	£45	£45		-

*the charge will be less within a leisure centre as the staffing/management costs are spread across multiple activities. The Schools Plus costs will be specific to their management/operational costs for this facility alone.

Does the current level of community access align with the standards and expectations set out in Sport England's guidance for CUAs?

The CUA sets the parameters for community use and the sports hall can be booked for block bookings and casual use in line with those requirements.

It doesn't mandate the level of community access required.

For info; Sport England requires a CUA for new school sports facilities and its CUA template establishes the principle of the way Sport England expect a CUA to operate. Outside of this, Sport England does not specify requirements or standards for operation of CUAs.

General Information for Full council 25.09.25

Houghton Regis LC Sports Hall usage

At the time of the consultation on the new leisure centre total sports hall usage at the old centre was an average of 10% before 4:30pm weekdays, and an average of 25% after 4:30pm, when compared to total capacity.

It should also be noted that some of this usage included sports who used the sports hall in the absence of other more suitable spaces. For example, martial arts clubs used the old sports hall but don't need a space so high/large.

Usage data for the old sport hall (Dec23 to Nov24) showed an average of 32% use for bookings and casual use.

Community Use of School facilities

Community use maximizes the use of school sports facilities to serve both curriculum and community use.

Community use of education facilities happens at many schools across Central Bedfordshire, where there are usually sports halls open to the public out of school hours.

Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre in Leighton Buzzard is a joint facility with Cedars School which has operated successfully for many years.

Sports hall use at Houstone School

The new leisure centre consultation made it clear sports hall use would be provided at Houstone School.

It recognised that some daytime activities could not be accommodated at the new school hall, and that alternative venues would be agreed with users. It was noted that some current

activities would have to make slight changes to playing times. However, it is not uncommon for Leisure Centres and/or Sports Groups to change the timings of bookings and sessions over time, as requirements changes.

Not all activities need to take place in a sports hall - those clubs who used the old sports hall but don't need a sports hall to operate have moved to the large exercise studios in the new leisure centre.

The Houstone sports hall is open full time for community use from 8am to 10pm every day of the week during school holidays. The school has 69 days for school exam periods.

Basketball, badminton and football users have booked into the Houstone sports hall. Basketball's booking at Houstone was delayed as they needed to provide safeguarding information which they have now done.

The Academy for Central Bedfordshire has determined what they need for their students PE and have booked what suits them. This includes space at the new leisure centre for swimming sessions, and at The Dunstable Centre and other venues that give a range of experiences such as climbing and outdoor adventure not provided by the leisure centre or other Council facilities.

Pricing

The cost of booking the new sports hall has been talked about by some clubs. This is because they have had a subsidised booking at the old sports hall. Some clubs have benefited from regular free sessions.

Basketball previously received 2 x free sessions per week, and 1 session at a very reduced rate £35 for whole sports hall)

BeActive (County Sports Partnership) is working with Basketball to support them in becoming a formally established club, which will help them access external funding.

CBC has supported reduced price sessions for basketball at The Dunstable Centre – they receive 2 hours for the price of 1, paying £32 instead of £64.

Houstone School Prices

Hire of the sports hall is £50 per hour. The old HR sports hall was £45.70 per hour. Some clubs – basketball and some badminton paid much less.

Hire of a single court is £12 per hour.

Schools Plus initially ensured priority booking for those clubs who use the old sports hall. Bookings are now also open for casual bookings. The CUA confirms that casual bookings are available including for either the whole hall or a single court.

Background – Consultation / Decisions

The decision to build a new leisure centre in Houghton Regis was taken in 2021 and 2022;

- Executive decision 8 June 2021 to apply for £19.9M of Levelling Up funding (LUF) towards the £25M leisure centre project; and
- Executive decision on 7 December 2021 to accept the LUF secured and to proceed to build a new leisure centre on the Kingsland campus to compliment the investment in the new Houstone Secondary School, and to undertake public consultation
- Executive on 7 December 2021 makes the intention clear ‘Houstone School project includes the delivery of a separate sports hall which will complement the Kingsland Leisure offer’
- Planning Permission approved on 6 July 2022 following the planning consultation for which Sport England were a statutory consultee and gave their approval.

The Public consultation for the new leisure centre in January and February 2022 proposed that the new centre would not contain a sports hall. A sports hall for community use would be made available at the new Houstone School via a Community Use Agreement. This is available online.

Have Your Say consultation responses and the Statement of Community Involvement which accompanied the planning application is [Case Documents - Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

The design has been in the public domain for many years and the consultations were available to anyone to review and comment.

We have been clear that funding for the leisure centre was for additional facilities and not duplicate sports provision available for school and community use.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HOUGHTON REGIS PARTNERSHIP
COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PEEL STREET
ON 26th November 2025**

Present:	Town Cllrs:	D Jones, M Herber, C Slough, D Taylor
	CBC Cllrs	Y Farrell (substitute), S Goodchild, P Hamill, T McMahon
	CBC	Mrs Hughes, Community Engagement Manager (virtual)
	Officers:	Gary Powell, CBC Service Director for Highways
	HRTC	C Evans, Town Clerk
	Officers:	
	Co-opted members:	D Gibbons, T Haines, C Regan, R Turner

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Alderman and Co-Optee J Anderson

Members of the public: 2

1113 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Alderman (Cllr Farrell substituted) and Co-Optee J Anderson.

1114 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The member of the public present had some specific points they wished to raise in relation to highways. They were invited to put their questions during the agenda item.

1115 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

1116 DRAFT HIGHWAYS CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Gary Powell, CBC Service Director for Highways, attended the meeting to update Members on the draft Highways Capital Programme for Houghton Regis and to receive their comments and feedback.

The Service Director for Highways informed Members of the schemes and works carried out in the current year, which included carriageways, footways, rights of way works.

The CBC budget was not yet confirmed and as such the Capital Highways programme was based on current grant funding from government which covers specific areas such as maintenance and local transport schemes. It is usual for CBC to top up the highways fund however as details of the government's Fairer Funding scheme were still awaited, CBC was not currently in a position to confirm any additional funding which may be available. As such the CBC Highways Capital Programme was more restricted than desired.

CBC operate a data-driven approach which aimed to prolong the life of its assets and ensure the best value for money. Accident data was used to establish hazardous areas and identify the appropriate safety measures to implement. Inspectors and resident feedback also informed the process and feasibility studies were carried out to ascertain where interventions were necessary.

The Houghton Regis schemes currently included: structural maintenance schemes; rights of way; and active travel. The programme of schemes would be followed, but costs would dictate what works would proceed.

Members were requested to provide their feedback by 1st December 2025.

Gary Powell answered questions from Members:

Could HRTC submit a request for alternative work to be carried out, rather than that listed, if it was considered a higher priority?

This was possible and CBC would consider such requests. It was highlighted, however, that in order to accommodate changes the projects would need to fall under the same budget.

How could communication be improved to keep residents informed and to manage their expectations?

CBC was working to improve communication. Ideally, residents would be aware that some works on the programme might not be carried out should circumstances / priorities change. Generally, it was felt that residents needed to be better informed of proposed works and changes to proposed works.

Works were sometimes carried out several times on the same site, which did not appear to make economic sense. Why was this the case and was signage an option?

Sometimes CBC carried out emergency works that as a temporary measure or undertake preparatory works. More than one visit might be required before a permanent solution was in place. Costs meant that it was not feasible to put explanatory signage in place.

Was CBC's equipment purchase and hire costs capital or revenue funded?

(Cllr Hamill left the meeting)

CBC owned some of the plant which would be a capital cost while other equipment was supplied under contract. It was thought that it was more economical to invest in the long-term condition of the network rather than equipment.

A member of the public questioned what depth a pothole needed to be for action to be taken. It was also highlighted that humps in the road had been causing problems for vehicles at two sites within Houghton Regis.

The member of the public left the meeting. The Service Director for Highways requested the Town Clerk to send him details of the question in order to respond directly to the member of public.

Why did reports submitted via Fix My Street sometimes come back as 'non-priority' and were then closed? The issues remained and residents did not receive updates to indicate when they would be given attention.

Even when cases were closed, there was a trail recording issues and CBC continued to monitor the situation. Costs meant there were limitations to what could realistically be achieved.

Did CBC look beyond the 3-year pipeline programme? Was there flexibility in the programme to respond to safety issues?

The current year's plan was in place, in addition to the 3-year pipeline covered by the MTFP. The programme was subject to change during the course of the year. The list of future schemes would go beyond this to indicate what was likely to need attention in future years.

Safety-based schemes were investigated and feasibility studies carried out to prioritise cases. Decisions were based on five years of data.

What S106 funds had been made available for Houghton Regis and how much was left?
It was not possible to respond with a definite amount as funding was linked to development and, while not always specific, some funds could only be used for certain projects. In addition, historic funds might be available but would require supplementary funds before works could begin.

Repairs and improvements were carried out on roads that were seemingly dug up again soon afterwards. Was there a way to diarise works and communicate more effectively to stop this happening?

The Highway Agreements Team and Street Works were responsible for co-ordinating planned works; however, emergency or developer works sometimes meant this was not always possible. External parties were required to advise CBC of proposed works and to complete these prior to any road improvements taking place. Failure to observe this process would mean that the proposed works could not be carried out for two years following road maintenance.

Could residents be informed when visits were scheduled so residents could meet with officers and discuss key concerns before a road was adopted.

(Roger Turner left the meeting)

Plans were assessed from a technical perspective and it was necessary for road designs to pass technical reviews. Roads were expected to be safe in the first instance, built to the correct specification and maintained until the point of adoption. CBC would inspect the road at this point to ascertain if it was fit to be adopted. The process was driven by the developer rather than CBC and, unfortunately, roads did not always meet the correct standard for adoption.

The Chair requested that the Town Clerk send details of the programme to Members and for Members to respond by the end of Friday 28th November 2025.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.16pm

Dated this 27th day of January 2026

Chairman

DRAFT



PEOPLE & PLACES

Insight

HOUGHTON REGIS

TOWN BENCHMARKING REPORT

August 2025

Mike King
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

People and Places Insight strive to improve the performance of localities through a series of well-used and advanced Town Centre Services. We have worked with National Government, Business Improvement Districts, Local Authorities, Town Councils, Community and Town Partnerships and Retailers on a wide range of projects including Town Benchmarking, First Time Visitor Reviews, Signage and Wayfinding, Footfall Counts, Event Evaluation, Car Parking Studies, Disability Access Audits and Neighbourhood Planning.

In 2025 Central Bedfordshire Council commissioned People and Places Insight to undertake a Benchmarking Review in Houghton Regis to measure town centre performance. Previous evaluations in the town centre have taken place by People and Places Insight in 2019 and 2021. The detailed results of the Benchmarking Review can be found in the following report whilst the Executive Summary provides the headline findings.

GENERAL

Commercial Offer

- 9% of the ground floor units in the defined town centre were vacant during the audit in April 2025, identical to the National Small Towns average but higher than in previous evaluations.
- 37% of the ground floor units in the defined Houghton Regis town centre area are A1 Shops, 14% lower than the National Small Towns average, whilst 15% are B1 Businesses, 12% higher than the National average.
- 60% of the A1 Shops sell 'Comparison Goods'.
- 47% of the A1 Shops in Houghton Regis are unique to the town centre whilst 47% have a Nationwide presence.

Town Centre Use

- As in previous evaluations 'Convenience Shopping' (55%) was the key reason for Town Centre Users to visit Houghton Regis.
- 50% of Town Centre Users reported that they spend £10.00-£20.00' on a normal visit to Houghton Regis.

Footfall

- 'Busy Day' Footfall in Houghton Regis remained the same from the 2021 evaluation with 57 persons per ten minutes, lower than both the National Small Towns average, 110 persons and the 2019 figure. (83). 'Quiet Day' footfall, 44 persons per ten minutes is more than double the 2021 figure but lower than the 2019 average of 64 persons per ten minutes. Saturday footfall sits between the 'Busy Day' and Quiet Day' counts with 51 people per ten minutes.

Car Parking

- 51% of all car parking provision was vacant on the 'Busy Day' in Houghton Regis and the same figure for the 'Quiet Day', the former 24% higher than the National Small Towns average and the latter 18%.
- 47% of car parking spaces were vacant on the 'Saturday' car parking audit.
- Additional analysis with the removal of Morrisons Car Park provides vacancy figures of 'Busy Day' (28%), Quiet Day (24%) and 'Saturday' (21%).

POSITIVE

Business Confidence and Performance

- All of the Businesses reported that their 'Turnover' and 'Profitability' has 'Increased' over the last year and 75% expected their 'Turnover' to increase over the next 12 months.

Local Customers

- 'Convenience' (82%) was classed as the most positive aspects of Houghton Regis by Town Centre Users.
- 81% of Town Centre Users visit Houghton Regis at 'Least Once a Week'.
- 55% of Town Centre Users travel into Houghton Regis Town Centre 'On Foot', with 36% by 'Car'.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Physical Appearance

- As in 2019, 'Physical Appearance' (78%) was classed as the most negative aspect of Houghton Regis Town Centre, 53% higher than the National Small Towns average.
- 'Safety' (56%) was rated by Town Centre Users as a negative aspect of Houghton Regis, 50% higher than the National average.

Visit Recommendation

- 55% of Town Centre Users would not recommend a visit to Houghton Regis, 30% higher than the National Small Towns average of 25% but lower than in the 2021 (68%) and 2019 (67%) evaluations.

METHODOLOGY

THE APPROACH

The People and Places Insight Town Benchmarking System has been developed to address the real issues of how to understand measure, evaluate and ultimately improve town centres. The approach offers a simple way of capturing data on Key Performance Indicators selected by those involved in Town Centre management. By having the tools to measure performance, strategic decision-making is both encouraged and improved. By considering performance, forward strategies and action planning can be more focused and effective.

THE SYSTEM

The Benchmarking system is divided into two sections:

- National Large Towns; consisting of those localities with more than 300 units
- National Small Towns; consisting of those localities with less than 300 units

Towns, depending on their size, contribute to either the Large or Small-Town analysis. The defined town centre area of **HOUGHTON REGIS** consists of **45** units and is thus classed as a **Small** Town. A list of all the Commercial Units in the defined town centre area are listed in the Appendix.

The analysis provides data on each KPI for the Benchmarked town individually and in a National and Longitudinal. The National figure is the average for all the towns which participated in Benchmarking from July 2022 to January 2024.

THE REPORTS

The People and Places Insight Town Benchmarking report provides statistical analysis of each of the KPIs. The reports are used by a variety of key stakeholders such as Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils, Business Improvement Districts, Local Partnerships, Retailers and Universities to assist with;

- Measuring High Street regeneration projects
- Developing Town Centre regeneration
- Measuring the impact of events and festivals against normal trading conditions
- Providing an evidence base for funding applications
- Providing an evidence base for car parking initiatives
- Providing an evidence base for Neighbourhood Planning
- Supporting Business Improvement Districts
- Supporting Community groups

Each KPI in a typical Benchmarking Review is collected in a standardized manner as highlighted in the Table below.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	METHODOLOGY
KPI: COMMERCIAL OFFER; USE CLASS	Visual Survey of ground floor units in defined Town Centre area.
KPI: COMMERCIAL OFFER; COMPARISON/CONVENIENCE	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined Town Centre area.
KPI: COMMERCIAL OFFER: TRADER TYPE	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined Town Centre area.
KPI: COMMERCIAL OFFER: VACANCY RATES	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined Town Centre area.
KPI: MARKETS	Visual Survey of total number of traders on a Weekday Market
KPI: FOOTFALL	Footfall Survey on a Busy Weekday, Quiet Weekday and Saturday from 10.00-13.00 on each day
KPI: CAR PARKING	Audit of total number of spaces and vacancy rate on a Busy Weekday, Quiet Weekday and Saturday between 11.00-14.00
KPI: BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEYS	Paper Based Surveys
KPI: TOWN CENTRE USER SURVEYS	Face to face/ Paper Based/ Online
KPI: SHOPPERS ORIGIN SURVEYS	Paper Based Surveys

KEY FINDINGS

KPI: GROUND FLOOR; USE CLASS

It is important to understand the scale and variety of the “offer” throughout the town. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of buying and selling goods and services ensures that the local population (and visitors from outside) can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth of the town within the local economy. Importantly, it forms the employment base for a substantial proportion of the community too, helping to retain the population rather than lose it to nearby towns and cities.

The Use Class Order from 1987 was updated into larger segments in 2020. Due to the more in-depth breakdown provision in 1987, People and Places Insight Limited continue to deploy these Use Class classifications.

The following table provides a detailed breakdown of each of the Use Classes:

CLASS	TYPE OF USE	CLASS INCLUDES
A1	Shops	Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes.
A2	Financial and Professional Services	Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices.
A3	Restaurants and Cafes	Food and drink for consumption on the premises- restaurants, snack bars and cafes.
A4	Drinking Establishments	Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not nightclubs).
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	Sale of hot food for consumption off the premises.
B1	Businesses	Offices (other than those that fall within A2) research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area.
B2	General Industrial	General Industrial.
B8	Storage and Distribution	Warehouses, includes open air storage.
C1	Hotels	Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided (excludes hostels).
C2	Residential Institutions	Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.

C2A	Secure Residential Institution	Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders' institution, detention centre, secure training centre, custody centre, short-term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks.
D1	Non-Residential Institutions	Clinics, health centres, crèches, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres.
D2	Assembly and Leisure	Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not nightclubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or area for indoor or outdoor sports and recreations (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).
SG	Sui Generis ("unique" establishments)	Theatres, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/ or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, laundrettes, taxi business, amusement centres, casinos, haulage yards, transport depots, veterinary clinics, dog parlours, tanning and beauty salons and tattoo studios.

The following table provides a detailed analysis of the offering in the town centre by Use Class.

The figures are presented as a percentage of the **41** occupied units recorded.

CLASS	TYPE OF USE	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
A1	SHOPS	51	37	34	34
A2	FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	13	2	8	8
A3	RESTAURANTS AND CAFES	9	12	5	5
A4	DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS	4	2	5	5
A5	HOT FOOD TAKEAWAYS	4	10	8	8
B1	BUSINESSES	3	15	24	24
B2	GENERAL INDUSTRIAL	1	0	0	0
B8	STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION	0	0	0	0
C1	HOTELS	1	0	0	0
C2	RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS	0	5	5	5
C2A	SECURE RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTION	0	0	0	0
D1	NON-RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS	7	7	8	8
D2	ASSEMBLY AND LEISURE	1	0	0	0
SG	SUI GENERIS	5	10	3	3

37% of the ground floor units in the defined Houghton Regis town centre area are A1 Shops, 14% lower than the National Small Towns average, whilst 15% are B1 Businesses, 12% higher than the National average.

KPI: GROUND FLOOR; COMPARISON VERSUS CONVENIENCE

The presence of a variety of shops in a town centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors / potential customers.

The following table outlines the classification for Convenience and Comparison Goods.

CONVENIENCE GOODS:	COMPARISON GOODS
Food and Non Alcoholic Drinks	Books
Tobacco	Clothing and Furniture
Alcohol	Furniture-Floor Coverings and Household Textiles
Newspapers and Magazines	Audio-Visual Equipment and other durable goods
Non-Durable Household Goods	Hardware and DIY Supplies
	Chemists Goods
	Jewelry, Watches and Clocks
	Bicycles
	Recreational and Miscellaneous Goods
	Hairdressing

The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which sell mainly Comparison Goods/ Convenience Goods.

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
COMPARISON	82	60	77	79
CONVENIENCE	18	40	23	21

60% of the A1 Shops mainly sell 'Comparison Goods'.

KPI: GROUND FLOOR UNITS; TRADER TYPES

The vitality of a Town Centre depends highly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. A sustainable balance of key attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town.

The following shops are considered Key attractors by Experian Goad.

DEPARTMENT STORES

- Marks and Spencer
- Debenhams
- House of Fraser
- John Lewis

MIXED GOODS RETAILERS

- Wilkinson
- Argos
- Boots
- TK Maxx
- WH Smith

SUPERMARKETS

- Waitrose
- Sainsbury's
- Tesco

CLOTHING

- Burton
- Dorothy Perkins
- H & M
- New Look
- Primark
- River Island
- Topman
- Topshop

OTHER RETAILERS

- Carphone Warehouse
- Clarks
- Clintons
- O2
- Superdrug
- Phones 4 U
- Vodafone
- Waterstones

Multiple traders have a countrywide presence and are well known household names. Regional shops are identified as those with stores/units in several towns throughout one geographical region only and Independent shops are identified as those that are specific to a particular town. The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which are Key Attractors, Multiples, Regional and Independent to the locality.

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
KEY ATTRCTOR	8	0	0	0
MULTIPLE	21	47	38	38
REGIONAL	10	7	8	8
INDEPENDENT	61	47	54	54

47% of the A1 Shops in Houghton Regis are unique to the town centre whilst 47% have a Nationwide presence.

KPI: GROUND FLOOR UNITS; VACANCY RATES

Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a Town Centre. The presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses, whether due to locational criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres.

The following table provides the percentage figure of vacant units from the total number of commercial units.

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
VACANCY	9	9	2	5

9% of the ground floor units in the defined town centre were vacant during the audit in April 2025, identical to the National Small Towns average but higher than in previous evaluations.

KPI: MARKETS

Good quality markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used street market can therefore be a good indicator of the vitality of a town centre. Conversely, if a market is in decline (e.g., empty pitches reducing numbers), it can be an indication of potential weaknesses in the town centre e.g., a lack of footfall customers due to an inappropriate retail mix or increased competitor activity. Street markets can also generate substantial benefits for the local economy. Markets can also provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of shops services on offer throughout the town.

The following table provides the average number of market traders at the main regular (at least once a fortnight) weekday market within the locality.

	NAT SMALL TOWNS	HOUGHTON 2025	HOUGHTON 2021	HOUGHTON 2019
MARKET TRADERS	15	N/A	N/A	N/A

There is no regular weekday Market in Houghton Regis.

KPI: FOOTFALL

The arrival and movement of people, whether as residents, workers, visitors or a shopper is vital to the success of most businesses within the Town Centre. Measuring passing people in a consistent manner in the same place, at the same time builds up a picture of the town, its traders and their relative success over the weeks and months.

Benchmarking footfall is conducted on weekdays in specific locations for a set period, between 10.00am to 1.00pm, counting the people passing in both directions through a fixed point (e.g., an imaginary line across the road) for a precise ten minutes in every hour (e.g., 10.00–10.10am, 11.20am-11.30am, 12.40pm-12.50pm). Aside from the above basic rules are applied to the process:

- An accurate stopwatch and a hand operated mechanical counter are used
- If a person walks pass
- more than once they are included in the count each time they pass through the 'line'
- Children under 12 are not included in the count
- Footfall counts are not conducted in weather conditions which will limit the number of town centre users i.e., heavy rain, snow

	NAT SMALL TOWNS	HOUGHTON 2025	HOUGHTON 2021	HOUGHTON 2019
BUSY DAY	110	57	57	83
QUIET DAY	105	44	21	64
SATURDAY	N/A	51	N/A	N/A

'Busy Day' Footfall in Houghton Regis remained the same from the 2021 evaluation with 57 persons per ten minutes, lower than both the National Small Towns average, 110 persons and the 2019 figure. (83) 'Quiet Day' footfall, 44 persons per ten minutes is more than double the 2021 figure but lower than the 2019 average of 64 persons per ten minutes. Saturday footfall sits between the 'Busy Day' and Quiet Day counts with 51 persons per ten minutes.

The following tables provide full details of the footfall counts.

FOOTFALL- BUSY DAY

LADBROKES TO POUNDSTRETCHER, BEDFORD SQUARE	
FRIDAY 25 TH APRIL 2025	
10.30-10.40	46
11.30-11.40	62
12.30-12.40	64
TOTAL	172
AVERAGE	57

KINGS ARMS TO DENTAL CENTRE, HIGH STREET

FRIDAY 25 TH APRIL 2025	
10.30-10.40	39
11.30-11.40	38
12.30-12.40	49
TOTAL	126
AVERAGE	42

ALL SAINTS VIEW

FRIDAY 25 TH APRIL 2025	
10.30-10.40	29
11.30-11.40	14
12.30-12.40	20
TOTAL	63
AVERAGE	21

FOOTFALL- QUIET DAY

LADBROKES TO POUNDSTRETCHER, BEDFORD SQUARE	
	MONDAY 24TH MARCH 2025
10.30-10.40	39
11.30-11.40	41
12.30-12.40	53
TOTAL	133
AVERAGE	44

KINGS ARMS TO DENTAL CENTRE, HIGH STREET	
	MONDAY 24TH MARCH 2025
10.30-10.40	23
11.30-11.40	21
12.30-12.40	31
TOTAL	75
AVERAGE	25

ALL SAINTS VIEW	
	MONDAY 24TH MARCH 2025
10.30-10.40	18
11.30-11.40	25
12.30-12.40	25
TOTAL	68
AVERAGE	23

FOOTFALL- SATURDAY

LADBROKES TO POUNDSTRETCHER, BEDFORD SQUARE	
	SATURDAY 24TH MAY 2025
10.30-10.40	42
11.30-11.40	47
12.30-12.40	50
TOTAL	139
AVERAGE	46

KINGS ARMS TO DENTAL CENTRE, HIGH STREET	
	SATURDAY 24TH MAY 2025
10.30-10.40	46
11.30-11.40	41
12.30-12.40	66
TOTAL	153
AVERAGE	51

ALL SAINTS VIEW	
	SATURDAY 24TH MAY 2025
10.30-10.40	16
11.30-11.40	39
12.30-12.40	32
TOTAL	87
AVERAGE	29

KPI: CAR PARKING

A large proportion of spending customers in a Town Centre come by car. In the rural setting, the car tends to be an essential tool, used by both those who come to spend and those who come to work. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. An acceptable number of available spaces with a regular, quick turn-over for shoppers are the ideal while adequate longer stay, less convenient spaces for local owners/ workers and visitors must be considered too.

Within the town on street and off parking within the core commercial offering were identified as being integral to the study. The following tables provide a summary of the Car Parking offering broken down into;

- Overall percentage of short stay, long stay and disabled spaces
- Overall percentage of vacant spaces on a Market Day, Non-Market Day and Saturday

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
OVERALL				
SHORT STAY SPACES: (4 HOURS AND UNDER)	48	81	81	87
LONG STAY SPACES: (OVER 4 HOURS)	47	10	12	5
DISABLED SPACES:	5	9	7	7
NOT REGISTERED	0	0	0	0
VACANT SPACES ON A BUSY DAY:	27	51	46	29
VACANT SPACES ON A QUIET DAY:	33	51	51	47
VACANT SPACES ON A SATURDAY	N/A	47	N/A	N/A

51% of all car parking provision was vacant on the 'Busy Day' and the same figure for the 'Quiet Day', the former 24% higher than the National Small Towns average and the latter 18%. 47% of car parking spaces were vacant on the 'Saturday' car parking audit.

Additional analysis with the removal of Morrisons Car Park provides vacancy figures of 'Busy Day' (28%), Quiet Day (24%) and 'Saturday' (21%).

KPI: BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEY

With regards to the 'business confidence' by establishing the trading conditions of Town Centre businesses, stakeholders can focus their regeneration efforts on building on existing strengths and addressing any specific issues.

The following percentage figures are based on the **6** returned Business Confidence Surveys.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR BUSINESS?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
RETAIL	N/A	50	N/A	100
FINANCIAL/PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	N/A	0	N/A	0
PUBLIC SECTOR	N/A	0	N/A	0
FOOD AND DRINK	N/A	50	N/A	0
ACCOMMODATION	N/A	0	N/A	0
OTHER	N/A	0	N/A	0
WHAT TYPE OF BUSINESS ARE YOU?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
MULTIPLE	11	25	N/A	0
REGIONAL	6	25	N/A	0
INDEPENDENT	83	50	N/A	100
HOW LONG HAS YOUR BUSINESS BEEN BASED IN THE TOWN?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
LESS THAN A YEAR	8	0	N/A	0
ONE TO FIVE YEARS	20	25	N/A	0
SIX TO TEN YEARS	13	0	N/A	0
MORE THAN TEN YEARS	59	75	N/A	100

50% of Business Survey respondents are based in the 'Retail' sector and the same figure 'Food and Drink'. 50% are 'Independent' and 75% based in the Town Centre for 'More than Ten Years'.

COMPARED TO LAST YEAR HAS YOUR TURNOVER?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
INCREASED	39	100	N/A	0
STAYED THE SAME	27	0	N/A	0
DECREASED	34	0	N/A	100
COMPARED TO LAST YEAR HAS YOUR PROFITABILITY?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
INCREASED	30	100	N/A	0
STAYED THE SAME	32	0	N/A	0
DECREASED	39	0	N/A	100
OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS DO YOU THINK YOUR TURNOVER WILL....?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
INCREASE	42	75	N/A	0
STAY THE SAME	39	25	N/A	100
DECREASE	19	0	N/A	0

All of the Businesses reported that their 'Turnover' and 'Profitability' has 'Increased' over the last year and 75% expected their 'Turnover' to increase over the next 12 months.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF HAVING A BUSINESS LOCATED IN THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	50	50	N/A	0
CLEANLINESS	N/A	50	N/A	0
PROSPERITY OF THE TOWN	42	50	N/A	0
LABOUR POOL	15	0	N/A	0
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION	47	50	N/A	0
MIX OF RETAIL OFFER	50	50	N/A	100
POTENTIAL TOURIST CUSTOMERS	36	25	N/A	0
POTENTIAL LOCAL CUSTOMERS	74	75	N/A	0
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	16	25	N/A	0
TRANSPORT LINKS	41	25	N/A	0
FOOTFALL	31	0	N/A	0
CAR PARKING	27	50	N/A	0
SAFETY	N/A	0	N/A	0
RENTAL VALUES/ PROPERTY COSTS	12	75	N/A	0
MARKET(S)	13	0	N/A	0
EVENTS/ACTIVITIES	20	50	N/A	0
MARKETING/PROMOTIONS	10	25	N/A	0
LOCALPARTNERSHIPS/ ORGANISATIONS	20	50	N/A	0

‘Potential Local Customers’ (75%) and ‘Rental Values/ Property Costs’ (80%) were classed as positive aspects of trading from Houghton Regis Town Centre.

WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF HAVING A BUSINESS LOCATED IN THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	18	25	N/A	0
CLEANLINESS	N/A	25	N/A	0
PROSPERITY OF THE TOWN	22	50	N/A	100
LABOUR POOL	16	0	N/A	100
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION	8	25	N/A	0
MIX OF RETAIL OFFER	25	0	N/A	0
NUMBER OF VACANT UNITS	N/A	0	N/A	0
POTENTIAL TOURIST CUSTOMERS	13	0	N/A	0
POTENTIAL LOCAL CUSTOMERS	5	0	N/A	0
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	14	0	N/A	0
TRANSPORT LINKS	15	25	N/A	0
FOOTFALL	23	25	N/A	0
CAR PARKING	44	75	N/A	100
SAFETY	N/A	0	N/A	0
RENTAL VALUES/ PROPERTY COSTS	25	25	N/A	0
MARKET(S)	9	25	N/A	0
LOCAL BUSINESS COMPETITION	21	50	N/A	0
COMPETITION FROM OUT-OF-TOWN LOCATIONS	39	25	N/A	100
COMPETITION FROM OTHER TOWNS/CITIES	29	25	N/A	0
COMPETITION FROM THE INTERNET	44	0	N/A	0
EVENTS/ACTIVITIES	N/A	0	N/A	0
MARKETINGG/ PROMOTIONS	N/A	0	N/A	0
LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS/ ORGANISATIONS	N/A	0	N/A	0

75% of Businesses classed 'Car Parking' as negative aspect of trading from the Town Centre.

HAS YOUR BUSINESS SUFFERED FROM ANY CRIME OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
YES	27	25	N/A	100
NO	73	75	N/A	0
IF YES, WHAT TYPE OF BUSINESS CRIME HAVE YOU SUFFERED?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
THEFT	66	100	N/A	0
CRIMINAL DAMAGE	27	0	N/A	0
ABUSE	12	100	N/A	100
OTHER	8	0	N/A	0
HAS YOUR BUSINESS SUFFERED FROM ANY ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
YES	27	75	N/A	100
NO	73	25	N/A	0

75% of Businesses have not suffered any 'Crime' over the last 12 months, with 75% reporting that they had suffered from 'Anti-Social Behaviour'.

WHAT SUGGESTIONS WOULD YOU MAKE TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE?

- Bedford Square was designed in the 1960's when most people walked everywhere. Now, a lot of people drive by and do not realise it is a shopping centre because they only see the back of the shops. It needs redeveloping or failing that make clear what it is.
- Better shopping centre.
- More variety of shops.
- More security presence as lot of kids shoplifting
- Most kids are at school during the day period
- There is almost no evening economy beyond a few food outlets/ restaurants. Since CBC took over our Community Centre there is no space to even add anything
- More security walking about
- Get quite a lot of children throwing litter and being loud at night, Aa lot of it is boredom, a lot of shops in the area get targeted

TOWN CENTRE USERS SURVEY

The aim of the Town Centre Users Survey is to establish how your town is seen by those people who use it. By asking visitors, of all types, a more detailed picture can be obtained as what matters to regular visitors can be different to someone who has never been to the place before.

In total **64** surveys were completed. The following percentage figures are based upon the total number of respondents to each question.

GENDER/ AGE	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
MALE	32	43	29	33
FEMALE	67	57	67	64
NON-BINARY	N/A	0	N/A	N/A
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	1	0	4	3
UNDER 16	N/A	0	N/A	N/A
16-25	6	0	1	4
26-35	15	8	15	9
36-45	24	8	19	16
46-55	23	31	21	20
56-65	17	23	19	22
OVER 65	N/A	31	19	25
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	1	0	4	4

57% of Town Centre Users are 'Female' and 43% 'Male'. 31% of respondents are aged '46-55' and the same figure 'Over 65'.

WHAT DO YOU GENERALLY VISIT THE TOWN CENTRE FOR?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
WORK	N/A	18	6	8
CONVENIENCE SHOPPING	N/A	55	70	58
COMPARISON SHOPPING	N/A	0	1	0
ACCESS SERVICES	N/A	9	14	20
EATING AND DRINKING OUT	N/A	9	N/A	N/A
LEISURE	N/A	0	0	4
DOCTORS SURGERY/ MEDICAL CENTRE	N/A	0		
OTHER	N/A	9	9	11

As in previous evaluations 'Convenience Shopping' (55%) was the key reason for Town Centre Users to visit Houghton Regis.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
DAILY	23	18	10	8
MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK	37	45	30	34
WEEKLY	21	18	27	26
FORTNIGHTLY	7	0	9	9
MORE THAN ONCE A MONTH	5	9	9	6
ONCE A MONTH OR LESS/ FIRST VISIT	8	9	15	16

81% of Town Centre Users visit Houghton Regis at 'Least Once a Week'.

HOW DO YOU NORMALLY TRAVEL INTO THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
ON FOOT	40	55	36	N/A
BICYCLE	1	0	2	N/A
MOTORBIKE	0	0	0	N/A
CAR	55	36	56	N/A
BUS	2	9	4	N/A
TAXI	N/A	0	N/A	N/A
OTHER	0	0	2	N/A

55% of Town Centre Users travel into Houghton Regis Town Centre 'On Foot', with 36% by 'Car'.

ON AVERAGE, ON YOUR NORMAL VISIT TO THE TOWN CENTRE HOW MUCH DO YOU NORMALLY SPEND?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
NOTHING	3	0	5	2
£0.01-£5.00	11	18	5	16
£5.01-£10.00	23	27	11	23
£10.01-£20.00	32	50	32	25
£20.01-£50.00	26	5	43	27
MORE THAN £50.00	6	0	5	7

50% of Town Centre Users reported that they spend £10.00-£20.00' on a normal visit to Houghton Regis.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	45	0	3	5
CLEANLINESS	40	27	12	18
RETAIL OFFER	22	9	20	13
CUSTOMER SERVICE	24	9	14	12
CAFES/RESTAURANTS	56	36	10	16
ACCESS TO SERVICES	57	73	47	51
LEISURE FACILITIES	14	0	3	N/A
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES/EVENTS	20	0	10	9
PUBS/ BARS/ NIGHTCLUBS	29	0	3	6
PUBLIC TOILETS	20	27	32	22
TRANSPORT LINKS	14	27	8	16
EASE OF WALKING AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE	59	82	36	33
CONVENIENCE	69	82	61	61
SAFETY	23	9	7	7
CAR PARKING	27	18	24	26
OTHER	6	0	15	11

'Convenience' (82%), 'Ease of Walking Around' (83%) and 'Access to Services' (73%) were classed as the most positive aspects of Houghton Regis Town Centre.

WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	25	78	70	70
CLEANLINESS	19	44	37	41
RETAIL OFFER	47	44	52	47
CUSTOMER SERVICE	7	0	8	10
CAFES/RESTAURANTS	12	11	23	24
ACCESS TO SERVICES	12	0	22	1
LEISURE FACILITIES	27	11	22	26
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES/EVENTS	20	11	18	14
PUBS/ BARS/ NIGHTCLUBS	14	33	18	18
PUBLIC TOILETS	25	33	12	26
TRANSPORT LINKS	19	11	3	5
EASE OF WALKING AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE	10	0	5	7
CONVENIENCE	3	0	2	3
SAFETY	16	56	48	50
CAR PARKING	43	44	27	44
OTHER	17	11	18	13

As in 2019, 'Physical Appearance' (78%) was classed as the most negative aspect of Houghton Regis Town Centre, 53% higher than the National Small Towns average. Similarly, 'Safety' (56%) was also rated as a negative aspect, 50% higher than the National average.

HOW LONG DO YOU STAY IN THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
LESS THAN AN HOUR	35	45	53	66
1-2 HOURS	44	36	32	28
2-4 HOURS	13	0	8	3
4-6 HOURS	3	0	2	1
ALL DAY	4	9	3	0
OTHER		9	3	2

91% of Town Centre users stay in Houghton Regis for 'Less than 2 Hours'.

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND A VISIT TO THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
YES	75	45	32	33
NO	25	55	68	67

55% of Town Centre Users would not recommend a visit to Houghton Regis, 30% higher than the National Small Towns average of 25% but lower than in the 2021 (68%) and 2019 (67%) evaluations.

WHAT WOULD YOU MAKE TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN CENTRE?

As in previous evaluations the key themes to emerge were 'Improving Physical Appearance' and 'Improving Safety'.

KPI: SHOPPERS ORIGIN SURVEY

The Shoppers Origin Survey tracks the general area that your town centre visitors originate from. The data can be used to target local marketing or promotional literature. It can also be used as evidence of the success of such campaigns by gauging the penetration into the population. The post codes gathered from businesses are split into 3 categories to be able to compare with other towns. The categories are:

- Locals; those who live within a Post Code covering the town
- Visitors; those who live within a Post Code less than a 30-minute drive away
- Tourists; those who live within a Post Code further than a 30-minute drive away

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	HOUGHTON 2025 (%)	HOUGHTON 2021 (%)	HOUGHTON 2019 (%)
LOCALS	55	N/A	N/A	N/A
VISITORS	19	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOURISTS	15	N/A	N/A	N/A

Businesses did not complete enough Shoppers Origin Surveys to provide a valid analysis.

ADDITIONAL KPI INFORMATION

A successful 21st Century Market Town must be a blend of a commercial offer suitable for locals and visitors, a place of employment, have a strong culture and events-based offer and provide leisure and recreation opportunities both during the day and in the evening.

**Please note those in Italics are outside of the defined Town Centre Area for Benchmarking purposes.*

Public

- Houghton Regis Town Council

Religious Offer

- All Saints Church

Leisure

- Houghton Regis Village Green

Education

- Houghton Regis Library
- Bedfordshire College at Bedford Square Community Centre

Public Transport Link

- Direct Bus Services to Luton Airport, Luton, Dunstable, Thorn Turn, Toddington, Leighton Buzzard, Harlington, Woburn, Ridgmont, Tingrith, Flitwick, Ridgmont, Toddington.

MOVING FORWARD

A successful 21st Century Small Town must be a blend of a commercial offer suitable for locals and visitors, a place of employment, have a strong culture and events-based offer and provide leisure and recreation opportunities both during the day and in the evening.

Houghton Regis is one of the smallest localities on the Town Benchmarking System which is reflected in the comparisons to the National Small Town averages. Houghton Regis is a town which services local residents and does not draw in significant numbers of visitors. The town centre is based around the rather tired looking Bedford Square but has benefitted from the development of All Saints View.

The following section highlights potential projects/ areas for improvement in Houghton Regis Town Centre:

Improving the Physical Appearance of Bedford Square

Built in 1966, Bedford Square currently looks very tired and unappealing. Driving through the Town Centre, it would be easy for first-time or infrequent visitors to drive through without knowing that there was a commercial offering in Bedford Square. Without physical regeneration of the site it is essential that projects are developed to make the Square more enticing for Town Centre Users. Recent examples in similar sized towns where physical improvements have taken place include Shepshed in Leicestershire. The £2.9 million public realm improvement project targeted widening pavements and realigning carriageways, creating new public open spaces, introducing more trees and planting, providing new street furniture and community information and improving street lighting. The project has been a success with increased footfall, customer spend, business confidence and performance.

Catering for Homeworkers

‘Homeworking’ is on the increase in Britain. Before the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, over 1.5 million people worked from home, up from 880,000 in 2010. ‘Homeworking’ is prevalent in Houghton Regis with the 2021 Census indicating that 20% of employed Houghton Regis residents work from home. Recent studies have highlighted that despite increased productivity from being home-based there are negative aspects such as social isolation leading to mental health issues. People and Places Insight conducted a study in 2017 in Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire on the use of empty premises in town centres and the key feedback from home-based workers was that vacant commercial units should be used as shared office space. Respondents stated that by having the opportunity to use shared office space on a regular basis they would also increase customer spend in the town centre by also using the local coffee shops, cafes, pubs for lunches and meetings.

In Swadlincote, South Derbyshire a vacant ex furniture store and cafe was successfully transformed into a shared office space called In Hub. The commercial unit has been transformed into separate work pods, informal meeting space and a meeting and training room which can be booked. The inhouse café offers the opportunity for catering whilst free Wi-Fi is available with printing, scanning and mailbox services. Clients simply need to register to become members of the In Hub and can rent a desk for £20 a day or make longer term commitments for £87 for 5 full days a month or £147 for 10 full days a month. Customers include homeworkers, freelancers and SME’s across a range of sectors.

Whilst commercial units suitable for the sole purpose of accommodating ‘Homeworkers’ may not be readily available in Houghton Regis ensuring that this essential cohort have the opportunity to visit and work in the existing premises in the town centre at points during the week is hugely important. Local Businesses should be looking to offer incentives for ‘Homeworkers’ to visit the town centre. ‘Homeworkers’ both increase footfall and spend in individual businesses but may also spend money during their visit in other businesses and engage with the wider leisure and cultural offering.

Disability Inclusivity

On the High Street, £249 Billion is being lost across the country every year due to the barriers that disabled people face. Considering these startling figures, People and Places Insight have built an audit that specifically looks at disability and access to good and services within a defined town centre area.

We have noticed from our reviews that there are multiple barriers that disabled people are facing when trying to buy and access goods and services in town centres. The aim of the audit is to highlight the barriers that people face due to their disability and celebrate what Local Authorities are already doing well to remove those barriers.

The Single Equalities Act 2010 was introduced to update and replace all existing equalities legalisation. All areas are covered including gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion and ethnicity. As a result of the Act, all providers of goods and services are legally required to make reasonable adjustments to enable a disabled person to be able to access and use your good and services. A reasonable adjustment is something that removes a barrier for a disabled person to be able to access goods and services. Reasonable means is the adjustment practical, within a reasonable cost and will it benefit disabled people.

Example of Council’s working with businesses and organisations to improve town centres for disabled people include town accessibility maps, business advice service around making a business more accessible, making sure car parking spaces are in the right place, providing drop kerbs, making sure footpaths are accessible and free of street clutter, providing support for people, induction loops for hearing impaired people and having well developed shop mobility services.

The Disability Access Audit covers:

- Public Transport
- Public Toilets
- Changing Facilities
- Street Furniture
- Highways and Pavements
- Car Parking
- Access to Shops and Services
- Mystery Shop of a sample of Shops and Services reviewing the experience for a Disabled User
- Digital Review

APPENDIX

COMMERCIAL OFFER

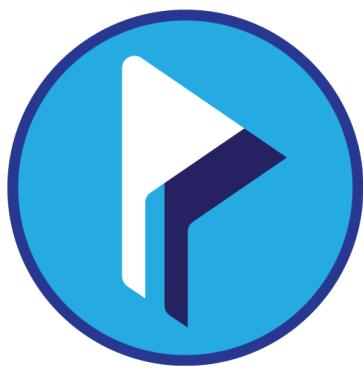
NAME	STREET	USE	TYPE	TYPE	NOTES
MORRISONS	HIGH STREET	A1	CONV	MULT	
JET PETROL STATION	HIGH STREET	SG	N/A	N/A	
GEORGINA SERVICE STATION	HIGH STREET	N/A	N/A	N/A	VACANT
LADY SPENCER RESIDENTIAL CARE	HIGH STREET	C2	N/A	N/A	
GRS ACADEMY/ SHOWROOM	HIGH STREET	B1	N/A	N/A	
GRS	HIGH STREET	B1	N/A	N/A	
TRIDENT HOUSE OFFICES	HIGH STREET	B1	N/A	N/A	
BRIGHTER SOFTWARE	HIGH STREET	N/A	N/A	N/A	VACANT
SANDYS AND KIRSTYS	HIGH STREET	A1	COMP	IND	
WILSON CAR SALES	HIGH STREET	SG	N/A	N/A	
HOUGHTON MOTORS LTD	HIGH STREET	B1	N/A	N/A	
THE KINGS ARMS	HIGH STREET	A4	N/A	N/A	
ALL SAINTS CHURCH	HIGH STREET	D1	N/A	N/A	
EAST OCEAN	BEDFORD ROAD	A5	N/A	N/A	
HAIR.COMB	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	COMP	IND	
POUNDSTRETCHER	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	COMP	MULT	
BEDFORD SQUARE COMMUNITY CENTRE	BEDFORD SQUARE	B1	N/A	N/A	
PHOENIX	BEDFORD SQUARE	A5	N/A	N/A	
LLOYDS PHARMACY	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	COMP	MULT	
TWP FLOORING	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	COMP	REG	
AGE UK	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	COMP	MULT	
D AND S	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	COMP	IND	
PREMIER	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	CONV	MULT	
CINAMON LOUNGE	BEDFORD SQUARE	A3	N/A	N/A	
CHINA HOUSE	BEDFORD SQUARE	A5	N/A	N/A	
LADBROKES	BEDFORD SQUARE	A2	N/A	N/A	
TRANSYLVANNIA	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	CONV	IND	
JEWELS	BEDFORD SQUARE	A3	N/A	N/A	
CAFÉ AND SMOOTHIE BAR	BEDFORD SQUARE	A3	N/A	N/A	
TURKISH CHARCOAL GRILL	BEDFORD SQUARE	A5	N/A	N/A	
GREGGS	BEDFORD SQUARE	A3	N/A	N/A	
RAHMAN FAMILY HALAL BUTCHERS	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	CONV	IND	
BROWN AND WHITE	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	COMP	MULT	
CAKE HAVEN	BEDFORD SQUARE	A1	CONV	IND	
ROSALYN HOUSE	HIGH STREET	C2	N/A	N/A	
HOUGHTON REGIS DENTAL CENTRE	HIGH STREET	D1	N/A	N/A	
AUTOLUSSO	KING STREET	N/A	N/A	N/A	VACANT
HOUGHTON REGIS MEDICAL CENTRE AND PHARMACY	PEEL STREET	D1	N/A	N/A	

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL	PEEL STREET	B1	N/A	N/A	
MAKETIMEFORYOU	ALL SAINTS VIEW	SG	N/A	N/A	
COSTA	ALL SAINTS VIEW	A3	N/A	N/A	
HERON FOODS	ALL SAINTS VIEW	A1	CONV	MULT	
RAZORS	ALL SAINTS VIEW	A1	COMP	IND	
TAN AND GO	ALL SAINTS VIEW	SG	N/A	N/A	
NUMBER 1	ALL SAINTS VIEW	N/A	N/A	N/A	VACANT

CAR PARKING

Name:	Morrisons
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park
Total Spaces:	168
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	152
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	16
Vacant Spaces on: Friday 25 th April 2025	119
Vacant Spaces on: Monday 24 th March 2025	122
Vacant Spaces on: Saturday 24 th May 2025	116
Name:	Bedford Square
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park
Total Spaces:	34
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	32
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	2
Vacant Spaces on: Friday 25 th April 2025	3
Vacant Spaces on: Monday 24 th March 2025	13
Vacant Spaces on: Saturday 24 th May 2025	0
Name:	Medical Centre
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park
Total Spaces:	54
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	52
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	2
Vacant Spaces on: Friday 25 th April 2025	9
Vacant Spaces on: Monday 24 th March 2025	11
Vacant Spaces on: Saturday 24 th May 2025	10
Name:	All Saints View
On Street/ Car Park:	Car Park
Total Spaces:	21
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	14
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	0
Disabled Spaces:	7
Vacant Spaces on: Friday 25 th April 2025	16
Vacant Spaces on: Monday 24 th March 2025	10
Vacant Spaces on: Saturday 24 th May 2025	15

Name:	King Street
On Street/ Car Park:	On Street
Total Spaces:	14
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	14
Disabled Spaces:	0
Vacant Spaces on Friday 25th April 2025	8
Vacant Spaces on: Monday 24th March 2025	0
Vacant Spaces on: Saturday 24th May 2025	5
Name:	Bedford Square
On Street/ Car Park:	On Street
Total Spaces:	17
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	0
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	17
Disabled Spaces:	0
Vacant Spaces on: Friday 25th April 2025	3
Vacant Spaces on: Monday 24th March 2025	1
Vacant Spaces on: Saturday 24th May 2025	0



PEOPLE & PLACES

Insight

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

TOWN BENCHMARKING REPORT

DECEMBER 2025

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INTRODUCTION

People and Places Insight strive to improve the performance of localities through a series of well-used and advanced Town Centre Services. We have worked with National Government, Business Improvement Districts, Local Authorities, Town Councils, Community and Town Partnerships and Retailers on a wide range of projects including Town Benchmarking, First Time Visitor Reviews, Signage and Wayfinding, Footfall Counts, Event Evaluation, Car Parking Studies, Disability Access Audits and Neighbourhood Planning.

In 2025, Central Bedfordshire Council commissioned People and Places Insight to undertake a Benchmarking Review to measure town centre performance in the following towns:

- Ampthill
- Biggleswade
- Dunstable
- Flitwick
- Houghton Regis
- Leighton Buzzard
- Potton
- Sandy
- Shefford

Previous evaluations in the town centre have taken place by People and Places Insight in 2019 and 2021. The detailed results of the Benchmarking Review can be found in the following report with a breakdown for the towns alongside each other in each KPI and against the National Small Towns average.



METHODOLOGY

THE SYSTEM

The People and Places Insight Town Benchmarking System has been developed to address the real issues of how to understand measure, evaluate and ultimately improve town centres. The approach offers a simple way of capturing data on Key Performance Indicators selected by those involved in Town Centre management. By having the tools to measure performance, strategic decision-making is both encouraged and improved. By considering performance, forward strategies and action planning can be more focused and effective.

The Benchmarking system is divided into two sections:

- National Large Towns; consisting of those localities with more than 300 units
- National Small Towns; consisting of those localities with less than 300 units

Towns, depending on their size, contribute to either the Large or Small-Town analysis. The defined town centre areas of the Central Bedfordshire Council Towns are as follows:

TOWN	NO. OF GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL UNITS
Amphill	87
Biggleswade	176
Dunstable	267
Flitwick	61
Houghton Regis	45
Leighton Buzzard	228
Potton	41
Sandy	82
Shefford	49

The National figure is the average for all the towns which participated in Benchmarking from July 2022 to January 2024.



THE REPORTS

The People and Places Insight Town Benchmarking report provides statistical analysis of each of the KPIs. The reports are used by a variety of key stakeholders such as Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils, Business Improvement Districts, Local Partnerships, Retailers and Universities to assist with;

- Measuring High Street regeneration projects
- Developing Town Centre regeneration
- Measuring the impact of events and festivals against normal trading conditions
- Providing an evidence base for funding applications
- Providing an evidence base for car parking initiatives
- Providing an evidence base for Neighbourhood Planning
- Supporting Business Improvement Districts
- Supporting Community groups

Each KPI in a typical Benchmarking Review is collected in a standardized manner as highlighted in the Table below.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	METHODOLOGY
KPI: COMMERCIAL OFFER; USE CLASS	Visual Survey of ground floor units in defined Town Centre area.
KPI: COMMERCIAL OFFER; COMPARISON/CONVENIENCE	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined Town Centre area.
KPI: COMMERCIAL OFFER: TRADER TYPE	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined Town Centre area.
KPI: COMMERCIAL OFFER: VACANCY RATES	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined Town Centre area.
KPI: MARKETS	Visual Survey of total number of traders on a Weekday Market
KPI: FOOTFALL	Footfall Survey on a Busy Weekday, Quiet Weekday and Saturday from 10.00-13.00 on each day
KPI: CAR PARKING	Audit of total number of spaces and vacancy rate on a Busy Weekday, Quiet Weekday and Saturday between 11.00-14.00
KPI: BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEYS	Paper Based Surveys
KPI: TOWN CENTRE USER SURVEYS	Face to face/ Paper Based/ Online
KPI: SHOPPERS ORIGIN SURVEYS	Paper Based Surveys



KEY FINDINGS

KPI: GROUND FLOOR; USE CLASS

It is important to understand the scale and variety of the “offer” throughout the town. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of buying and selling goods and services ensures that the local population (and visitors from outside) can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth of the town within the local economy. Importantly, it forms the employment base for a substantial proportion of the community too, helping to retain the population rather than lose it to nearby towns and cities.

The Use Class Order from 1987 was updated into larger segments in 2020. Due to the more in-depth breakdown provision in 1987, People and Places Insight Limited continue to deploy these Use Class classifications.

The following table provides a detailed breakdown of each of the Use Classes:

CLASS	TYPE OF USE	CLASS INCLUDES
A1	Shops	Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes.
A2	Financial and Professional Services	Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices.
A3	Restaurants and Cafes	Food and drink for consumption on the premises- restaurants, snack bars and cafes.
A4	Drinking Establishments	Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not nightclubs).
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	Sale of hot food for consumption off the premises.
B1	Businesses	Offices (other than those that fall within A2) research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area.
B2	General Industrial	General Industrial.
B8	Storage and Distribution	Warehouses, includes open air storage.
C1	Hotels	Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided (excludes hostels).
C2	Residential Institutions	Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.



C2A	Secure Residential Institution	Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders' institution, detention centre, secure training centre, custody centre, short-term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks.
D1	Non-Residential Institutions	Clinics, health centres, crèches, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres.
D2	Assembly and Leisure	Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not nightclubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or area for indoor or outdoor sports and recreations (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).
SG	Sui Generis ("unique" establishments)	Theatres, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/ or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, laundrettes, taxi business, amusement centres, casinos, haulage yards, transport depots, veterinary clinics, dog parlours, tanning and beauty salons and tattoo studios.

The following table provides a detailed analysis of the offering in the town centres by Use Class.



CLASS	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
A1	51	46	38	49	33	37	49	35	35	32
A2	13	11	10	11	17	2	8	5	5	11
A3	9	18	9	11	10	12	12	5	12	9
A4	4	6	5	3	2	2	5	8	4	9
A5	4	3	7	6	7	10	5	5	7	1
B1	3	6	6	2	7	15	3	13	4	11
B2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
B8	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
C1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C2	0	0	1	1	0	5	0	0	0	0
C2A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D1	7	1	9	5	12	7	7	13	12	11
D2	1	3	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	2
SG	5	5	12	12	9	10	10	8	11	6



KPI: GROUND FLOOR UNITS; COMPARISON VERSUS CONVENIENCE

A1 Retail units selling goods can be split into two different types, Comparison and Convenience.

Convenience goods - Low-cost, everyday items that consumers are unlikely to travel far to purchase.

Defined as:

- Food and non-alcoholic drinks
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Newspapers and magazines
- Non-durable household goods

Comparison goods - All other retail goods.

Defined as:

- Books
- Clothing and Footwear
- Furniture, floor coverings and household textiles
- Audio-visual equipment and other durable goods
- Hardware and DIY supplies
- Chemists' goods
- Jewellery, watches and clocks
- Bicycles
- Recreational and Miscellaneous goods
- Hairdressing

The presence of a variety of shops in a town centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors / potential customers.

The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which sell mainly Comparison Goods/ Convenience Goods.

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
COM	82	86	76	72	79	60	80	57	76	67
CONV	18	14	24	28	21	40	20	44	24	33

KPI: GROUND FLOOR UNITS; TRADER TYPES

The vitality of a Town Centre depends highly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. A sustainable balance of key attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town.

Multiple traders have a countrywide presence and are well known household names. Regional shops are identified as those with stores/units in several towns throughout one geographical region only and Independent shops are identified as those that are specific to a particular town. The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which are Key Attractors, Multiples, Regional and Independent to the locality.

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
KEY ATT.	8	3	0	5	11	0	8	7	0	0
MULTIPLE	21	8	23	25	21	47	18	21	21	27
REGIONAL	10	19	8	6	16	7	5	14	15	13
INDEPENDENT	61	70	69	64	53	47	70	57	65	60

KPI: GROUND FLOOR UNITS; VACANCY RATES

Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a Town Centre. The presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses, whether due to locational criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres.

The following table provides the percentage figure of vacant units from the total number of commercial units.

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
VACANCY	9	8	7	11	5	9	9	2	8	4



KPI: MARKETS

Good quality markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used street market can therefore be a good indicator of the vitality of a town centre. Conversely, if a market is in decline (e.g., empty pitches reducing numbers), it can be an indication of potential weaknesses in the town centre e.g., a lack of footfall customers due to an inappropriate retail mix or increased competitor activity. Street markets can also generate substantial benefits for the local economy. Markets can also provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of shops services on offer throughout the town.

The following table provides the average number of market traders at the main regular (at least once a fortnight) weekday market within the locality.

	NAT SMALL TOWNS	AMPT 2025	BIGG 2025	DUNST 2025	FLIT 2025	HR 2025	LB 2025	POTT 2025	SANDY 2025	SHEFF. 2025
TRADERS	15	8	2	N/A**	12	N/A	18	N/A	N/A	2

** Dunstable no longer has a specific town centre Weekly Market Day but there are fortnightly Middle Row Markets throughout the year and additional Markets at Christmas. The Middle Row Markets attract on average 30 Traders, double the National Small Towns figure.



KPI: FOOTFALL

The arrival and movement of people, whether as residents, workers, visitors or a shopper is vital to the success of most businesses within the Town Centre. Measuring passing people in a consistent manner in the same place, at the same time builds up a picture of the town, its traders and their relative success over the weeks and months.

Benchmarking footfall is conducted on weekdays in specific locations for a set period, between 10.00am to 1.00pm, counting the people passing in both directions through a fixed point (e.g., an imaginary line across the road) for a precise ten minutes in every hour (e.g., 10.00–10.10am, 11.20am-11.30am, 12.40pm-12.50pm). Aside from the above basic rules are applied to the process:

- An accurate stopwatch and a hand operated mechanical counter are used
- If a person walks pass more than once they are included in the count each time they pass through the 'line'
- Children under 12 are not included in the count
- Footfall counts are not conducted in weather conditions which will limit the number of town centre users i.e., heavy rain, snow

	NAT SMALL TOWNS	AMPT 2025	BIGG 2025	DUNST 2025	FLIT 2025	HR 2025	LB 2025	POTT 2025	SANDY 2025	SHEFF. 2025
MARKET/BUSY DAY	110	81	128	159	34	57	335	56	59	66
NON- MARKET/QUIET DAY	105	75	154	100	27	44	179	42	40	43
SATURDAY	N/A	137	226	134	31	51	370	66	59	82

KPI: CAR PARKING

A large proportion of spending customers in a Town Centre come by car. In the rural setting, the car tends to be an essential tool, used by both those who come to spend and those who come to work. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. An acceptable number of available spaces with a regular, quick turn-over for shoppers are the ideal while adequate longer stay, less convenient spaces for local owners/ workers and visitors must be considered too.

Within the town on street and off parking within the core commercial offering were identified as being integral to the study. The following tables provide a summary of the Car Parking offering broken down into;

- Overall percentage of short stay, long stay and disabled spaces
- Overall percentage of vacant spaces on a Market Day, Non-Market Day and Saturday

	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF. 2025 (%)
SHORT STAY SPACES: (4 HOURS AND UNDER)	48	56	59	39	41	81	24	89	46	80
LONG STAY SPACES: (OVER 4 HOURS)	47	38	36	54	55	10	69	3	51	16
DISABLED SPACES:	5	6	5	7	4	9	7	8	3	4
NOT REGISTERED	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VACANT SPACES ON A MARKET/BUSY DAY:	27	7	38	45	30	51	16	16	29	22
VACANT SPACES ON A NON- MARKET/QUIET DAY:	33	9	40	49	35	51	42	20	39	27
VACANT SPACES ON A SATURDAY	N/A	9	37	37	44	47	38	27	47	15

KPI: BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEY

With regards to the 'business confidence' by establishing the trading conditions of Town Centre businesses, stakeholders can focus their regeneration efforts on building on existing strengths and addressing any specific issues.

The following percentage figures are based on the returned Business Confidence Surveys.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR BUSINESS?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
RETAIL	N/A	25	36	69	42	50	63	N/A	64	N/A
FIN./PROF. SERVICES	N/A	0	27	12	21	0	21	N/A	18	N/A
PUBLIC SECTOR	N/A	0	9	0	8	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
FOOD AND DRINK	N/A	50	27	12	17	50	17	N/A	9	N/A
ACCOMMODATION	N/A	0	0	6	0	0	0	N/A	9	N/A
OTHER	N/A	25	0	0	13	0	0	N/A	0	N/A

WHAT TYPE OF BUSINESS ARE YOU?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
MULTIPLE	11	0	18	7	0	25	17	N/A	0	N/A
REGIONAL	6	0	9	21	0	25	12	N/A	18	N/A
INDEPENDENT	83	100	73	71	100	50	71	N/A	82	N/A

HOW LONG HAS YOUR BUSINESS BEEN BASED IN THE TOWN?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
LESS THAN A YEAR	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
ONE TO FIVE YEARS	20	0	18	19	0	25	8	N/A	18	N/A
SIX TO TEN YEARS	13	50	9	0	0	0	13	N/A	0	N/A
MORE THAN TEN YEARS	59	50	73	81	100	75	79	N/A	82	N/A



COMPARED TO LAST YEAR HAS YOUR TURNOVER?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
INCREASED	39	0	18	31	20	100	35	N/A	40	N/A
STAYED THE SAME	27	50	64	19	20	0	22	N/A	40	N/A
DECREASED	34	50	18	50	60	0	43	N/A	20	N/A
COMPARED TO LAST YEAR HAS YOUR PROFITABILITY?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
INCREASED	30	0	27	19	20	100	17	N/A	40	N/A
STAYED THE SAME	32	50	36	12	20	0	22	N/A	40	N/A
DECREASED	39	50	36	69	60	0	61	N/A	20	N/A
OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS DO YOU THINK YOUR TURNOVER WILL....?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
INCREASE	42	0	18	20	0	75	18	N/A	44	N/A
STAY THE SAME	39	25	64	53	50	25	36	N/A	33	N/A
DECREASE	19	75	18	27	50	0	46	N/A	22	N/A

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF HAVING A BUSINESS LOCATED IN THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	50	100	54	47	0	50	50	N/A	36	N/A
CLEANLINESS	N/A	0	23	13	0	50	27	N/A	9	N/A
PROSPERITY OF THE TOWN	42	100	31	27	0	50	41	N/A	18	N/A
LABOUR POOL	15	0	0	0	0	0	14	N/A	0	N/A
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION	47	33	69	40	80	50	45	N/A	18	N/A
MIX OF RETAIL OFFER	50	33	31	13	40	50	18	N/A	9	N/A
POTENTIAL TOURIST CUSTOMERS	36	33	8	7	0	25	14	N/A	9	N/A
POTENTIAL LOCAL CUSTOMERS	74	33	77	53	60	75	68	N/A	64	N/A
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	16	0	0	7	0	25	18	N/A	0	N/A
TRANSPORT LINKS	41	0	54	40	80	25	23	N/A	55	N/A
FOOTFALL	31	0	31	33	20	0	41	N/A	36	N/A
CAR PARKING	27	0	31	40	20	50	14	N/A	45	N/A
SAFETY	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
RENTAL VALUES/ PROPERTY COSTS	12	33	8	33	0	75	9	N/A	27	N/A
MARKET(S)	13	0	31	27	0	0	41	N/A	0	N/A
EVENTS/ACTIVITIES	20	33	31	40	20	50	41	N/A	18	N/A
MARKETING/PROMOTIONS	10	33	23	27	0	25	9	N/A	9	N/A
LOCALPARTNERSHIPS/ ORGANISATIONS	20	33	15	13	20	50	9	N/A	0	N/A

WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF HAVING A BUSINESS LOCATED IN THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	N/A
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	18	0	36	31	60	25	22	N/A	40	N/A
CLEANLINESS	N/A	0	27	31	40	25	30	N/A	20	N/A
PROSPERITY OF THE TOWN	22	25	36	50	40	50	26	N/A	50	N/A
LABOUR POOL	16	75	18	19	0	0	9	N/A	20	N/A
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION	8	25	9	6	0	25	13	N/A	10	N/A
MIX OF RETAIL OFFER	25	0	36	25	20	0	35	N/A	30	N/A
NUMBER OF VACANT UNITS	N/A	25	36	75	60	0	52	N/A	20	N/A
POTENTIAL TOURIST CUSTOMERS	13	25	18	25	20	0	17	N/A	0	N/A
POTENTIAL LOCAL CUSTOMERS	5	0	0	12	0	0	13	N/A	10	N/A
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	14	25	0	6	0	0	13	N/A	0	N/A
TRANSPORT LINKS	15	25	0	31	0	25	26	N/A	10	N/A
FOOTFALL	23	25	9	44	20	25	39	N/A	60	N/A
CAR PARKING	44	75	64	50	80	75	61	N/A	70	N/A
SAFETY	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
RENTAL VALUES/ PROPERTY COSTS	25	25	18	38	20	25	39	N/A	0	N/A
MARKET(S)	9	0	0	31	0	25	13	N/A	10	N/A
LOCAL BUSINESS COMPETITION	21	0	9	25	20	50	13	N/A	10	N/A
COMPETITION FROM OUT-OF-TOWN LOCATIONS	39	25	55	31	20	25	70	N/A	10	N/A
COMPETITION FROM OTHER TOWNS/CITIES	29	25	18	31	20	25	13	N/A	30	N/A
COMPETITION FROM THE INTERNET	44	25	36	25	0	0	48	N/A	10	N/A
EVENTS/ACTIVITIES	N/A	0	9	12	0	0	9	N/A	10	N/A
MARKETING/ PROMOTIONS	N/A	0	9	13	0	0	9	N/A	10	N/A
LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS/ ORGANISATIONS	N/A	0	9	6	0	0	13	N/A	10	N/A

HAS YOUR BUSINESS SUFFERED FROM ANY CRIME OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
YES	27	33	46	44	20	25	61	N/A	36	N/A
NO	73	66	54	56	80	75	39	N/A	64	N/A
IF YES, WHAT TYPE OF BUSINESS CRIME HAVE YOU SUFFERED?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
THEFT	66	100	100	100	100	100	73	N/A	75	N/A
CRIMINAL DAMAGE	27	0	0	39	0	0	40	N/A	25	N/A
ABUSE	12	0	0	29	0	100	47	N/A	0	N/A
OTHER	8	0	0	14	0	0	17	N/A	0	N/A

TOWN CENTRE USERS SURVEY

The aim of the Town Centre Users Survey is to establish how your town is seen by those people who use it. By asking visitors, of all types, a more detailed picture can be obtained as what matters to regular visitors can be different to someone who has never been to the place before.

The following percentage figures are based upon the total number of respondents to each question.

GENDER/ AGE	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
MALE	32	26	55	30	41	43	31	44	50	44
FEMALE	67	71	42	68	52	57	66	53	50	55
NON-BINARY	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	1	2	3	2	7	0	3	2	0	1
UNDER 16	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16-25	6	3	3	3	3	0	2	2	5	2
26-35	15	6	14	7	3	8	17	6	17	7
36-45	24	15	8	16	14	8	17	9	26	12
46-55	23	29	14	19	31	31	15	17	21	14
56-65	17	27	11	26	22	23	16	18	24	21
OVER 65	N/A	19	52	25	21	31	29	46	7	42
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	1	2	0	3	5	0	3	3	0	2

WHAT DO YOU GENERALLY VISIT THE TOWN CENTRE FOR?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
WORK	N/A	4	17	7	0	18	3	2	5	2
CONVENIENCE SHOPPING	N/A	42	68	39	83	55	39	53	51	63
COMPARISON SHOPPING	N/A	4	8	8	6	0	9	2	2	7
ACCESS SERVICES	N/A	6	3	12	4	9	13	17	27	8
EATING AND DRINKING OUT	N/A	26	2	N/A	6	9	21	15	N/A	9
LEISURE	N/A	7	3	11	0	0	5	1	8	1
OTHER	N/A	10	0	14	0	9	10	10	7	9



HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
DAILY	23	22	15	14	17	18	12	17	9	14
MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK	37	47	34	32	45	45	38	48	46	46
WEEKLY	21	18	26	21	21	18	29	18	20	23
FORTNIGHTLY	7	5	6	12	6	0	9	7	9	6
MORE THAN ONCE A MONTH	5	5	6	10	2	9	7	4	7	7
ONCE A MONTH OR LESS/ FIRST VISIT	8	4	12	11	9	9	5	7	10	4

HOW DO YOU NORMALLY TRAVEL INTO THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
ON FOOT	40	51	55	46	62	55	39	47	N/A	41
BICYCLE	1	2	0	1	2	0	4	1	N/A	1
MOTORBIKE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	0
CAR	55	45	45	46	34	36	49	51	N/A	55
BUS	2	2	0	2	0	9	5	1	N/A	1
TAXI	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	1
OTHER	0	1	0	4	2	0	3	1	N/A	2

ON AVERAGE, ON YOUR NORMAL VISIT TO THE TOWN CENTRE HOW MUCH DO YOU NORMALLY SPEND?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
NOTHING	3	2	12	5	0	0	0	2	4	0
£0.01-£5.00	11	2	9	7	4	18	3	6	15	4
£5.01-£10.00	23	12	28	23	15	27	18	23	31	14
£10.01-£20.00	32	30	37	27	28	50	35	37	31	30
£20.01-£50.00	26	37	12	28	41	5	33	26	15	38
MORE THAN £50.00	6	16	2	10	11	0	9	4	3	12

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	45	77	50	11	9	0	45	79	15	49
CLEANLINESS	40	53	34	14	20	27	36	63	37	51
RETAIL OFFER	22	41	11	8	9	9	19	36	8	21
CUSTOMER SERVICE	24	18	45	4	4	9	10	34	9	10
CAFES/RESTAURANTS	56	81	38	30	24	36	62	59	33	42
ACCESS TO SERVICES	57	48	45	30	18	73	53	66	43	49
LEISURE FACILITIES	14	6	13	15	9	0	9	3	0	2
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES/EVENTS	20	13	7	19	7	0	29	15	3	7
PUBS/ BARS/ NIGHTCLUBS	29	51	7	7	7	0	39	41	11	25
PUBLIC TOILETS	20	18	11	6	0	27	43	14	9	6
TRANSPORT LINKS	14	3	32	20	51	27	12	9	19	10
EASE OF WALKING AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE	59	46	84	34	44	82	66	64	54	57
CONVENIENCE	69	74	70	63	73	82	66	74	68	76
SAFETY	23	18	59	4	16	9	16	24	12	19
CAR PARKING	27	9	50	10	29	18	23	21	47	40
MARKET(S)	25	29	30	13	38	N/A	61	17	1	18
OTHER	6	3	2	9	2	0	7	8	4	4

WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWN (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	25	2	34	53	73	78	18	1	30	9
CLEANLINESS	19	6	36	31	36	44	19	3	16	9
RETAIL OFFER	47	13	72	64	61	44	55	18	61	44
CUSTOMER SERVICE	7	1	16	9	7	0	4	3	5	3
CAFES/RESTAURANTS	12	2	22	16	27	11	9	4	21	13
ACCESS TO SERVICES	12	8	20	48	64	0	31	8	36	20
LEISURE FACILITIES	27	15	25	12	27	11	24	18	42	33
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES/EVENTS	20	5	33	13	34	11	13	7	27	17
PUBS/ BARS/ NIGHTCLUBS	14	3	30	21	27	33	5	2	16	12
PUBLIC TOILETS	25	14	22	44	43	33	10	18	35	34
TRANSPORT LINKS	19	18	28	12	7	11	11	20	8	16
EASE OF WALKING AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE	10	23	14	12	16	0	3	4	3	2
CONVENIENCE	3	0	14	2	0	0	4	1	1	2
SAFETY	16	11	22	32	16	56	26	10	10	11
CAR PARKING	43	81	20	55	39	44	37	72	24	21
MARKET(S)	15	3	36	39	7	N/A	4	6	27	12
OTHER	17	19	5	18	5	11	20	13	18	22



HOW LONG DO YOU STAY IN THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
LESS THAN AN HOUR	35	20	38	40	50	45	23	51	64	48
1-2 HOURS	44	55	37	43	43	36	59	37	25	43
2-4 HOURS	13	20	11	13	7	0	23	8	5	6
4-6 HOURS	3	3	0	1	0	0	2	1	4	2
ALL DAY	4	1	14	2	0	9	1	1	2	0
						9				

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND A VISIT TO THE TOWN CENTRE?	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
YES	75	95	67	25	18	45	69	88	36	70
NO	25	5	33	75	82	55	31	12	64	30

KPI: SHOPPERS ORIGIN SURVEY

The Shoppers Origin Survey tracks the general area that your town centre visitors originate from. The data can be used to target local marketing or promotional literature. It can also be used as evidence of the success of such campaigns by gauging the penetration into the population. The post codes gathered from businesses are split into 3 categories to be able to compare with other towns. The categories are:

- Locals; those who live within a Post Code covering the town
- Visitors; those who live within a Post Code less than a 30-minute drive away
- Tourists; those who live within a Post Code further than a 30-minute drive away

	NAT SMALL TOWNS (%)	AMPT 2025 (%)	BIGG 2025 (%)	DUNST 2025 (%)	FLIT 2025 (%)	HR 2025 (%)	LB 2025 (%)	POTT 2025 (%)	SANDY 2025 (%)	SHEFF 2025 (%)
LOCALS	55	N/A	41	77	80	N/A	73	N/A	50	N/A
VISITORS	19	N/A	58	22	20	N/A	21	N/A	45	N/A
TOURISTS	15	N/A	1	1	0	N/A	6	N/A	5	N/A

Houghton Regis Partnership Committee

Town Clerk: Clare Evans Tel: 01582 708540

CBC contact: Sarah Hughes Tel 0300 300 6166

Agenda Item 7

**Central
Bedfordshire**

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL UPDATE

Purpose of the report: for information

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Community Safety

SAFER COMMUNITIES & PARTNERSHIP TEAM

July 1st – December 31st 2025

During this period there were 87 cases open to the Community Safety Enforcement Team: -

- Community Safety General Enquiries - 12
- Dog Barking – 15
- Dog (other) - 1
- Fly Tipping – 19
- Graffiti – 2
- Pollution Noise – 25
- Pollution Odour – 7
- Nuisance Vehicles - 4
- Nuisance Neighbours – 2

1 Fixed Penalty Notice was served for fly-tipping

1 Community protection Warning or Notice was served

There were 4 cuckooing cases investigated of which none are still open

There were 5 weapon sweeps in the area

- Community Safety Officer assisted CBC Housing with a letter drop in Churchfield Road.
- CBC Housing pop-up event at the Leisure Centre attended by a Community Safety Officer.
- Community Safety Officer completed a letter drop in Elm Park Close.
- Community Safety Officer assisted Beds Police with a letter drop in Agrimony Croft.
- Community Safety Officer visited businesses in Bedford Square in relation to their Responsible Knife Retailer Agreement.
- Community Safety Officer attended the Youth & Parent Engagement event organised as part of the Town Council Skate Jam event.
- Community Safety Officer conducted business visits in Bedford Square.
- Community Safety Officer completed a letter drop in Kingsland Court.
- Community Safety Officer completed a letter drop in Yew Street.
- Community Safety Officer attended a pop-up Youth engagement event at Puddlehill Gateway, temporary accommodation for 18–25-year-olds, accompanied by Cllr Goodchild.
- Community Safety Officer assisted Beds Police with a letter drop in Skye Gardens.

- Community Safety Officer attended a welfare visit with CBC Housing.
- Community Safety Officer assisted Beds Fire & Rescue with door knocks at various addresses close to the skate park.
- Community Safety Officers arranged an Action/Information Day for residents in partnership with other organisations and departments. This event was at Bedford Square and Houghton Regis Day Centre in relation to responsible waste disposal and recycling.
- Community Safety Officer completed a letter drop in Kingsland Close.
- Community Safety Officer completed business visits to the Library and the Leisure Centre.
- Community Safety Officer attended a pop-up event at the Library.
- Community Safety Officer based himself to work at the Library to complete administration work following reports of youth ASB.
- Community Safety Officer attended a pop-up event at the Leisure Centre.
- Community Safety Officer conducted business visits in Bedford Square during Op Sceptre week.
- Community Safety Officer attended a pop-up event at Morrisons, joined by Cllr Goodchild, Cllr Herber & Cllr Cooper.

Central Bedfordshire residents invited to have their say on proposed crackdown on nuisance vehicles

Central Bedfordshire Council is asking residents, businesses and visitors to take part in a public consultation on proposed new powers to tackle vehicle-related anti-social behaviour across the area.

The Council is consulting on the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) aimed at addressing harmful vehicle-related behaviours such as car meets, street racing, excessive engine noise, obstruction of highways and intimidating behaviour. These issues have been persistent and are having a significant impact on residents' quality of life, particularly in hotspot areas including Houghton Regis and Dunstable.

Bedfordshire Police data shows that Central Bedfordshire accounts for nearly half of all vehicle-related anti-social behaviour incidents in the county, with reports continuing to rise year-on-year.

If introduced, the PSPO would apply across the whole of Central Bedfordshire and give Bedfordshire Police additional powers to take enforcement action, including issuing £100 Fixed Penalty Notices or pursuing court action for non-compliance. Importantly, enforcement could also take place at static car meets and where incidents are captured via CCTV. The proposed PSPO would run for three years, with a formal review required before any extension.

Enforcement of the PSPO would be led by Bedfordshire Police under a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the Council, with additional support through CCTV where appropriate.

The consultation is open from 16 January until 13 March 2026. Residents can take part online at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations. If approved, enforcement would begin in October 2026.

Paper copies of the consultation document and questionnaire are also available by emailing consultations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or calling 0300 300 8000.



Penalty Charge Notices

Please see how many PCN's have been issued in Houghton Regis and visits conducted by the Civil Enforcement Officers in table below

Houghton Regis Partnership Report 2025	PCN's issued	Visits conducted
April	17	58
May	38	80
June	32	93
July	37	100
August	16	92
September	15	70
October	60	39
November	65	75
December	43	132
Total	323	739

CCTV Report

1st December to 31st December 2025

This report contains data gathered by the Council's CCTV Control Room located at Thorn Turn, Houghton Regis. It includes details of CCTV monitored incidents and arrests by the police in the town of Houghton Regis. It does not include details of the police response to any incident where an immediate arrest is not made, nor does it include incidents not captured by CCTV; for this reason, the data will not reflect the overall picture of crime and disorder in any area.

Date	Time	Location	Type of Crime
01/12/2025	15:00	Bedford Road	Intelligence
11/12/2025	12:36	Bedford Road	Public Order
12/12/2025	18:14	Bedford Road	Wanted Person
14/12/2025	01:51	High Street	Police Pursuit
17/12/2025	14:20	Bedford Road	Intelligence
19/12/2025	07:09	Sapphire Place	Theft
22/12/2025	06:05	Sapphire Place	Intelligence

Public Health

STOP SMOKING SERVICES

The Stop Smoking Service is now part of our new integrated behaviour change service, *Choose You*. It continues to deliver flexible support options, including telephone support for residents who need FREE and CONFIDENTIAL support to help them quit smoking.

Some CBC residents are still able to access Stop Smoking services through Level 2 support from their GP practice, or if this is not available at their GP, then they can refer you to Level 3 support, via *Choose You*, directly from the CBC Team, or you can self-refer easily by contacting the Team directly via *Choose You* (see below for details).

Performance continues to be severely impacted by the reduced capacity for delivery of Level 2 support through Primary Care, but we continue to both support GPs to deliver and

strongly encourage GPs to refer to our CBC Specialist Level 3 Team if they cannot provide direct Level 2 support.

We are currently working to develop activity/outcome reports from the new Choose You case management system, but at this time we are unable to produce local level data reporting for Dunstable (Chiltern Vale) or any of the other localities.

There is a range of stop smoking aids and products available for residents wanting to stop smoking, including nicotine replacement therapies. The Service is now also able to provide e-cigarettes as an aid to quitting smoking. This means that re-usable 'vape' kits are available to adult residents who currently smoke tobacco products, and who want to quit. This e-cigarette offer is a short-term intervention to support stop smoking attempts only and is not intended to promote or encourage the continued or indefinite use of e-cigarettes; part of this programme focuses on how to stop vaping. E-cigarettes are not available to current non-smokers. We are part of the national 'swap to stop' scheme which opportunistically offers residents an electronic cigarette as an alternative to smoking, without them having to be referred into the service.

The other 'quit' option for smokers is to attend a 1-day quit seminar, delivered by Allen Carr's Easyway. As with all our support to quit smoking, this is free for Central Bedfordshire residents.

Extended treatment programmes and face-to-face appointments 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 Choose You on: 0800 013 0553 or go to [Quit smoking, lose weight and feel healthier - Choose You](#)

Email: stop.smoking@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

CHOOSE YOU

As indicated above, Choose You launched in April 2025 to provide a more holistic approach to supporting residents who want help maintaining a healthy weight or quitting smoking, recognising that residents often have multiple needs and that these can often be best tackled together, rather than in isolation. Choose You incorporates elements of motivational interviewing primarily to support residents stop smoking or manage a healthy weight.

We have added the option of 'health coaching' provision for our most vulnerable residents to help them identify and achieve behaviour change goals and sustain any changes.

[Choose You - Quit smoking, lose weight and feel healthier](#)

SUPPORT FOR DRUG & ALCOHOL HARM AND MISUSE

Public Health commissions East London NHS Foundation Trust to deliver the Adult Drug & Alcohol Treatment Service, Path2Recovery (P2R), and the Central Bedfordshire service is now established at the new Dunstable Health Hub. It is available for residents of CBC who

want any support or confidential, non-judgmental advice on how to reduce the health harms that they – or someone close to them - are experiencing from drugs and/or alcohol.

For more details on the service, what is available in-person or on-line and how to access it go to:

[Support services for addiction - Path 2 Recovery \(P2R\) | Central Bedfordshire Council](#) .

Our drug and alcohol support service for young people is provided by Aquarius – details are available by following the link:

[Support for under 18s effected by Substance Misuse in Bedfordshire \(aquarius.org.uk\)](#)

NHS HEALTH CHECKS

The NHS Health Check Programme, commissioned by Public Health, 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. Depending on GP capacity and delivery, an NHS Health Check should be offered to the residents who qualify every five years.

GP practices continue to be the sole provider of the NHS Health Check programme; however, performance varies. Although patients are entitled to one Health Check every five years, Practices have a target to invite 20% of their eligible population each year, with a focus on those who have are at the greatest risk of poor health outcomes.

The latest data, for **April-October 2025-26** shows that covering Houghton Regis, in the Chiltern Vale Primary Care Network:

- 780 Health Checks have been delivered against the annual target of 1,458 (53.5% of annual target).
- 1,182 patients were invited for a Health Check (annual target 5,064) with performance at 23.3% for that indicator.

The local Chiltern Vale Practices are performing as follows:

2025-2026

	Offered YTD Activity	YTD Offered Target	Offered % of YTD Target	Delivered YTD Activity	YTD Delivered Target
E81635 - Eastgate Surgery	79	194	40.7% R	87	56
E81008 - Wheatfield Surgery	361	394	91.6% A	149	121
E81009 - West Street Surgery	343	399	86.0% R	132	114
E81034 - Toddington Medical Centre	1	264	0.4% R	69	70
E81045 - Kingsbury Court Surgery	71	327	21.7% R	87	93
E81069 - Caddington Surgery	119	163	73.0% R	31	42
E81014 - Priory Gardens Surgery	25	539	4.6% R	108	156
E81052 - Kirby Road Surgery	28	268	10.4% R	46	77
E81027 - Houghton Regis Medical Centre	155	411	37.7% R	71	126

The overall quality measure for these practices in relation to Health Checks is mixed, but generally good, ranging from 81.9% (Caddington Surgery – red) to 99.3% (Wheatfield Surgery – green). The average quality score for the practices is 95.6% (green). This compares to 97.8% for quality as a measure across all Primary Care in BMK.

The plans to offer outreach NHS Health Checks continue to be on hold, due to being unable to commission a suitable provider to deliver this service.

Business, Investment, Employment and Skills

Business Support

Ongoing UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) business support programmes until 31st March 2026. The Business & Investment Team continue to work with local partners to support businesses who can apply for the following support:

Business Support and Delivery Partner
Business Innovation (University of Bedfordshire)
Business Entrepreneurship & Start Up (Wenta)
Business Scale-up and Resilience (Cranfield University)

Export support ([Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce](#))

Business Decarbonisation ([Cranfield University](#))

Houghton Regis Applications received so far, for UKSPF support = 14 (equating to just over 5% of all applications received)

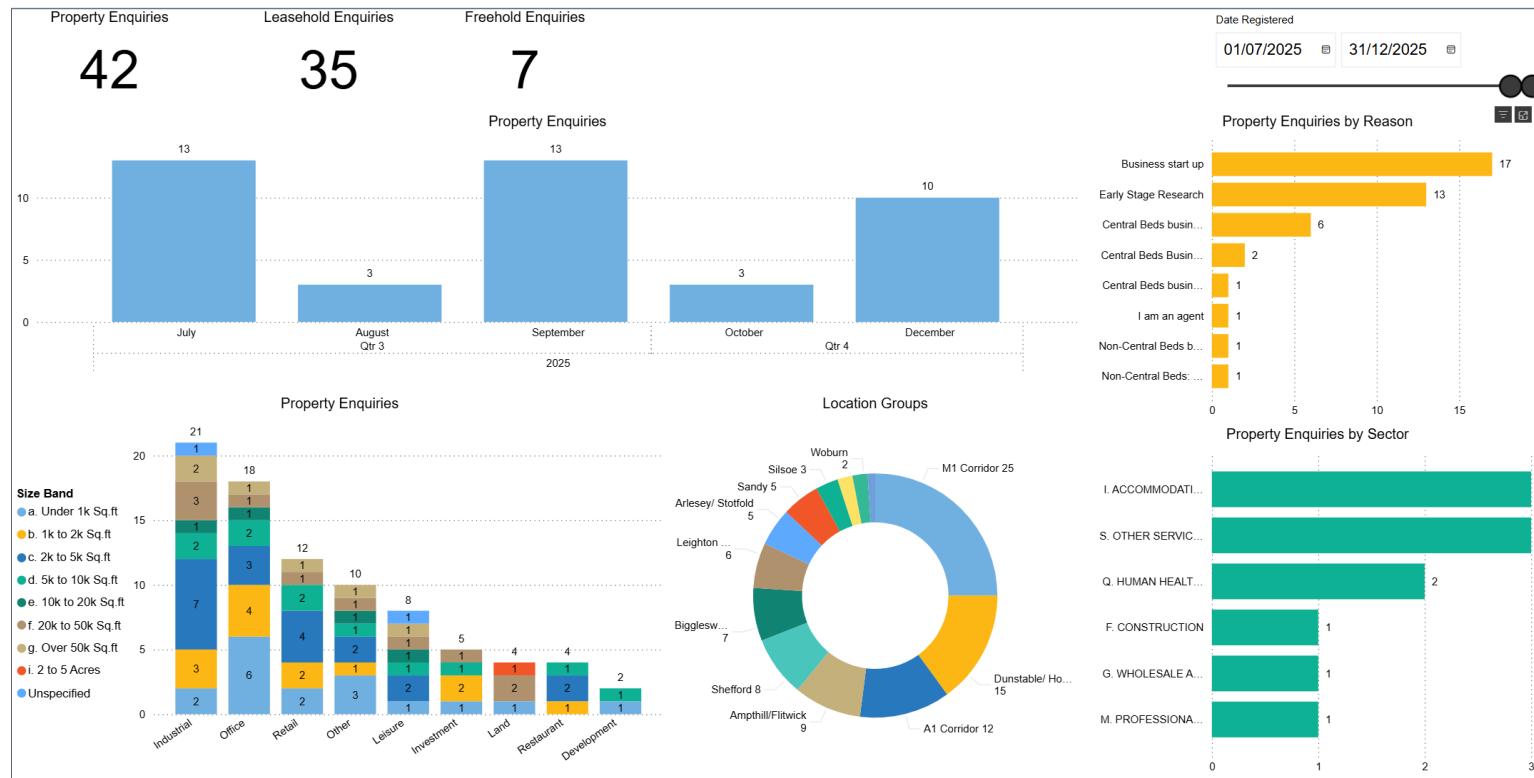
Of which the business sectors are:

- Wholesale, Retail
- Manufacturing
- Accommodation and Food services
- Education
- Administration & support services
- Human health and social care
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreational activities

For further information about the business support on offer please contact the Business and Investment Team by [email](#), or visit the **Be Central Bedfordshire [website](#)**.

Commercial Property Enquiries

The reporting period covers the last six months covering 1st July – 31st Dec with a total of 42 enquiries. Accounting for 35 leasehold and 7 freehold, this shows demand during the period was heavily leasehold-led (around 83%), suggesting a strong focus on smaller units, offices, or investment-style enquiries rather than outright purchases. Dunstable is the strongest performing town and accounts for over one-third of all enquiries (36%). This highlights Dunstable/ Houghton Regis as the dominant enquiry hotspot, likely benefiting from the strong M1 connectivity, a broader commercial stock mix, higher levels of business start-up and early-stage research interest.



Town Centre vacancy rates in Central Bedfordshire, November 2024 to November 2025

Town	Nov 2024	Feb 2025	May 2025	Aug 2025	Nov 2025
Amphill	4.1	6.0	7.0	8.0	7.8
Arlesey	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3
Biggleswade	4.5	6.4	8.3	8.3	7.7
Dunstable	15.9	15.0	15.0	14.3*	13.4
Flitwick	4.4	6.5	6.5	6.5	2.2
Houghton Regis	9.4	9.4	9.4	6.3	9.4
Leighton Buzzard	7.2	8.0	7.6	7.2	9.7
Potton	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
Sandy	7.2	7.1	4.3	4.3	2.39
Shefford	7.0	7.0	7.0	9.3	7.0
Stotfold	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Overall vacancy rate	8.4 %	9.0%	9.1%	8.9%	8.9%

In November 2024 the vacancy rate for all units within towns surveyed was 8.4%. There were a total of 984 units of which 83 were vacant. One year later, in November 2025, the vacancy rate increased to 8.9% with a total of 991 units and 88 vacancies. During this time, the vacancy rates for Arlesey, Houghton Regis, Potton, Shefford and Stotfold remain relatively the same, Dunstable, Flitwick and Sandy have decreased and the rates for the other towns have increased.

Leisure, Libraries and Countryside

HOUGHTON REGIS LEISURE CENTRE

Customer usage of the leisure centre is *continuing to grow we are averaging around 30k visits per month.*

November 2025	31000
December 2025	30000

Swimming Lessons

Dec 2025	Everyone Active Swimming Lessons	1013
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Ongoing training and recruitment for new swim teachers is still at the forefront for Everyone Active to help the swim programme grow. New Teachers have come on board to continue to

grow the swim programme. We have added 2 new teachers to start the year and have placed a current level 1 on to their level 2 qualification

Fitness

Dec 24	Fitness members	1516
Dec 25	Fitness members	3016

EA has recruited further to the fitness team which will bring an emphasis on member retention and increased customer service for members. Fitness member numbers are steadily increasing.

Community involvement:

- In December the centre hosted the rotary club father Christmas route from the centre, the staff served up mince pies and mulled wine to the attendees
- The site also hosted the children in care Christmas Party for over 65 children
- January sees the team outreaching with local primary schools for the adopt a school campaign to get students, parents and teachers into physical activity.

COMMUNITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TEAM

Active Lifestyles Referral Scheme: Our GP referral programme is continuing to run throughout Central Bedfordshire supporting residents at risk or living with long term health conditions. For more information, please visit 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 and Balance Referral Programme: Our Falls Prevention Strength & Balance referral programme is running at all leisure facilities including Houghton Regis Leisure & Community Centre. 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. For more information please email: activityforhealth@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

GaitSmart Assessments - GaitSmart is an innovative technology which provides an objective measure of gait/walking ability in a person friendly report. It provides an opportunity to improve muscle strength and balance and reduce the risk



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of falls. For more information, please email: active.lifestyles@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Health and Wellbeing Kiosks: The health and wellbeing kiosks are located 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

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. Health and Wellbeing Kiosks can be found at Houghton Regis Leisure & Community Centre.

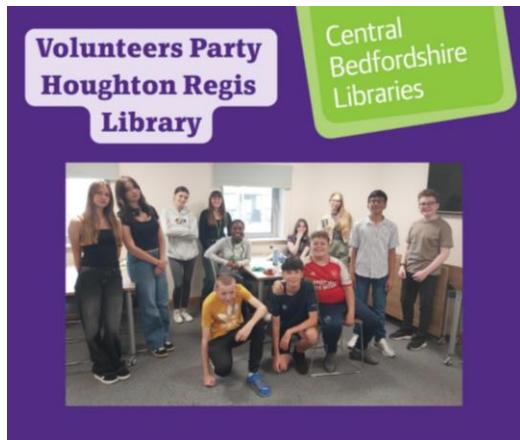


Community Physical Activity Programme: Activities include Buggy fitness, walking football and Netball, outdoor bootcamp. Most of the activities are FREE. Residents must book on via our booking page. www.bookwhen.com/activelifestyles

Children and Families – Active Families: The team offer an Active Families Referral Programme for families with children under 5 years old. It comprises a FREE 6-8 week support programme to help lead a healthier, happier, active lifestyle. To register your interest email: active.lifestyles@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

HOUGHTON REGIS LIBRARY

Over the last six months the library has been kept busy with activities and events. We hosted the 2025 summer reading challenge with over 250 local children taking part and finishing the challenge. We recruited 13 young volunteers to help out with the summer challenge, 5 volunteers returned from last year and 8 new young volunteers.



Full House Theatre

Full House Theatre are a touring theatre company with a focus on children's productions; they have been running a monthly toddler group hosted within the library with a different event theme each time. The sessions have been well received – they are often fully booked and are enjoyed by all.

Council events

The library has hosted various events for Central Bedfordshire Council.

CBC's Housing team has been hosting their regular drop-in events at other Houghton Regis venues but will be returning to the library in the new year (Jan 22nd).

Central Bedfordshire's councillors also continue to host their monthly help and advice surgeries at the library, taking place on the last Saturday of each month. These surgeries give members of the public a chance to meet face-to-face with their local councillor in order to raise any issues or concerns they have in the local area.

Adult crafts

The library has been hosting monthly adult craft sessions for residents, including sessions creating Terrariums, mosaic coasters and two book folding sessions – one for Autumn and one for Christmas. Adult craft sessions will continue in the new year, with block printing on canvas tote bags scheduled for January.

School visits

Local schools have been visiting the library over the course of the year, with the purpose of learning about how the library works and the various facilities and resources that they can access via the library. We also had classes visit the library prior to the summer holidays in order to inform children about the Summer Reading Challenge, so that they are encouraged to continue reading while they are not at school

Regular events

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Rhyme and Craft Time is still hosted on Wednesday mornings during term time, a perfect chance for children to learn words, numbers and songs all while in a safe social setting, this is a great opportunity for parents and children to make new friends.

Lego Club continues Wednesday afternoon, it's a very popular time in the library with lots of after school visitors to use the Lego blocks or Duplo to explore and expand their creativity.

Knit, Natter & More remains a really popular group, this club is perfect for when you want to work on your home based craft project within a social setting among like-minded people.

Lego Coding Club is still going strong with a core group of 8 children who are led by our volunteer, Ian. This is a great experience for children aged 8 and above with an interest in coding and or computers to see how code they write can be brought to life via Lego.

Dough club has been running monthly with a growing number of users. The dough is made fresh for the session and there are plenty of toys and tools for the children to use to shape their own fun.

Board Games Club is hosted Friday after school and has been very successful, with most weeks' numbers reaching over 20 children visiting over the hour and half that the session runs for. There are a variety of board games for children and adults alike to enjoy.

Saturday events

Each month the library hosts a fun themed day for local families to participate in. We have recently hosted Roald Dahl Day, Autumn Day, Dino Day and for December, Winter Day. Our themed days all feature a craft activity, a scavenger hunt and a game with a chance to win a prize (i.e. guess the name of the bear for a chance to win the bear). Our themed days are always well attended and enjoyed by the local community. We will be having a break for January and will be resuming in February with Love Day (February 14th).



Christmas storyteller

On November 29th we kicked off the festive period early by hosting Charlotte Read Creative as an Elf storyteller who entertained over forty children over two sessions. The children listened to the story, participated in some games and finished off with a craft activity, all assisted by Charlotte. Every child who attended also left with a small gift from the library – a copy of the book they had just read to them.

Sustainability

Building a clearer picture of local food projects

A new survey on a platform called Common Place is found here [Have Your Say Today - Local Food - Commonplace](#)

Central Bedfordshire Council is gathering information about the food projects and activities taking place locally. Whether it's surplus food redistribution, community cafés, growing projects, cooking sessions, farmer activities, or local businesses promoting sustainable food, we want to shape our understanding of what's working well and how we might support a fairer, healthier and more sustainable local food system.

We would appreciate your help in sharing the Food Matters Survey with your networks. The survey is short and aimed at organisations, volunteers, and professionals who run or know about food-related activity in Central Bedfordshire. Your support will help ensure local projects and community efforts are recognised and reflected in future planning.

The survey only takes a few minutes complete. It is open now and will close on 28 February 2026. The survey can be found here [Have Your Say Today - Local Food - Commonplace](#)

The second Food Summit takes place at the Rufus Centre on February 24th This summit is for anyone involved in our local food system – farmers, businesses, charities, community groups, and public sector professionals.

Get involved to meet others, share ideas, and influence the future of food fairness. Please use this link to obtain your free tickets <https://buytickets.at/foodmatters1/1992893> - and sign up prior to Tuesday, 17th February

Eco-Schools support

We are pleased that Hadrian Academy, Houghton Regis Primary and Thornhill Primary School have registered to be part of the Eco-Schools programme for this year. We continue to offer support to schools through teacher forums, advice and outreach workshops to ensure that schools achieve their Green Flag Award. Find out more through the [Eco-Schools website](#).

Next Eco-Forum:

Tuesday 27th January, 4-5pm - Online via Microsoft Teams

School Menu Planning with ProVeg and Approaches to Redistributing School Uniforms with Eco-Schools

Invite to follow, please email to register your interest.

If your local school is interested in becoming an Eco-School, and would like to find out more about how the Sustainability Team can support you, please email

begreen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

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Free Carbon Literacy training

Town Councils, Parish Councils and Community groups can receive free Carbon Literacy training. To be able to deliver requests for training, we require a venue and a minimum of 8 participants per session. The course, developed by the Carbon Literacy Project, will raise your awareness and equip you with the insights you need to meet the challenge we face in combatting and adapting to climate change. This Carbon Literacy training will provide support and information which will help in making a meaningful contribution.

By the end of the training, you will have:

- Gained an understanding of the **basic science of climate change** and how climate change will affect us both **globally and locally**
- Gained an understanding of how you, as a community member and leader, can mobilise change
- Explored the **low carbon objectives** in local communities
- Created an **action plan** to help reduce the **carbon footprint** of your local community
- Explored strategies for **influencing others** to take action on climate change

The course is either delivered through a full day or two half days (of which both parts must be attended). We will further be running online breakfast sessions between 08:00 - 09:30 between Monday 22nd and Friday 26th June 2026 for Town & Parish Councils across Central Bedfordshire. Please contact the Sustainability Team to register your interest in a course: begreen@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Highways

January 2026

Repairs in Houghton – September, October and November

The below table shows the number of reactive maintenance repairs carried out in Houghton Regis 1st September 2025 –1st January 2026

Defect Repaired	Total Number
Potholes	56
Street Light Repair	134
Bollards & Signs	8

Capital Programme of Works

Our Highways Team is dedicated to maintaining and improving the road network in Central Bedfordshire. We manage over 1,400 kilometres of roads, 220 bridges, and other essential infrastructure to keep the region's roads safe, efficient, and functional for all users.

Our Capital Programme focuses on large-scale, data-driven projects, from major repairs to new road safety initiatives. We also continue to carry out reactive repairs, emergency work, and smaller improvements to ensure roads remain in good condition throughout the year.

This year we've transitioned to a more strategic Capital Programme that's guided by data. Using an asset management approach, we collect and analyse information on the condition of our roads and infrastructure. This helps us make informed decisions on where to focus our efforts, ensuring we prioritise the most important repairs and improvements. By doing this, we can make the best use of our resources, rather than relying on anecdotal feedback. This way, we're able to schedule and carry out the work that will have the biggest impact.

You can search for schemes in your area by visiting -

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/353/highways_capital_programme

Winter Weather

We salt just under half of the roads in Central Bedfordshire. Roads carrying the highest volumes of traffic, with the greatest risk of accidents or providing key access are given priority. These include all A&B roads and most smaller roads, especially if they are busy commuter routes, routes to hospitals, schools, or key to the emergency services.

You can search for your road / street name to see if it is on our gritting run. If it isn't listed, we don't salt that road.

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To find our list of gritted roads please visit [Salting and gritting - winter road gritting and salt bins | Central Bedfordshire Council](#).

Fix My Street

FMS reports	Road markings and lining	Signs	Grand Total
closed	4	6	10
confirmed	1		1
internal referral	3	9	12
unable to fix	7	4	11
duplicate		1	1
Grand Total	15	20	35

We are continuing to make improvements to our Fix My Street reporting system, with the most recent upgrades including:

- A new mapping layer to include new assets and newly adopted roads
- ROW integration – the Rights of Way layer is now on Fix My Street
- The automated responses have been reviewed and amended to provide more clarity and information.

If you see an issue on the network please make a report by visiting -
<https://fixmystreet.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/>

Highways Consultations

- TRO-029 All Saints View, Houghton Regis and Priory View, Dunstable – Cashless Parking
- TRO-042 Redhouse Court, Houghton Regis – Waiting Restrictions
- TRO-057 Hillborough Crescent, Houghton Regis – Disabled Bay
- TRO-061 Sundon Road, Houghton Regis – Toucan Crossing

Environmental Services

Waste Management
Waste Collections
Waste collections have been operating as normal with minimal service impacts. There was a one-week suspension of recycling collections in early December due to a contractual matter. Christmas and New Year collection changes are now complete, and Real Christmas Tree collections commenced on 5 th January and will end on Friday 16 th January.
Litter Bins
Tennyson Avenue – Dog bin repair Titus Grove – Litter bin repair

Environmental Management
Fly Tips and Street Cleansing
Large Fly Tip Clearances:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grendall Lane – 2 black sacks of garden waste, household waste and litter• Blackthorn Road - Underlay, cabinet, garden waste• Brentwood Close - Ton bag full of builder's waste• Arenson Way – Wood, black bags, tree branches and small amount of litter• St Micheals Avenue - Large broken branch• Parkside Drive - Building materials, Furniture, Green / Garden waste, Household waste / black bin bags, Mattress or bed base, White goods - fridge, freezer, washing machine
Grounds Maintenance
Grounds season has now come to an end and is due to restart April 2026.
Abandoned Vehicles
4 abandoned vehicles picked up and destroyed from 1 st July to 31 st December 2025 in Houghton Regis.

Dog Patrols (July to December)	
Location	Notes
1. Bedford Road 2. Bromley Gardens 3. Drury Lane 4. Hillborough Crescent 5. Leafields 6. Redhouse Court Recreation Ground	All roads are patrolled once a week, with the exception of Hillborough Crescent, Bedford Road and Redhouse Court which are patrolled twice per week. No fixed penalty notices were issued during this time.

Youth Support Services

Update on NEETs within the wider Central Bedfordshire area

The figures presented in the table are those reported to NCCIS/DfE as destination types as at the end of November 2025.

Headline Figures for the whole Central Bedfordshire area					
Cohort	Total number of young people	Positive (EET) destinations		NEET destinations	
16year olds / Year 12	3587	3488	(97.2%)	73	(2.0%)
17year olds / Year 13	3761	3567	(94.8%)	136	(3.6%)
Combined cohort	7348	7055	(96.0%)	209	(2.8%)

Overview for the Houghton Regis area compared to other local areas

	Dunstable		Houghton Regis		Leighton Buzzard	
Total YPs in area	974		603		1080	
EET	940	(96.5%)	571	(94.7%)	1044	(96.7%)
NEET	27	(2.8%)	26	(4.3%)	34	(3.1%)
Unknown/Refused	7	(0.7%)	6	(1%)	2	(0.2%)

Characteristics of the NEET Group in the Houghton Regis area

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
Houghton Regis East	336	18	5.4%
Houghton Regis West	267	8	3%
Total	603	26	4.3%

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	7	Less than 3 months	4	Male	12
17 years old	14	3 - 6 months	17	Female	14
18 years old	0	6+ months	5	Not Recorded	0

Summary status of the Houghton Regis NEET cohort

Status			
Seeking Employment or Training	19	(73.1%)	
Unable to work due to 'Personal Circumstances'	7	(26.9%)	

The Youth Support Service will offer support to 16-18 years olds who are NEET (*up to 25 if they have an EHCP or care leaver*). Referrals can be made by emailing youth.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Schools

Active travel

Houstone School, Tithe Farm Primary, Thornhill Primary and Lime Tree Academy took part in our Santa Challenge; walking, scooting and cycling a virtual race to Santa over two-weeks.

We continue to work with schools on their [Travel Plans](#), alongside the sustainable travel platform [Modeshift STARS](#). Currently Houstone School, The Chiltern School, Tithe Farm Primary and St Vincent's Primary have up to date Travel Plans.

Thornhill Primary held Level 2 Bikeability sessions for 28 pupils and Level 1 sessions for 17 pupils. [Bikeability](#) L2 training is available to all schools, and we are able to offer limited Dr Bike sessions to ensure pupils' bikes are in a safe condition to use. We also offer bike security marking to schools who have an active Travel Plan.

Please contact TravelChoices@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk for more information.

Update on pupil place planning

As set out in the Agrenda for the Houghton Regis Partnership Committee the review of school places is ongoing. Central Bedfordshire, similar to the national picture, is forecasting a decrease in the demand for mainstream pupil places and an increase in specialist places. The management of pupil places, ensuring schools are sustainable and that the local authority meets its statutory duty in providing everyone with a school place is challenging and needs to be constantly reviewed. The new primary school at Bidwell West (previously proposed for September 2027) will be monitored until there is an evidence base for the new places. Given the fluctuations in housing numbers the forecast is subject to change and will be monitored.

At the November meeting of the Childrens Services OSC, recommendations were made to set up a Working group regarding specific school planning areas within Dunstable and Houghton Regis area. This group has now met and will be provided the actual pupil numbers following National Offer Day.

Engagement and Consultation

T/PC Engagement

Cllr Russ Goodchild has been appointed as the Deputy Executive Member for Town and Parish Councils and Town Centres and is supporting the Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Highways to continue the schedule for in person engagement and liaison with Town and parish Councils. The next in person event takes place **6pm Tuesday January 20th** and will focus on the draft Budget proposals

The team continue to send a monthly bulletin to all T/PC Chairs and clerks and the expectation is that this is shared with all T/PC Cllrs.

VCS Network

The Leader and Deputy Leader in partnership with Community and Voluntary Services (CVS) and Beds RCC, facilitate the VCS Network. At the in person session in November VCS representatives were able to engage directly with Senior CBC officers and the feedback from both CBC colleagues and VCS organisations has been very positive. The next meeting will be held online on Tuesday, 3rd March 2026, from 12:30 pm to 2 pm and will focus on VCS achievements over the last year.

The VCS Network and provides a platform for the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector to:

- Strengthen partnerships and opportunities for collaboration
- Share and gather insight and experiences
- Consider key thematics and priorities
- Advocate for their importance and the critical services they provide to the local population and
- Inspire stronger communities & volunteering

Ward Councillor Grant scheme

Please be advised of the following deadlines for completing applications in relation to the Ward Councillor Grant Scheme for 2025/26:-

Monday 16 February by 5pm

Applications to be submitted to community.grants@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Monday 02 March by 5pm

Completed Councillor forms to be returned to community.grants@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

A summary of the activity under the scheme during 2024/25 has been produced that can be found [here](#)

Please contact community.grants@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Armed Forces Covenant

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Over 100 colleagues across the Council have signed up for online training to help strengthen our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC). This training ensures we deliver on our legal duty to pay due regard to the needs of service personnel, veterans, and their families particularly in the areas of education, health and housing.

From 2022, legislation made the AFC a statutory obligation for local authorities. Soon, this duty will extend into social care, childcare, employment, welfare, criminal justice, transport, and more, so by developing our knowledge now, we can improve our offering to those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families.

Our AFC Action Plan and will strengthen our potential to secure the Defence Employer Recognition scheme - Silver Award, which is awarded to councils actively demonstrating support for their armed forces communities.

Household Support Fund (HSF)

Central Bedfordshire Council was allocated HSF funding to support vulnerable households experiencing challenges with the rise in the cost of living. Recently we have partnered with Houghton Regis Town Council helping us to channel support through local partners such as Houghton Regis Helpers, Jewels, Thomas Whitehead Academy and Tithe Farm School. Over the next few months it is anticipated 1500 households will receive support for essential items and supermarket vouchers. More information about the HSF is on our website [Household Support Fund | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

Consultations

The Community Engagement team have supported several Consultations with community engagement activity helping people to understand proposals and engage in the consultation e.g Ivel Valley school proposals and proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme where we utilised partnerships and relationships to build awareness to and participation in the consultations.

Details of current and upcoming consultation activity undertaken by the Council are provided by the Consultation 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)
Contacting Housing Services survey	Survey to tenants, to understand how they currently contact the council, and their preferences around contact.	July 2025	Tbc	Charlotte Gurney 0300 300 5345
National Highways and Transport (NHT) surveys	The NHT surveys cover a number of topics including views about highways maintenance including roads and pavements, potholes, street lighting,	Sept 2025	Feb 2026	Jack Bowers 0300 300 4957

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	drain clearance and gritting as well as looking at traffic congestion, road safety and accessibility.			
Housing Revenue Account	Consultation on the draft HRA for 2026/27.	17 Dec 2025	1 Feb 2026	Charlotte Gurney 0300 300 5345
Budget 2026	Consultation on the draft budget for 2026.	7 Jan 2026	3 Feb 2026	Denis Galvin 0300 300 6083
Food Matters survey	Survey to understand the work happening across Central Bedfordshire that is improving access to good food, supporting local businesses, reducing waste and contributing to a healthier local food system.	17 Dec 2025	28 Feb 2026	Cara Milligan 01234 276887 and Sara Earl 0300 300 5666

Upcoming consultations and surveys

Subject	Description	Start	End	Lead officer(s)
Public Space Protection Order – Nuisance Vehicles	Consultation on the proposed order to restrict harmful vehicle-related behaviours across Central Bedfordshire (subject to Executive approval to consult)	Feb 2026 (tbc)	April 2026 (tbc)	Lisa Scott 0300 300 5733

Upcoming Meetings

January

Committee Meeting	Date	Time
Traffic Management	27 January 2026	06:30 PM
Health and Wellbeing Board	28 January 2026	02:00 PM
Children's Services OSC	29 January 2026	09:30 AM
Full Council	29 January 2026	06:30 PM

February

Committee Meeting	Date	Time
Corporate Resources OSC	10 February 2026	09:30 AM
Development Management Committee	11 February 2026	09:30 AM
Sustainable Communities OSC	12 February 2026	09:30 AM
Executive	17 February 2026	09:30 AM
Young Person Led Corporate Parenting Board	17 February 2026	02:00 PM
Social Care, Health and Housing OSC	23 February 2026	09:30 AM
Children's Services OSC	24 February 2026	09:30 AM

Audit	25 February 2026	10:00 AM
Full Council	26 February 2026	02:00 PM

Appendix 1



PUBLIC NOTICE

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

NOTICE OF VARIATION OF METHOD OF PAYMENT FOR PARKING

Notice is hereby given that Central Bedfordshire Council, intends to make the below named Order in exercise of the powers under Sections 35, 46 and Schedule 9 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and of all other enabling powers to revise the payment method at several On and Off Street Parking locations.

The effect of the proposed Order will be to introduce Cashless Payments Only at the following locations:

Off Street

- All Saints View, Off Sapphire Place, Houghton Regis
- Priory View, Church Street, Dunstable

Comments should be sent by e-mail to highways.consultation@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk by 30 July 2025. Any objections must state the grounds on which they are made **and must quote unique reference number TRO-029**. If you want to send in your comments in writing please send them to the address shown below FAO Emily Hirst.

Order Title: If made will be “Central Bedfordshire Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Variation No.**) Order 202**”

If made, Cashless Payments expected to be effective from 18th August 2025

Central Bedfordshire Council

Gary Powell

Priory House

Assistant Director

Chicksands

Highways

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Shefford SG1917 5TQ

09 July 2025

Appendix 2



Central
Bedfordshire

PUBLIC NOTICE

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PROPOSES TO INTRODUCE

NO WAITING AT ANY TIME ON REDHOUSE COURT AND CLARKES WAY, HOUGHTON REGIS

Reason for proposal: For avoiding danger to persons or other traffic and/or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising. For facilitating the passage of traffic on the road or any other road of any class of traffic (including pedestrians). More specifically, the waiting restrictions are intended to address indiscriminate parking and to ensure that junctions are not obstructed by parked vehicles.

Effect of the Order:

To introduce No Waiting at any time on the following length of road in Houghton Regis:-

1. Clarkes Way, north-west side, from the junction with Redhouse Court (where the existing waiting restrictions end) and extending in a south-westerly direction for approximately 10 metres.
2. Clarkes Way, south side, from the junction with Redhouse Court and extending in a generally westerly direction following the curvature of the kerb round for approximately 10 metres.
3. Redhouse Court, east side, from a point in line with the centre of the junction with Clarkes Way (where the existing waiting restrictions end), extending in a south easterly direction for approximately 14 metres.

Details may also be viewed online at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutorynotices.

Comments should be sent by e-mail to highways.consultation@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk by 22nd October 2025. Any objections must state the grounds on which they are made **and must quote unique reference number TRO-042**. If you want to send in your comments in writing please send them to the address shown below FAO Emily Hirst.

Please note that any comments received will be redacted of personal information and uploaded onto the Central Bedfordshire Council website as part of a report on the scheme a few days before the proposal is discussed at the relevant Traffic Management Meeting, where it will

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remain in the public domain. If you do not wish for your comments to be part of the report please state this explicitly within your response.

Order Title: If made will be “Central Bedfordshire Council (Bedfordshire County Council (District of South Bedfordshire) (Civil Enforcement Area and Special Enforcement Area) (Waiting Restrictions and Street Parking Places) (Consolidation) Order 2008) (Variation No.*) Order 202*”

Central Bedfordshire Council

Gary Powell

Priory House

Service Director

Chicksands

Highways

Shefford SG17 5TQ

01 October 2025

Appendix 3

Central
Bedfordshire

PUBLIC NOTICE

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PROPOSES TO INTRODUCE A DISABLED PARKING BAY ON HILLBOROUGH CRESCENT, HOUGHTON REGIS

Reason for proposal: The disabled parking space would provide a dedicated place for blue badge holders to park.

Effect of the Order:

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

1. Hillborough Crescent, south side, from a point in line with the shared property boundary between No.78 and No.80 and extending in a north-westerly direction, covering an area approximately 3.6 metres in width and 5 metres in length.

Details may also be viewed online at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutorynotices. Comments should be sent by e-mail to highways.consultation@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk by 31 December 2025. Any objections must state the grounds on which they are made. **All comments must quote unique reference number TRO-057.** If you want to send in your comments in writing please send them to the address shown below FAO Emily Hirst.

Please note that any comments received will be redacted of personal information and uploaded onto the Central Bedfordshire Council website as part of a report on the scheme a few days before the proposal is discussed at the relevant Traffic Management Meeting, where it will remain in the public domain. If you do not wish for your comments to be part of the report please state this explicitly within your response.

Order Title: If made will be "Central Bedfordshire Council (Bedfordshire County Council (District of South Bedfordshire) (Civil Enforcement Area and Special Enforcement Area) (Waiting Restrictions and Street Parking Places) (Consolidation) Order 2008) (Variation No.*) Order 202*"

Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House
Chicksands
Shefford SG17 5TQ

Gary Powell
Service Director
Highways

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Central
Bedfordshire
106/109

Appendix 4



PUBLIC NOTICE

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PROPOSES TO INSTALL A TOUCAN CROSSING ON SUNDON ROAD, HOUGHTON REGIS

Notice is hereby given that Central Bedfordshire Council, in exercise of its powers under Section 23 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and all other enabling powers, proposes to establish a Signalised Toucan Crossing on Sundon Road, Houghton Regis. This proposal is part of a scheme specified in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to provide improved facilities for the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists.

A Toucan Crossing is proposed to be sited at the following location in Houghton Regis:

1. Sundon Road, centered at a point approximately 21 metres south west of the centre of the junction with Silver Birch Avenue.

Details may also be viewed at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutarynotices.

Comments should be sent by e-mail to highways.consultation@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk by 20 Jan 2026. Any objections must state the grounds on which they are made. **All comments must quote unique reference number TRO-061.** If you want to send in your comments in writing please send them to the address shown below FAO Emily Hirst.

Please note that any comments received will be redacted of personal information and uploaded onto the Central Bedfordshire Council website as part of a report on the scheme a few days before the proposal is discussed at the relevant Traffic Management Meeting, where it will remain in the public domain. If you do not wish for your comments to be part of the report please state this explicitly within your response.

Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House
Chicksands

Gary Powell
Service Director
Highways

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Shefford SG17 5TQ

23 December 2025

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Central
Bedfordshire
108 / 109

Central Bedfordshire in contact

Find us online: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Email:

partnerships.communityengagementteam@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ