



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Councillor Y Farrell**

Tel: 01582 708540

Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

e-mail: info@houghtonregis.org.uk

5th December 2022

To: Members of the Planning Committee

Cllrs: M Kennedy (Chair), J Carroll, E Cooper, S Goodchild, D Jones, S Thorne and C Slough.

(Copies to other Councillors for information)

Notice of Meeting

You are hereby summoned to a Meeting of the **Planning Committee** to be held at the Council Offices, Peel Street on **Monday 12th December 2022** at **7.00pm**.

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

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

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

Debbie Marsh
Corporate Services Manager

THIS MEETING MAY BE RECORDED¹

Agenda

- 1. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**
- 2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

In accordance with approved Standing Orders 1(e)-1(l) Members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

¹ This meeting may be filmed by the Council for subsequent broadcast online and can be viewed at <http://www.houghtonregis.org.uk/minutes>

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.

The total period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall not exceed 15 minutes and an individual member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.

3. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

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

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

4. MINUTES

Pages 6 - 10

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 21st November 2022.

Recommendation: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2022 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

5. PLANNING MATTERS

(a) To consider the following applications:

CB/22/04454/FULL	Two Storey Side Extension 18 Thornhill Close, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5SG For: Mr J Kane
CB/22/04405/VOC	Variation of condition number 10 of planning permission CB/18/04471/FULL (48 new residential units.). Variation sought to split into two phases due to change on subcontractor. Land at Oakwell Park, Thorn Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 6JH For: Miss J Buoey
CB/22/03101/RM	Reserved Matters: following Outline Application CB/21/00280/OUT (Erection of 4 chalet style bungalows) Reserved matters sought for appearance, landscaping, layout and scale. Land North of Highfield House, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 For: Mr D Carrol
CB/22/04594/FULL	Erection of a detached dwelling 52 Drury Lane, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5ED For: Mr A Nasar
CB/22/04567/RM	Reserved Matters: Erection of 77 dwellings, providing full details of reserved matters including appearance, landscaping, scale and layout. Pursuant to Outline Application CB/19/04220/OUT: Residential Development for up to 100 Dwellings with all matters reserved, except access.

Land at Bury Spinney, Thorn Road, Houghton Regis, LU5 6JQ
For: Mr M Mann

For noting

- CB/22/04384/DOC Discharge of Conditions 8, 9, 12, 13 and 25 against planning permission CB/21/05575/REG3 (Development of a new leisure centre, incorporating landscaping and parking provisions. Demolition of the existing building and the construction of a new facility to include an eight-lane 25 metre community swimming pool, dedicated learner pool, confidence pool, fitness suite, exercise studio and two squash courts. Building to include a café, community space, creche, children's outdoor play zone and an outdoor fitness trail and public area.)
Houghton Regis Academy, Parkside Drive, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5PX
- CB/22/04403/LDCP Lawful Development Certificate Proposed: Single storey rear extension.
200 Tithe Farm Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5JF
- CB/22/04544/DOC Discharge of Condition 7 against planning permission CB/20/01537/FULL (Erection of a mixed use Local Centre comprising 52 no. apartments, 1 no. day nursery (Use Class D1), 1 no. retail unit (Use Class A1) 4 no. retail units (Use Classes A1/A3/A5) and associated infrastructure works including a haul road, landscaping and public realm).
Land west of Bidwell, Houghton Regis LU5 6JQ
- CB/22/04591/DOC Discharge of Condition 2 against planning permission CB/22/00545/FULL Development of a single industrial warehouse unit for E(g)(iii), B2 and B8 use with ancillary offices, car parking, service areas and soft landscaping.
Unit 15, Humphrys Road, Dunstable, LU5 4TP

(b) Decision Notices

Permissions/Approvals/Consents:

- CB/22/01953/FULL The creation of a vehicular access ramp to the top deck of the existing multi-storey car park (north eastern elevation) and the Change of use of the top deck from Use Class E to B8 (storage and distribution).
Decked Car Park to the North of Porz Avenue Houghton Hall Park Houghton Regis Dunstable LU5 5FT
- CB/22/03782/FULL Retrospective planning permission for change of use from amenity land to a residential, gravel parking area to the rear
2 Farriers Way, Farriers Way, Houghton Regis, Dunstable LU5 5FG

Refusals:

None at time of going to print.

Withdrawals:

None at time of going to print.

6. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

Page 11

Members will find attached the income and expenditure report, for the Planning Committee to date.

7. PLANNING COMMITTEE DRAFT BUDGET 2023/24

Pages 12 - 13

Members will find attached the officer draft budget for 2023/24 (*Appendix A – page 12*) along with explanatory notes for the Planning Committee (*Appendix B – page 13*).

The draft budget reflects on ongoing budgetary commitments along with anticipated budgetary commitments arising from the Council Vision 2020/24.

8. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Pages 14 - 91

Members are requested to consider the attached final draft version of Houghton Regis Town Councils Neighbourhood Plan.

Whilst the plan has been reviewed by the Steering Group members, members of this committee are advised that there could still be minor changes to the text before this version is published for public consultation.

Therefore, members are being requested to recommend to Town Council that minor changes to the text i.e. names of places, street names and grammatical errors, be allowed up until the plan is presented for public consultation.

It is proposed, should Council be minded to agree, that the draft plan will be subject to a 6 week public consultation early in January 2023.

Recommendations:

- 1) To recommend to Town Council the adoption of the final version of Houghton Regis Town Councils Draft Neighbourhood Plan.**
- 2) To request that Town Council allow minor changes to the text to be made up until the plan is presented for public consultation.**
- 3) To approve the costs for the neighbourhood planning consultant fees, from budget heading 401-4062, be offset by a transfer in from EMR330, to enable the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to be able to take the plan to referendum stage.**

9. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITES/LOCAL PLAN– UPDATE/PROGRESS

Woodside Link – No substantive update to report.

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Planning Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on

21st November 2022 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: D Jones
J Carroll
E Cooper
S Goodchild
S Thorne
C Slough

Officers: Debbie Marsh Corporate Services Manager
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: M S Kennedy

Also present: Councillor: T McMahon Virtual Attendance

12249 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Cllr Kennedy.

12250 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

12251 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

12252 MINUTES

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 31st October 2022.

**Resolved To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 31st October 2022
and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

12253 PLANNING MATTERS

(a) The following planning applications were considered:

CB/22/04024/LB Listed Building: Conversion of a listed barn into a detached dwelling including removal of dilapidated single-storey side addition.
Red Cow Farm Cottage, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis,
LU5 6JP
For: J&D 2012 Ltd

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council objected to this application for the following reason:

- 1) Loss of trees that would otherwise compliment the setting of a Listed Building. The Town Council wishes to lend its support to the Ecology Officers findings and report.**

CB/22/03938/FULL Demolition of existing barn and garage, provision of a garage to the existing Listed building, conversion of Listed barn into a dwelling and construction of eight new dwellings with associated garages and new access road.
Red Cow Farm Cottage, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 6JP
For: J&D 2012 Ltd

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council objected to this application for the following reasons:

- 1) Overdevelopment.**
- 2) The proposed layout does not compliment the setting of Red Cow Farm Cottage**
- 3) Proposed loss of the hedgerow to allow access to Plot 1. The ongoing infill developments along Bedford Road have already had an impact to the character of Bidwell, any further loss cannot be supported.**
- 4) Concern of highway safety for vehicles accessing and exiting plot 1.**
- 5) Concern of pedestrian safety when crossing the access road to plot 1 due to reduced visibility.**
- 6) Concerns over the loss of mature trees and the associated loss of their ecological benefit on the site. The Town Council wishes to lend its support to the Ecology Officers findings and report.**
- 7) Loss of trees that would otherwise compliment the setting of Listed Buildings.**

CB/22/03724/RM Reserved Matters: following Outline Application CB/15/00297/OUT (Outline 'hybrid' planning application with details of main access routes, primary road network and associated drainage in detail only and layout in outline with details of landscaping, appearance and scale reserved for later determination. Development to comprise: Up to 1,850 residential (C3) dwellings (including affordable housing), 2FE Primary School (D1), employment land (Use Classes B1 [a-c], B2 & B8), local centre comprising retail (A1, A2, A3, A4 & A5) and community/leisure uses (D1 & D2), layout of public open spaces including sports pitches and changing rooms, natural wildlife areas and all associated works and operations including engineering operations and earthworks). Reserved Matters for approval of public art works.
Land West of Bidwell, Houghton Regis North Site 2, Houghton Regis
For: Isaac Mercer Ltd

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council had no objections to this application.

CB/22/04218/LB Listed Building: Erection of illuminated and non-illuminated signs to the exterior of the building.
The Crown, East End, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5LB
For: Stonegate Group

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council had no objections to this application.

CB/TRE/22/00606 Works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders 04/1980 and 01/2014: Fell Ash Tree (T5) and Horse Chestnut monolith (T12). Works to Lime tree (T6), Beech tree (T7), Lime tree (T8), Sycamore (T9) and Horse Chestnut (T10). These trees fall in Part of G1, G2 and G3 and listed as T4 of TPO 4/1980. Works to Beech (T1) and Sycamore (T4), these trees are listed as T5 and T7 in TPO 01/2014.
Land North of Tennyson Avenue Between 97 And 119, Tennyson Avenue, Houghton Regis

Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council objected to this application as it was felt the documents were incomplete due to the lack of a replanting scheme and no reasons given, for these works, other than duty of care.

Noted:

CB/22/04152/DOC Discharge of Condition 17 against planning permission CB/20/01537/FULL: Erection of a mixed use Local Centre - Drainage Maintenance Report.
Land west of Bidwell, Houghton Regis LU5 6JQQ

CB/22/04289/LDCP Lawful Development Certificate Proposed: Proposed rear loft conversion and dormer extension
Woodstock, Queen Street, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5BT

CB/22/04254/DOC Discharge of Conditions 7,8,10 and 16 against planning permission CB/22/0545/FULL Development of a single industrial warehouse unit for E(g)(iii), B2 and B8 use with ancillary offices, car parking, service areas and soft landscaping - Cond 7 Electric Vehicle Charge Management Plan, Cond 8 Landscape Maintenance Scheme, Cond 10 Arboricultural Method Statement and Cond 16 Surface Water Drainage Works
Unit 15 Humphrys Road, Dunstable, LU5 4TP

Permissions / Approvals / Consents

CB/22/01876/FULL Replacement front garden wall, 2.1m in height and part trellis on wall.
The Gables, East End, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5LA

Members expressed their disappointment at CB/22/01876/FULL having been granted as this was not in keeping with the aesthetics of the area. Members also requested that this item be placed on the agenda for the meeting to be held on the 30th January 2023 in order that the Town Council could be satisfied that a landscaping scheme to include all hard and soft landscaping and a scheme for landscape maintenance for a period of five years following the implementation of the landscaping scheme had been received by the Planning Authority, as per Condition 2 of the Decision Notice.

Refusals:

None received.

Withdrawals:

None received.

12254 CONSULTATION – DRAFT PARKING STANDARDS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Members were informed that an eight-week consultation on the Parking Standards for New Developments Supplementary Planning Document began on Tuesday 8th November 2022, with the deadline for comments being 10am on Thursday 5th January 2023.

Members were in support of this strategy.

Members requested that contact be made with the Strategic Transport Team at Central Bedfordshire Council to ascertain whether current outline planning applications, which have already been granted permission, would need to comply with this strategy when submitting their Reserved Matters applications.

Resolved: To support Central Bedfordshire Councils draft Parking Standards for New Developments Supplementary Planning Document consultation

12255 PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES ON PARKSIDE DRIVE, HOUGHTON REGIS A00357 & A00357C

Members were advised that Central Bedfordshire Council proposed to construct four sets of road humps on Parkside Drive and to install a raised zebra crossing on Parkside Drive and a raised crossing to the access road to Kingsland Skills and Enterprise Centre. These proposals were part of a wider scheme to reduce traffic speeds and create a safer environment for all road users.

Members requested it be noted that they were in favour of the proposed measures.

Resolved: To support the various proposed traffic calming measures on Parkside Drive

12256 NOTICE OF APPEAL DECISION – 4 TOWNSEND TERRACE

For information Members received a notice of an appeal decision at 4 Townsend Terrace, Houghton Regis.

Members were advised that the applicant had addressed issues raised by the Planning Officer, however, the application was now refused on the grounds of the Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation - Zone of Influence.

12257 NOTICE OF APPEAL DECISION – LAND OFF BOSCOMBE ROAD-PORZ AVENUE

For information members received a notice of an appeal decision at Land off Boscombe Road – Porz Avenue, Houghton Regis.

Members received this report for information and noted the content.

**12258 STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITES/LOCAL PLAN–
UPDATE/PROGRESS**

Woodside Link – No substantive update to report.

A5 M1 Link – No substantive update to report.

All Saints View – No substantive update to report.

Linnere – No substantive update to report.

Bidwell West – No substantive update to report.

Kingsland – No substantive update to report.

Windsor Drive – No substantive update to report.

Section 106 Monies – No substantive update to report.

Resolved: To note the information

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.03pm

Dated this 12th day of December 2022.

Chairman

05/12/2022

Houghton Regis Town Council

Page 1

12:12

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 05/12/2022

Month No: 8

Cost Centre Report

	Actual Current	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
<u>401 Growth Area</u>								
4059 OTHER PROFESSIONAL FEES	0	0	2,000	2,000		2,000	0.0%	
4062 Neighbourhood Plan	0	2,143	0	(2,143)		(2,143)	0.0%	
Growth Area :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>0</u>	<u>2,143</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>(143)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(143)</u>	<u>107.1%</u>	<u>0</u>
Net Expenditure	<u>0</u>	<u>(2,143)</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>143</u>				
Grand Totals:- Income	0	0	0	0			0.0%	
Expenditure	0	2,143	2,000	(143)	0	(143)	107.1%	
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>0</u>	<u>(2,143)</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>143</u>				
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>0</u>	<u>(2,142)</u>						

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 8)

Note: Budget

		<u>2021/22</u>		<u>2022/23</u>			<u>2023/24</u>			
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual	Projects	Committ	Agreed	EMR	Carried
<u>Planning and Licensing</u>										
401 Growth Area										
1078	Grants & Donations Received	0	4,665	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Income	<u>0</u>	<u>4,665</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
4059	OTHER PROFESSIONAL FEES	2,000	0	2,000	0	0	0	2,000	0	0
4062	Neighbourhood Plan	0	5,593	0	2,143	0	0	0	0	0
5008	Tr from EMR Comm Development	0	-928	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	<u>2,000</u>	<u>4,665</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>2,143</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>(2,142)</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>(2,000)</u>		
<hr/>										
	Planning and Licensing - Income	0	4,665	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Expenditure	2,000	4,665	2,000	2,143	0	0	2,000	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>(2,143)</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>(2,000)</u>		
	Total Budget Income	0	4,665	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Expenditure	2,000	4,665	2,000	2,143	0	0	2,000	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(2,000)</u>	<u>(2,143)</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>(2,000)</u>		

Planning Committee

401 Growth Area

Cost centre:	Code:	Title:	
401	4059	Other Professional Fees	
2022/23 figure:	2023/24 figure (requested):	Agreed	
2000	2000	2000	
Justification:			
For support from planning consultant for ad hoc planning advice Most of HRN2 planning applications have been approved			

Cost centre:	Code:	Title:	
401	4062	Neighbourhood Plan	
2022/23 figure:	2023/24 figure (requested):	Agreed	
0	0	0	
Justification:			
Continue to transfer in from EMR330, Community Development, to enable the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to pay for planning consultant support, on the Town Councils draft Neighbourhood Plan, to referendum stage.			



HOUGHTON REGIS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2020 - 2035

Pre-Consultation Draft November 2022

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Foreword

Houghton Regis in 2022 is a modern community centred around a historical core, with two new areas of major development on its northern and eastern edge bringing tremendous opportunities and challenges.

Key themes of the Neighbourhood Plan include proposals for the future of the town centre, the integration of new developments with the existing community, new commercial and residential developments, protecting the environment and features which contribute to the charm and appearance of the area. The vitality and viability of Houghton Regis will only continue with suitable and adequate facilities within the town and sustainable transport to connect with the surroundings.

The preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan draws on the findings, skills and knowledge within the community through a Steering Group of local councillors and residents under the auspices of Houghton Regis Town Council.

The Plan covers the period up to 2035.



1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2011, the Localism Act introduced a new opportunity for local communities to shape their future formally as part of the planning system. Neighbourhood Plans can be produced by Parish and Town Councils and when they have gone through all the required steps and processes, they become part of the development plan for the area. This means that any planning applications will have to take account of policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan. It also provides local people with a say on how land use and buildings can develop over time, such as protecting open spaces and improving local character.
- 1.2 Producing a Neighbourhood Plan is a formal process involving several stages, governed by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, but critically important is that the Plan is developed with continuing community involvement. In order to rigorously test the policies of a Neighbourhood Plan, an independent Examination is carried out. The Neighbourhood Plan must conform to the following 'basic conditions'. It must:
 - have regard to national policy;
 - be in general conformity with strategic local policy;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be compatible with EU obligations; and
 - meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters
- 1.3 Once the Plan has passed Examination, it is voted upon in a referendum by Parish residents and if a simple majority 'yes' vote is achieved, then the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and comes into force as a planning document with legal weight in decision-making.

2. Status of EU Regulations

- 2.1 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations (Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, 2004) and the Habitats Regulations (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) previously implemented the requirements of the SEA and Habitats Directives in England. These Regulations will continue to apply unless new legislation is introduced to withdraw or amend them. In most cases, Neighbourhood Plans do not require a full Assessment in

either case, but must be screened to confirm that this is the case. This Neighbourhood Plan has been screened for both SEA and HRA and does not require full assessments.

3. The Strategic Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021 and sets out the Government's approach to sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Essentially, it is about positive growth with economic, social and environmental gains being sought simultaneously through the planning system. Neighbourhood planning forms part of the NPPF approach to planning, to allow local communities to shape sustainable development within their area and to enable local communities to address their strategic needs and priorities. The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should set out a positive vision for the future of the local area with planning policies to determine decisions on planning applications, including policies which set out the quality of development that should be expected for the area, based on stated objectives for the area's future and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics.

4. Sustainable Development

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF states that pursuing sustainable development includes making it easier to create jobs in villages, to promote gains in biodiversity, to achieve better quality design, to improve people's quality of life, and to provide a wider choice of high quality homes.
- 4.2 Therefore, the aims, objectives, policies and proposals of the Neighbourhood Plan should be assessed against their ability to achieve sustainable development. Wherever possible the Neighbourhood Plan should actively promote the achievement of sustainable development.

5. Local Planning Documents

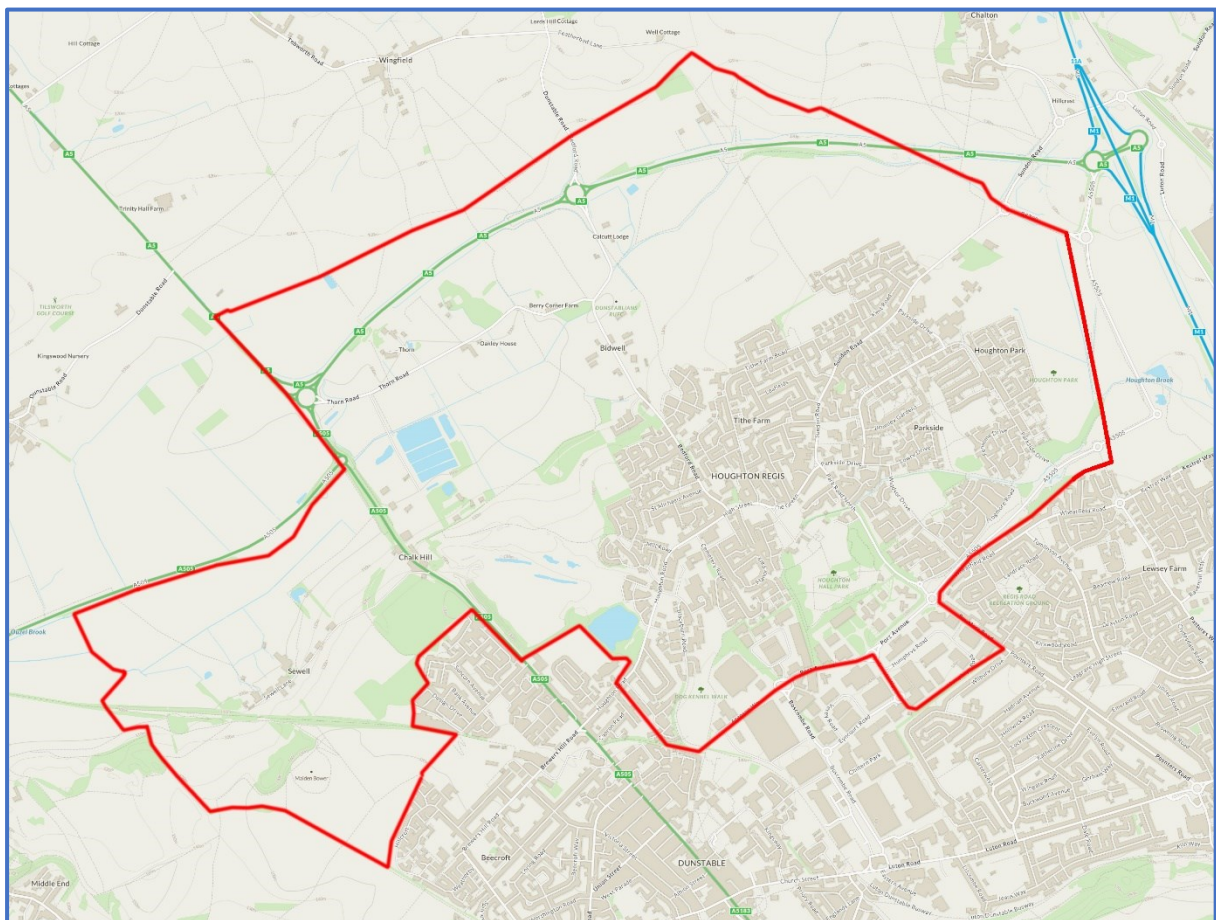
- 5.1 Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and plan positively to support these policies. The current Local Plan consists of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 which was adopted in July 2021. CBC have embarked on their

partial review of the Local Plan which will cover up to 2040, conducting a 'call for sites' and asking for comments on their 'Issues and Options' Consultation during 2022.

6. Neighbourhood Area

6.1 Central Bedfordshire Council designated the Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Area in April 2017 for the purposes of making a Neighbourhood Development Plan as outlined on the map. The area is appropriate for designation as a Neighbourhood Area because it consists of the whole of the area of the Town Council in accordance with section 61G(3)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Houghton Regis Town Council is the relevant body for the purpose of section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and is responsible for producing the Neighbourhood Plan.

Map 1: Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Area





7. Context

- 7.1 The Parish has Dunstable and Luton along its southern edge, and adjoins Totternhoe, Tilsworth, Chalgrave and Chalton parishes on the west, north and east. For much of its history the parish was much larger; part transferred to Dunstable in 1907 and part to Luton in 1939.
- 7.2 The modern parish of Houghton Regis has over 7,000 homes and a population of over 19,500 (source, Mid-year estimates (ONS) 2020). It includes the hamlets of Bidwell, Sewell, and Thorn. The town centre runs along the High Street with Bedford Square built in the 1960s providing shops and the community centre/library anchoring the eastern end, to a more recent supermarket (Morrisons) at the western end. Other facilities include the dental practice opposite Bedford Road and the GP/medical centre on Tithe Farm Road.
- 7.3 The High Street in central Houghton Regis is narrow, hemmed in by residential developments on both north and southern sides. The eastern end emerges into the major open space of The Green, at the western end the High Street turns to an area of employment uses on the site of the former cement works.
- 7.4 Since 1959, the population of Houghton Regis has continued to grow from 3,750 with great changes in the 1960s with a substantial expansion to accommodate London overspill population under the New and Expanded Towns Scheme. In the early 1960s, Tithe Farm Estate was built. It took its name from the huge tithe barn standing on what has now become Tithe Farm Road. This and Parkside estate re-housed Londoners who came to work in the car and truck factories in and around Dunstable and Luton.

- 7.5 The built-up areas of Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Luton have merged, with a population in 2010 of over 235,000 and a workforce in excess of 131,825 and the area is one of the largest manufacturing centres in the south-east outside London. Houghton Regis' main employment areas are on the southern side of the parish.
- 7.6 Recent major developments have again changed the nature of Houghton Regis.
- Houghton Regis North 1, 262 ha (which extends eastwards beyond the parish boundary) comprising up to 5,150 dwellings, up to 202,500 sq.m. gross commercial development, 2 primary schools, community and leisure facilities,
 - Houghton Regis North 2, on land west of Bidwell towards the A5, comprises up to 1,850 dwellings including affordable housing, a primary school, employment land, a local centre comprising retail and community/leisure uses, plus public open spaces including sports pitches, natural wildlife areas and all associated access routes, primary road network, associated drainage, and landscaping.
- 7.7 These two schemes have brought contributions to a new junction 11a on the M1, a strategic road link to the Woodside employment estate, and the re-direction of the A5 via the Dunstable North Bypass to the M1 at junction 11a.

2011 Census information

- 7.8 Compared with the rest of Central Bedfordshire the parish has:
- a younger age profile and a greater proportion of people from ethnic minority communities
 - a higher proportion of lone parent households, and fewer older households (aged 65 and over)
 - deprivation issues notably high overall proportions of children and older people living in income-deprived households
 - high unemployment and residents were more likely to be claiming out-of-work benefits
 - issues of serious acquisitive crime
 - no major differences either in overall health, or in the proportion of residents providing unpaid care

- a higher proportion of households have dependent children. A lower proportion of children achieved good GCSEs.
- less home-ownership than the national average and more socially rented households
- since 2001, an increase in private renting from 6% to 13%
- less than one fifth of residents worked within the town, while other key destinations for work were other parts of Central Bedfordshire notably Dunstable, and Luton.
- 77% of commuters travelled by car, similar to the Central Bedfordshire average.

History

- 7.9 Houghton Regis has a long history of settlement and industry. The parish has its origins deep in pre-history evidenced by Maiden Bower and the excavations at Puddlehill. Much of the evidence of prehistoric settlement probably lies under the current town and villages but the community on Puddlehill has been excavated providing a glimpse into the lives of the farmers who lived there. The name may seem strange, but even today, in very wet periods a small lake forms in the field below the chalk slope. The name 'Houghton' is Saxon combining 'hoe' meaning the spur of a hill in this case from the Chilterns, and 'tun' a village. The manor was owned by the Crown by the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), from which came the Regis part of the name. Thorn, Sewell and Bidwell all have origins dating from more than a thousand years ago. The Domesday survey listed Houghton as a royal property. With its own church, the size of the tax assessment indicates it was a prosperous village. Sewell is the only other settlement in the area listed in Domesday; smaller with just five farms or smallholders, its lord is named as Walraven of Sewell, under the overlordship of Queen Edith.
- 7.10 There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments listed in the parish, Maiden Bower Hillfort and Thorn Spring Moated Site and Associated Woodbanks. The historian, G Worthington Smith, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, describes many of the antiquities in the area including the earthworks and ditches of Maiden Bower Iron Age encampment, probably a retreat for the community in times of danger, its size providing a clue to how many people lived in the area. The 'camp' has five entrances suggestive of the paths and routes leading to and from it.

- 7.11 The main path in the vicinity is Watling Street, probably already in use before the Roman period. The Ickniel Way, running east-west, seems to have had several strands and modern Ordnance Survey maps still refer to Upper and Lower routes. One strand of the Ickniel Way seems to have followed Brewers Hill Road (near Maiden Bower) and Houghton Road from Dunstable, through the parish and around the northern edge of modern Luton. There are other old routes across the parish: the Green Lanes passing Maiden Bower are part of a drovers' route (possibly pre-roman) from the west going towards London. Worthington Smith shows a path from Puddlehill to the windmill at Houghton, and Dog Kennel path is shown as an old route possibly linking with old paths beyond the parish, and Sock Way from the A5 (Watling Street) towards Dunstable Downs. Before the chalk cutting straightened the Watling Street, the Old Coach Road wound its way up and down the gradient, the remains of which can still be followed.
- 7.12 The pre-development excavations for Houghton Regis North 1 have revealed more archaeological evidence for people living in the area.
- 7.13 The centre of Houghton Regis was designated a Conservation Area in 1977, the principal features of which are The Green and the buildings around it, Houghton Hall, Lodge and Court, Houghton Hall Park, and the group of 17th-19th century buildings around The Chequers public house. The Conservation Area was reviewed and extended in 1995 with a more recent appraisal carried out in 2008. This contains a detailed analysis of the Conservation Area features and listed buildings, a general history of the parish plus a management plan to guide future works and proposals in the Conservation Area and along the High Street. There are twenty-two buildings and structures which are listed buildings, (see Annex B) notable amongst them are the Church of All Saints (Grade I), and Houghton Hall (Grade II*). All Saints' Parish Church situated next to Bedford Square was built in the 13th/14th century on the site of a Saxon church. Houghton Hall was built for Dame Alice Milard completed in 1700, currently used as offices. The Crown Inn, next to The Green on East End Road probably dates from the 1790s.
- 7.14 Under Henry I a market town was established on the edge of the old parish where the Ickniel Way crossed Watling Street. Such a market was a good source of revenue and the settlement grew to become Dunstable, where local produce was sold and many trades became established. Travel, trade and pilgrimage continued for centuries to generate business for food, goods and accommodation.
- 7.15 The parish has an industrial heritage (in part of the parish transferred to Dunstable) and in 1891 JD Forder developed a lime works exploiting the local chalk at Sewell which was sold to Blue Circle Cement in 1912. Blue

Circle also opened a large cement works by Townsend Farm on the edge of Houghton village and began to cut away the chalk from Puddlehill. The 'cutting' which carried Watling Street through the parish had already dug a deep groove through the chalk scarp. In later years, the quarry and cement works included two huge chimneys which dominated the skyline of Houghton Regis and coated nearby buildings in a fine white dust.

8. Consultation

Issues Survey

8.1 A survey of major issues in late 2016/early 2017 produced key themes for the Plan:

- integrating new and existing communities
- protecting the countryside and open spaces in the parish
- working with neighbours to shape developments in adjoining areas
- better facilities and parking for local residents
- shaping the town centre for its future roles.

The Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2018

8.2 To inform the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, local people were asked about the main issues in the parish and then more specific questions about local needs. This was done by means of a questionnaire, conducted both online and in paper form, and augmented by a physical presence at several community events. The final survey report is included in the ancillary documentation.

Demographics

8.3 The age distribution was good, with between 14% and 22% of respondents in each age range over 25. However, there were over twice as many women as men taking the survey and the ethnic distribution was very predominately white British (87%). Just over 8% considered themselves disabled.

Housing

8.4 60% of respondents thought that there was enough housing either currently in the town or coming in the new developments that have already been approved.

8.5 The feelings were very much that there are 3 types of housing that are most needed: Single person, social, and larger homes (each just over 30%). Affordable housing was mentioned very often in the comments as well, especially for younger, local people, and bungalows for older people.

Town Centre

- 8.6 Almost 70% of respondents say they use Bedford Square or other amenities in the town centre at least once a week, although from the requests for new shops, etc. it does appear that many are not familiar with what is currently on offer! The reasons given for not using it (or not using it more) seemed to centre on issues of the lack of parking, safety/anti-social behaviour, limited offerings, and the unappealing architecture.
- 8.7 When asked about what is needed the top responses were: Bank (63%), Clothing/shoes (60%), Food (57%), Cinema (42%), Specialty (37%), restaurants/take-aways (37%), and Children's shops(36%).

Employment

- 8.8 87% think there needs to be greater job opportunities in and around Houghton Regis, most thinking that these should be within 5 miles of the town. There is also a great desire for more training and apprentice opportunities (60% in favour of more face-to-face training, for example).
- 8.9 14% are, or are considering being, self-employed. These people were evenly split over whether having more businesses/jobs in the area would help their business.
- 8.10 To attract more businesses to the town, the key issues seem to be: the high business rates and rents, the unattractive environment, parking, and the need for the town to better promote itself.

Sport and Leisure

- 8.11 The respondents showed interest in, or currently participate in, a wide range of physical activities. The top responses were: walking (70%), cycling (49%), football (44%), and running/jogging (29%). To improve the situation, respondents would like to see: more nature trails (67%), more cycle paths (56%), additional play parks for children (53%), and a splash park (52%).

Heritage

- 8.12 About 75% of respondents thought that preserving the town's heritage was important, however, an equal percentage know little, if anything, about what is currently protected. Most wanted buildings over 100 years old and/or that are historically important to be preserved.

Education

- 8.13 Half of the respondents thought that there need to be more opportunities for education in the town (a quarter were unsure, a quarter thought the offering adequate). The key areas needing attention were the need for an upper school and more in the way of life skills/employment skills training (all over 50%).

Sundry Key Issues

8.14 The major areas of concern were: anti-social behaviour (94%), crime (93%), travellers (90%), road safety (80%), lack of amenities (73%), and parking (60%).

Draft Neighbourhood Plan

8.15 During 2021, a previous iteration of the Neighbourhood Plan was published for comment for a six week period. Comments were received and the Town Council decided to update and significantly revise the Neighbourhood Plan to take account of the comments and changes in legislation and government planning guidance.

8.16 See the separate Consultation Statement for further details.





9. Vision, Objectives and Aims

9.1 The Town Council adopted a vision, aims and objectives for the town in 2016. Since then, these have been updated every few years, with the latest version being adopted in 2022.

Our Vision: Our Town (2020-2024)

Houghton Regis Town Council is still very much committed to ensuring it is in the best position to help, support and enhance our new and growing community. Through public consultation the Council have listened to what you want and developed a further Plan to cover the next 4 years.

Our Vision: Our Town

The plan has identified things to improve on, what you would like to change, and services and facilities that would improve where you live, play and work.

With the help and support of local organisations, strategic partners, and the community working together we can help to achieve this vision. This booklet represents our objectives and aspirations for the next 4 years.





We hope you'll be able to share our Vision and help make it a reality.

In 2016 the council developed its first Vision to cover the period until March 2020. During that time the council worked to deliver the Objectives of the plan. The outcomes achieved from this are listed on the back page.

Our 4 objectives are:

1. Grow your own
2. A greener cleaner Houghton Regis
3. A safe and vibrant town
4. To focus on our community

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Our Vision: Our Town

9.2 The Town Council's four overarching objectives are:

Objective 1: Grow Your Own. We want to encourage and support people to grow their own food, to eat a healthy and balanced diet and to enhance biodiversity and encourage wildlife in our town.

Objective 2: A Greener, Cleaner Houghton Regis. We want to reduce our use of natural resources, help improve the environment and improve fitness and wellbeing.

Objective 3: A Safe and Vibrant Town. We want to help everyone feel safe and confident about where they live by creating a safe and vibrant town.

Objective 4: Our Community. We want to look after, support and develop facilities and services for our residents.

9.3 Neighbourhood Plans contain policies which relate to land use issues. Whilst the above aims and objectives relate to the work of the Town Council, they have been used as a basis for developing the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan. In order to decide which policies this Neighbourhood Plan should contain, a series of aims have been developed which provide focus for the key issues that Houghton Regis faces for the next 10-15 years.

Neighbourhood Plan Aims

1	To identify and support measures to develop the appearance, vitality and facilities of the town centre and local centres of Houghton Regis
2	To support, protect and enhance the social assets, community facilities and services (including schools and healthcare, leisure and recreation) to meet residents' needs.
3	To ensure that all new development is well-designed, sympathetic and sustainable and enhances the character and function of Houghton Regis.
4	To respond to housing needs by supporting suitable housing for people of all ages and means.
5	To protect the rural aspect of the countryside outside of the urban areas.
6	To protect, enhance and where possible add to the green and blue infrastructure of the Parish.
7	To preserve and enhance Houghton Regis's Green, Conservation Area and heritage assets (whether listed or not).
8	To support existing local businesses and encourage new small and medium-sized businesses which provide sustainable employment opportunities.
9	To identify and support appropriate infrastructure developments which reflect the community's needs and keep it an attractive, well-planned and safe place for everyone.
10	To identify and support measures to encourage walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of transport as means of fulfilling shorter journeys.
11	To identify and support measures which improve traffic management including parking and speed control.

9.4 The policies arising from these aims address land-use issues covering town centre issues, facilities, housing, biodiversity and green spaces, sustainable transport, leisure, employment, and heritage.

10. Town Centre and Local Centres



Town Centre

- 10.1 Houghton Regis is identified as a Major Service Centre in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (adopted July 2021). This means that the town is considered to be a larger settlement with a highly diverse range in services and facilities, including schools, healthcare, varied retail offerings and a strong availability of public transport.
- 10.2 In addition, the town centre is listed as a Secondary Town Centre that provides a range of shops including some national multiple retailers and many independent shops, a range of services, facilities and leisure uses and is home to a number of businesses. The Local Plan also states that *“Houghton Regis town centre contains a significant higher proportion of convenience retail units than the national average (22% compared to 9%). The majority of the retail offer is at Bedford Square, although a new supermarket has recently opened on the High Street. The physical environment of the town centre has recently undergone substantial public realm improvements along the complete length of the High Street. The public transport network has also recently undergone improvements with the opening of the Luton-Dunstable Busway and the A5-M1 Link Road and the Woodside Connection should further improve the general environment, local public transport and congestion throughout the town centre.”*

- 10.3 The Local Plan also refers to the adopted Town Centre masterplan (2008) which “outlines how the town centre could be improved and how it could contribute to meeting the needs of a significantly increased local population. It is important that regard is had to Houghton Regis town centre when considering the masterplanning of the nearby urban extensions, particularly the location and scale of new local centres.”
- 10.4 Policy R1 of the Local Plan seeks to retain town centre uses within the defined town centre boundary as far as possible and states that development proposals for other town centre uses such as leisure, commercial office and community uses will be supported.
- 10.5 Houghton Regis town centre is arranged along the High Street with a notable retail presence in Bedford Square, at All Saint’s View, and the Morrisons supermarket on the southern side. Towards the west, the northern side houses and shops have mostly been converted or redeveloped to a mix of employment/office, with a car sales forecourt and the Kings Arms public house on the corner of the Town Centre and Bedford Road.
- 10.6 The majority of smaller shops and services, restaurants and takeaways are concentrated in Bedford Square. Bedford Square includes, on the ground floor, a range of stores including Poundstretchers, Post Office, a family butchers, a pharmacy, a newsagents, an Eastern European food shop, a carpet shop, a charity shop, a community shop, a convenience grocery and drinks store, an opticians, 5 restaurants or takeaways, a ladies hairdresser, a bookmakers and a cashpoint.
- 10.7 Additional business premises are located on the 1st floor of Bedford Square accessed only by steps. These include a taxi office, a ladies beauty specialist, a party specialist, and a bedding shop. Off Bedford Square is the library, health centre and community centre (this has now been identified as an education provision, however, there is still access to a limited number of rooms). A GP medical centre and the Town Council offices stand on the opposite side of Tithe Farm Road just outside the town centre. The retail offer at this end of the High Street has been expanded with the development of All Saints’ View on the former Co-op site and Red House Court, a scheme including 6 retail units on the ground floor fronting the Town Centre, hosting a coffee shop, a gentleman’s hairdressers, and a convenience store, and 168 independent-living apartments for older persons with support facilities, and associated parking and landscaping.
- 10.8 The High Street also has a dental practice, and a residential care home (Roslyn House). Physically, the High Street/Town Centre is hemmed in by residential developments on both northern and southern sides. The Green

and Memorial Hall lie just east of the town centre and at the western end, the High Street turns to another area of employment uses on the site of the former Townsend Farm and cement works. All Saints Church occupies a central and prominent position at the junction of the High Street and Bedford Road, opposite the Kings Arms public house.

- 10.9 A major study of the town centre took place in 2008 and has been the basis for shaping the area, notably with Morrisons and the development of All Saints View. The study also triggered improvements in the public realm, transport and movement. However, the High Street has lost its 'market town' feel, resulting in people from outlying villages more likely to travel to Dunstable/Luton or Leighton-Linslade for shopping or comparison purchases.
- 10.10 Currently the overall town centre frontage percentage of retail is comparable (Market Towns Study 2010) to regional/national averages for small towns by virtue of the presence of the 51,000sq. ft. Morrisons supermarket. Noticeable variations are the lower-than-average representations for Financial and Professional, Restaurants/Cafés, and Drinking Establishments. Along the High Street is a higher-than-average presence of business offices, car sales and care homes.
- 10.11 There is no regular street market in the High Street whereas other small towns have between 14 and 44 traders in a street market. The town centre is on the main bus routes through the town and from locations around it.

Issues Survey

When opinions were sought in the Issues Survey, three non-retail uses - banks, health facilities, and entertainment/leisure topped people's responses of what is missing. The lower responses (less than 8) for food shopping, hairdressers, hotels, residential, public houses, and takeaways suggest that these facilities are already well provided for.

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

Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan

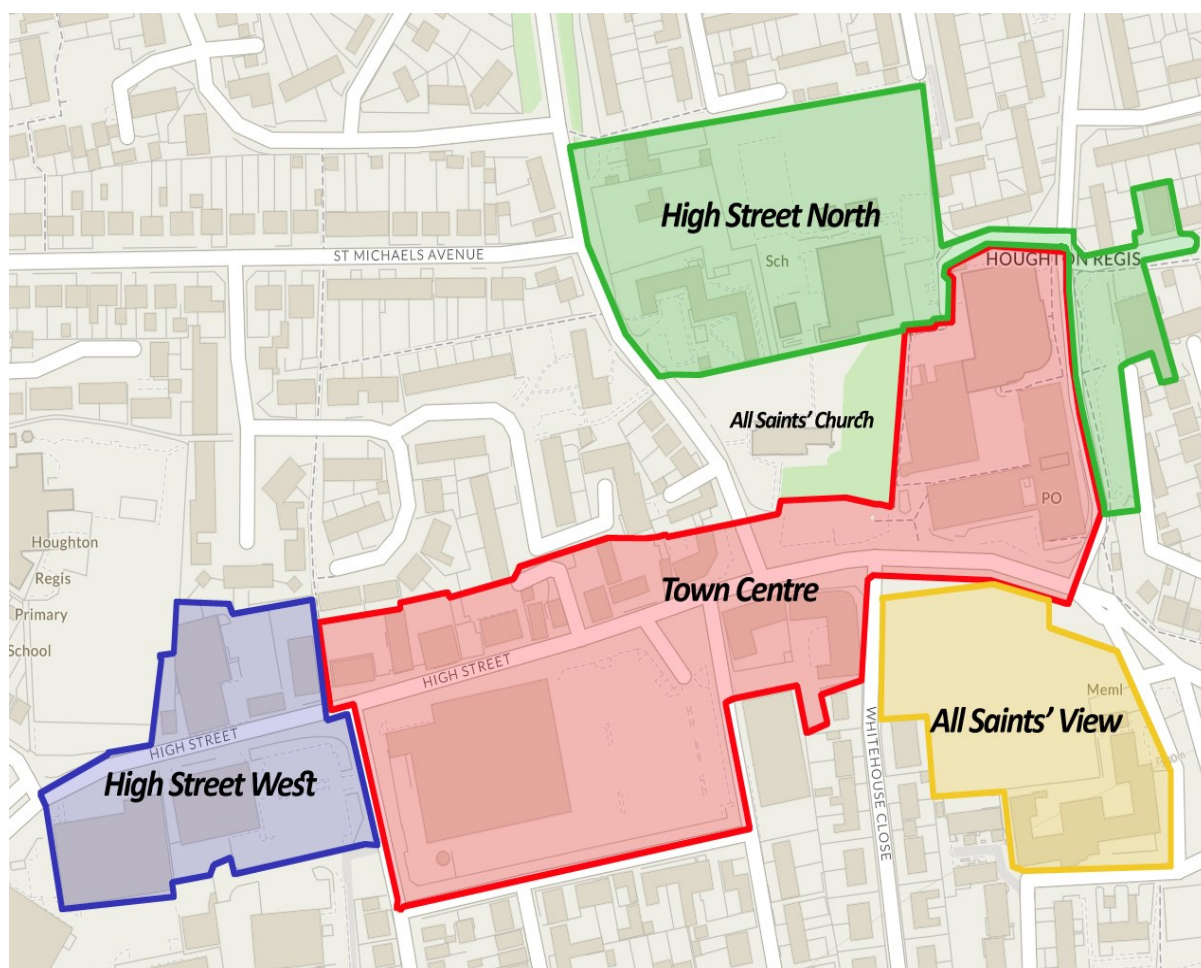
10.13 In January 2022, the Houghton Regis Town Centre Action Plan was produced and this is a background document to the Neighbourhood Plan. It draws on information in the Benchmarking Report and various other sources and establishes a vision for the centre and ten objectives, identifies catalyst projects and a phasing plan. Importantly, it highlights the need for a new updated Town Centre Master Plan which can be used to drive new development and help determine the future of the town centre, particularly in relation to planning decisions.

Town Centre Boundary and Areas

10.14 The Houghton Regis Town Centre Boundary has been designated in the recently adopted Central Bedfordshire Local Plan. Three additional areas immediately adjacent to the Town Centre Boundary have been identified through the Neighbourhood Plan and are shown on Map 2. These are:

- **High Street West:** the area currently used for employment at Houghton Road/Portland Close/Townsend Farm Road
- **High Street North:** the area to the north of All Saints' Church, including the site of Thomas Whitehead School, Angel's Lane, Bedford Court, the site of the current town offices, and the medical centre and car park on Peel Street/Tithe Farm Road, and
- **All Saints' View:** the recently redeveloped area to the south of Bedford Square

Map 2: Town Centre Areas



10.15 Planning applications which result in the loss of town centre uses within the town centre itself and the adjacent three areas will not be generally supported, whilst proposals for new town centre uses and proposals encouraging an evening economy will be encouraged.

10.16 All new town centre development should be compliant with the prevailing CBC Design Guide, notably that pertaining to Larger Footprint Buildings. In addition, all new town centre development will need to be supported by the improved provision of public realm features, street furniture, seating and signage.

Policy TC1: Town Centre

The loss of town centre related uses will be resisted unless the proposed replacement use would positively support the vitality of the town centre by enhancing the range of facilities on offer.

Acceptable development proposals within this boundary will include personal services and facilities, cafés, serviced office space, pop-up enterprises, smaller independent shops, premises supporting the evening economy and car-parking.

Above floor level, residential use and supported living will be supported.

Policy TC2: High Street West

Development proposals within this boundary that are for leisure, hospitality, entertainment and associated car parking will be supported.

Development proposals shall have sympathetic regard to the existing built form of the High Street and Houghton Road frontages.

Development proposals will seek to include direct pedestrian link(s) with the High Street and town centre to bring the commercial strands of the town centre together and support the pedestrian access and permeability of the site.

Policy TC3: High Street North

Proposals for development within this boundary for facilities and services for the community, health, municipal, retail, and car parking will be supported.

Above floor level, residential use and supported living and office space will be supported.

Policy TC4: All Saints View

Proposals for shop uses at ground floor will be encouraged and active frontages will be retained.

Houghton Regis Town Centre Master Plan

10.17 This Neighbourhood Plan (and the Town Centre Action Plan) identifies the need for a new Town Centre Masterplan to be drawn up through the auspices of the Houghton Regis Town Council in liaison with Central Bedfordshire Council to reflect the recent development, the future roles and functions of defined areas of the town centre, traffic management, parking, and public realm improvements.

10.18 The Masterplan will incorporate the following proposals:

- A 'market town' and local services offer – designed with smaller/specialist retail in mind as well as small/medium food shopping, plus a space for a regular market linked to events and attractions - focusing on Bedford Square for retail, post office, restaurants, takeaways, concentrated with the open plaza in the Square having a dual 'events/ market' function, as well as The Green for larger markets, carnivals and other occasional community activities and events (subject to other town centre parking being available),
- A new administrative, health and service centre (potentially in the High Street North area), in conjunction with the current library and community centre, with Houghton Regis Town Council, plus car parking and with the potential for new residential aimed at older/care sector,
- On the north side of the Town Centre between Carlton House and the Kings Arms - a destination for personal services - health, legal, financial, beauty, fitness, restaurants and small office businesses/services and residential accommodation serving the older (55+) sector of the local population, sheltered/semi-sheltered purpose-designed residential uses,
- Retaining the large supermarket and car parking offer on the High Street
- Accessibility and car parking for employees and visitors
- Ability of residents from Houghton Regis North to have good access to the town centre activities and 'offer' aimed at serving the new enlarged parish population.

Policy TC5 – Houghton Regis Masterplan

Development proposals should be in accordance with the principles and objectives of the Houghton Regis Masterplan, Town Centre Action Plan and Development Briefs. Development proposals elsewhere in the Parish should complement and not prejudice development proposed by the Masterplan.

Aspiration TC1: Town Centre

The Town Council will explore options, including sourcing and negotiating funding, in conjunction with Bedford Square site owners, retail unit occupants, and the users and owners of Bedford Square Library, Health and Community complex, to regenerate the area:

- to examine any opportunity to open it up more to the High Street.*
- to examine the desirability and feasibility of covering the pedestrian area to create an all-weather shopping area and to produce a costed way forward.*
- to retain and enhance the viability of the community centre, library and health facility.*

The following are community aspirations to enhance the vibrancy and vitality of the town's retail areas:

- a site for markets and events on the open space in Bedford Square, and temporary arts/ culture uses in empty shops,*
- improvements to public realm - pavements, street furniture, lighting, extend main themes to new developments, rationalise signs and improve signage/directions for visitors*
- improve the road safety, particularly for pedestrians, and parking*
- if Thomas Whitehead CE Academy were ever to relocate, add a new road with additional car parking behind the Community Centre to Bedford Road to be able to close the High Street from the Tithe Farm Road roundabout to the Bedford Road roundabout during the day and make it a pedestrian-only zone*
- include new public car parking in western end entertainment area*
- review town centre and proposals to minimise crime and anti-social behaviour*
- install secure bike parking and electric car charging points in the car park adjacent to All Saints Churchyard*
- improve pedestrian links from the High Street to The Green,*
- improve accessibility to the town centre for the enlarged Houghton Regis community with regard to traffic, parking, cycling and pedestrian needs.*

Local Centres

- 10.19 Local centres provide opportunities for smaller local shops and facilities and are particularly important for residents without access to a car. They also increase social cohesion by providing informal places for people to meet and contribute to the local community.
- 10.20 The outline approvals for Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 include up to 202,500 sqm. Gross of developments in Use Classes: E (retail); B2, B8 (industrial and storage and distribution); and C1 (hotel), plus a local centre comprising retail (E) and community/leisure uses (F2). Development of the commercial/employment areas within Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 will be the subject of planning applications on which the Town Council will be consulted.
- 10.21 In addition to the proposals for community hubs/local centres on Houghton Regis North 1 and 2, the town has two local centres plus individual local shops serving residents on Tithe Farm and Parkside with convenience shopping, pubs and takeaways.
- 10.22 Opportunities to improve parking at Tithe Farm and Parkside local centres will be sought. The current local centres/shops are:

LOCATION	BUSINESS
Neptune Square (Parkside)	Nisa shop Bella Calabria pub/ restaurant
Hillborough Crescent (Tithe Farm)	Nisa shop, sub-post office, plus other shops Harvest Home pub
Individual shops on Tithe Farm Road	Nike's News, Tithe Farm Stores, Tithe Farm, Chicken Take-out

10.23 There is a strong presumption against changes of use in local centres from retail and service uses, which would significantly erode the 'offer' in each local centre.

Policy TC6: Local Centres

Proposals for the change of use or re-development of shops or public houses in the neighbourhood centres, which would result in the loss of such facilities, will not be permitted unless:

- 1. There are other facilities performing the same function within easy walking distance of the community; and/or**
- 2. The facility no longer meets the needs of the community; and**
- 3. The applicant provides sufficient and demonstrable evidence that the facility is no longer viable in its current form.**

Where the above tests are met, the site/building must firstly be considered for alternative community infrastructure uses, in consultation with the local community, and only where an alternative community infrastructure use is demonstrated to be unviable or unsuitable, may other uses be considered acceptable

Any applications for new retail areas should include litter bins, dog waste bins and where appropriate, include an area for the placement of a 'bring-bank'.

11. Housing and Development



Houghton Regis Town

- 11.1 The Town itself has developed over many years with the largest period of growth occurring since 1945. The oldest residential part of the town lies to the south of the High Street around Manor Park and Cemetery Lane, and Park Ave/Drury Lane opposite The Green.
- 11.2 Within the existing residential areas of the parish, the housing stock is older, St. Michael's Avenue was started in the 1930s, and Tithe Farm and Parkside, dating from the second half of the 20th century, are now well established communities. The Millers Way area of homes is more recent. The parish also includes the houses opposite the former quarry in Douglas Crescent and Northview Road.
- 11.3 Housing which meets the needs of residents who require additional support include the following:
 - Mini Group - Neptune Close, Houghton Regis – 8 bungalows
 - Mini Group – Bidwell Close, Houghton Regis – 11 bungalows mixed one and two bedrooms,

- Johnson Court – Housing and Care 21, there are studio, 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom properties – a retirement complex of 47 apartments.
- Roman Court, a Community Care Scheme, provides care and support for up to 16 people with a range of care needs including learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and sensory impairments.
- Treow House is a bespoke Supported Living scheme. Living Plus and Outreach Service provide individualised and proactive support where people’s rights, independence and choices are actively promoted. The service provides 15 x 1 bedroom supported living flats and 7 x 1 bedroomed supported living plus flats which are built around a communal area. Support is provided to residents with learning disabilities, autism, behaviour that may be described as challenging, may be stepping down from secure settings and/or may have experienced previous placement breakdowns.
- There are 3 transitional housing settings: Puddlehill; Bedford Court; and The Brook Houghton Regis, due to be open late 2022 or early 2023. There are also residential and nursing care homes: Sharnbrook 26 bedroom consisting of 22 single and 2 double rooms; Rosalyn House, consisting of 46 single rooms; Lady Spencer House, 24 single rooms; and a brand-new care home, Thorn Springs in Bidwell West, Houghton Regis, with 66 bedrooms.

Growth Areas

- 11.4 Houghton Regis has been subject to large scale development, mainly in the north of the Parish. Central Bedfordshire’s Local Plan allocated a large swathe of land for housing and associated infrastructure known as Houghton Regis North Strategic Allocation. This was split into 2 sites, the first being Houghton Regis North Site 1 (HRN1 marketed as Linmere) comprising the area between the A5120 and the M1, for around 5,000 houses and 32 hectares of employment land (part of which lies outside the Houghton Regis Parish). The second site, (HRN2 marketed as Bidwell West) comprises the area from the A5 to the A5120 extending north to the new A5/M1 link road, providing up to 1,800 homes and 8 hectares of employment land. Both sites were subject of a masterplan and include sites and provision for education, green spaces, community and health centres and sports facilities.
- 11.5 Prior to the adoption of the Local Plan, planning permission was granted for the developments and the road extensions and work has been underway for the last few years. The development of the sites is forecast to be spread over a considerable part of the lifetime of this Neighbourhood Plan, providing a stream of new housing, including

affordable housing, available to local people and others wishing to move to the parish.

- 11.6 One other notable scheme is All Saints' View, on the former Co-op site in the Town Centre opposite Bedford Square, phase one of which has now been completed. When fully finished, it will consist of 168 new independent living apartments plus retail and community facilities.
- 11.7 Completion of the planned new developments at Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 and other planned developments will see the number of dwellings in the parish grow from 7,340 (2011) to over 15,000 by 2031, more than covering local housing needs, and contributing to the Central Bedfordshire wider housing requirement. Accordingly, this Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate sites for housing.
- 11.8 Integration of the new residents with the existing population is critical to ensuring a vibrant community into the future.

Aspiration H1: Integration of communities

The Town Council will aim to support the integration of existing and new communities by encouraging:

- *Good access to new multi-use community facilities*
- *Integration of library, recreation and Town Council functions across the parish*
- *Inter-schools and youth activities*
- *Events being held in new communities*
- *Publicity for events, facilities and services being provided across the communities*
- *Town Council noticeboards to be provided across the Parish.*

Hamlets

- 11.9 The hamlets of Bidwell and Thorn will be absorbed within Houghton Regis North 1 and 2. Sewell with around twenty homes, farms and businesses located in the fields on the western side of the A505 will remain separated from the rest of the urban area. The area around Sewell is particularly sensitive - both for the hamlet's residents' amenities and quality of life, and for the proximity to the heritage site at Maiden Bower. The hamlet and surrounding countryside lies within the Green Belt designation where only exceptional circumstances will allow development.

Issues Survey

When asked about the types of housing needed in future, bungalows for elderly people and family flats/ houses each received 26% of comments. Flats or houses for couples received 20%, supported or care homes 16% and single persons flats 12%.

Housing Affordability

- 11.10 Affordable homes are defined in the NPPF as housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).
- 11.11 Locally young people find it hard to have a place of their own, often living with parents or grandparents. Housing needs identified included single-person-housing and scope to 'move on', bungalows suitable for elderly and those with limited mobility, retirement housing complexes, and single-person flats or dwellings available to key workers.
- 11.12 Affordable housing should be available and financially realistic for local people, the elderly and disabled to avoid a build-up of unmet needs and people being forced to move away from family and social support networks. The proportion of affordable housing within new developments is determined through Local Plan Policy H4 which requires that all sites of 10 or more housing units will provide 30% as affordable housing. However, the Local Plan was adopted prior to the Government's First Homes Initiative, which allows a 30% discount on new homes to first time buyers. Whilst this may not be a sufficient discount given high house prices in Houghton Regis, it is certainly an initiative which can be supported through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy H1 — Affordable Housing

New residential development within Houghton Regis must provide a quantity of affordable housing in line with the requirements contained within the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan.

The provision and mix of affordable units for new development must comply with the National Planning Practice Guidance on First Homes, which requires 25% of all affordable housing to comprise of First Homes.

The remaining tenure of affordable units should be in accordance with Policy H4: Affordable Housing of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan, or its successor.

Infill Development and Redevelopment

11.13 There may be sites within the built-up areas of Houghton Regis which could be developed or redeveloped without harm to the residential amenity of existing dwellings, unacceptable loss of open space or loss of car parking capacity. In some cases, these opportunities would aid the regeneration of areas, e.g., the redevelopment of disused garage sites on Tithe Farm and Parkside. This type of development will be subject to assessment against the High Quality Design Policies of the Local Plan (including HQ1 – High Quality Design, HQ8- Back-land Development) and Central Bedfordshire’s Design Guide. The Town Council will make comments on planning applications for such developments.



Sustainable Building

11.14 The UK government needs help to meet its commitments under the Climate Change Act, to reduce global warming. One of the commitments made by the Government is to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The reality is that the homes built today will still be in use in 2050. Therefore, to achieve the UK and CBC carbon reduction targets cost effectively, new housing built today must be built to zero carbon standards as soon as possible. However, even if all new housing were to be carbon neutral from tomorrow, this would still not be enough to achieve the carbon emission reductions, as around 70% of buildings that will be in use in the 2050s already exist. If carbon reduction targets are to be met, and if fuel poverty is to be tackled, it is essential that the energy efficiency of existing buildings, including historic and listed buildings is also improved.

11.15 Water resources are precious, the Anglian Water supply region is classified as an area of serious water stress. Accordingly, care needs to be taken to reduce water consumption, minimize the possibility of water contamination as well as addresses concerns such as flooding. Houghton Regis sits on a watershed, and drainage and surface water management can be an issue as can water quality in the brooks and field drains. New development will therefore be required to design in measures to address these issues.

Issues Survey: Sustainability

The responses to the survey were positive about the use of solar panels, other power sources such as waste processing, car sharing/bike hire schemes, wind turbines, bio fuels and electric car-charging points, wifi and new technology/communications infrastructure.

- 11.16 In July 2019 CBC unanimously supported a proposal to prioritise responding to climate change and in September 2020 adopted the Sustainability Plan outlining the steps they will take to become carbon neutral by 2030. Policy CC1 of the Local Plan requires development to take opportunities to integrate the principles of sustainable design, water and energy efficiency into development.
- 11.17 New development of all buildings in Houghton Regis can play a part in moving towards a more sustainable level of resource-usage. Construction methods and design of buildings are important factors in reducing the impact of climate change. The development of Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 will include many new buildings which should include new features such as low/no carbon technologies, electric car charging points and 'Smart City' improvements. (The British Standards Institute (BSI) defines the term Smart City as "the effective integration of physical, digital and human systems in the built environment to deliver sustainable, prosperous and inclusive future for its citizens")

Policy H2— Sustainable Development

The design and standard of all new development will achieve a high level of sustainable design and construction.

All new development will be optimised for energy efficiency, targeting net zero carbon emissions. This involves:

- **Siting and orientation to optimise passive solar gain.**
- **The use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials.**
- **Installation of energy efficiency measures such as loft and wall insulation and double/triple glazing.**
- **The incorporation of on-site energy generation from renewable sources such as unobtrusive solar panels appropriately positioned.**

With regard to existing buildings:

- **The retrofit of existing buildings, including heritage properties, is encouraged to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable energy where appropriate, provided that historic characteristics are safeguarded.**
- **Alterations to all existing buildings must be designed with energy reduction in mind and comply with sustainable design and construction standards.**

All new development will be expected to minimise the use of water, provide water storage and manage surface water, using measures such as permeable paving.

Safety and Security

11.18 The Town Council's Vision includes Objective 3- A safe and vibrant town and the Town Council wishes to reduce the fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and crime levels through the partnership with Bedfordshire Police and Central Bedfordshire Council Community Safety team, and through support and encouragement for local Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

Issues Survey

The results produced some strong responses to the question about safety: increased police presence (29) and more CCTV (25) were followed by better lighting (18) and alternative activities for young people (18).

11.19 Data from the Bedfordshire Police showed 209 crimes reported in February 2016, within 1 mile of central Houghton Regis. The Locations of crimes were given as Sewell 3, Chalk Hill 9, Bedford Square 27, Bidwell 1, Tithe Farm 39, Bedford Rd 10, Parkside 32, Central HR 55, east HR 17.

11.20 National Planning Policy Guidance states that planning policies and decisions should promote public safety and the layout and design of developments should be informed by the most up-to-date information available from the police and other agencies about the nature of potential threats and their implications.

11.21 'Secured By Design' is the official police security initiative that works to improve the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings to provide safe places to live, work, shop and visit. It includes specific Design Guides to help design new development such as housing which helps all new developments to include crime prevention techniques into the design of landscaping, layout and buildings at the planning stage which can reduce the incidence of later criminal activity significantly. New developments including housing and town centre improvements in Houghton Regis will be expected to take into consideration recommendations in Secure By Design.

Aspiration H2 – Safety and Security

The Town Council will work towards

- *Ensuring that appropriate safety infrastructure is installed in Town Centre and other locations to reduce the incidence of crime*
- *Reducing enviro crime through direct action to remove incidences of fly tipping and graffiti*
- *Encouraging the use of Secure By Design development and Design Guides for new development*

12. Green Spaces & Recreation



- 12.1 The approach to green space, recreation and rights of way within this Plan is to:
- protect the main areas of existing open space, particularly those used for recreation;
 - support new areas of open space;
 - designate Local Green Spaces where they qualify according to NPPF criteria;
 - provide and encourage the provision of leisure equipment to increase usage;
 - retain and improve the network of footpaths and bridleways;
 - protect the particular qualities of Houghton Hall Park and the Chalk Pit Nature Reserve.
- 12.2 Policies GSR1 to GSR4 seek to protect important areas of open space, ensure there are connections between the existing and proposed open and green spaces in the Parish and identify recreation facilities and spaces to be retained or provided. Achieving a co-ordinated layout of these spaces and facilities with good community access will provide their sustainable longer-term management and maintenance within an integrated and accessible framework.

Issues Survey

People regarded it as very important to protect the open spaces within the parish.

General comments covered more multi-use games areas and toddler play areas, bigger and better parks, more tree and flower planting in open areas, tennis courts, and improvements to the standard of walks and safety.

The feedback from residents showed the greatest need was for facilities relating to teenagers, plus new health, child-care/play groups and sporting facilities.

Regarding the Quarry, people suggested: better access and greater public use (including disabled access) and improve it as a nature reserve (7); 5 people asked that it should be left as it is; suggested uses were for boating/sailing, swimming, fishing, and café/bar with a roof garden, toilets and increased seating.

Some suggestions covered outdoor gym/adult play/all age fitness equipment, and one suggestion was for off-road motorcycling.

At Dog Kennel Down comments covered more seating, better lighting, café, picnic and BBQ areas. One comment suggested the area was dangerous.

Open Spaces

12.3 There is a range of existing and proposed major open spaces throughout the parish. Unless otherwise stated the following public open spaces are managed by Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC):

- Houghton Hall Park (HRTC and CBC have a Joint Venture Agreement to manage the Park)
- The Village Green (protected by Charter)
- Houghton Hall Park (managed by Central Bedfordshire Council)
- Moore Crescent Recreation Ground
- Dog Kennel Down (County Wildlife Site)
- Orchard Close Recreation Ground (Field in Trust)
- Windsor Drive Recreation Ground (owned by CBC, leased to HRTC)
- Tithe Farm Recreation Ground (owned by CBC, leased to HRTC)
- Parkside Recreation Ground (owned by CBC, leased to HRTC)

- Houghton Regis Chalk Pit Nature Reserve (privately owned)
- Maiden Bower iron age hillfort (scheduled ancient monument) with surrounding fields
- Sewell Disused Railway (CWS)
- Sewell Cutting Nature Reserve (managed by the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants)
- Barley Brow County Wildlife Site
- Suncote Pits County Wildlife Site (managed by the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants)
- Grove Spinney at Grove Farm (in private ownership)
- The Baulk and Plaiters Way off Bedford Road
- Blue Waters Woodland with disabled access (managed by CBC)
- Oakwell Park (in private ownership)

Formal Recreation Facilities

- 12.4 Houghton Regis Leisure Centre adjoining the College off Parkside Drive, the Bowling Green and the Sports Club, are notable community facilities within the Parish. There are also a number of small play and open spaces scattered throughout the built up area providing facilities for different ages of children.
- 12.5 Central Bedfordshire Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy includes a schedule for each Parish. Houghton Regis schedule was updated in 2020. <https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/yf2mysvs8atd9tynu8ve9ffm1mem0type>
- 12.6 Generally speaking, the Parish is reasonably well served in recreation spaces and pitches, however, there is a shortfall in rugby and football pitches and there are currently no tennis courts or allotments. Some new facilities may be provided in the new development areas. There are areas of open space planned within the Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 masterplans for recreation and parks. New open spaces off Woodside Link, the 'buffer' areas between development and the A5/M1 link road, and new open spaces adjoining the Houghton Regis Chalk Pit Nature Reserve are notable among the Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 proposals. Within Houghton Regis North many of the open space, recreation areas and sports pitches are co-located with schools which has the potential to deliver combined public and schools' use.
- 12.7 Recreation facilities and green spaces will be expected to be provided alongside new developments in accordance with CBC's requirements set out in the Local Plan.

Policy GSR1 — Play and Recreation Spaces

The following play and recreation spaces will be retained as such, and proposals which would result in the loss or reduction of these will not be supported unless an alternative facility is provided to a better standard and/or in a better location:

- **The Green,**
- **Moore Crescent Bowling Club Ground,**
- **Other small recreation/playspaces throughout Houghton Regis as identified in the CBC Leisure Strategy Parish Schedule**
- **Allotments**

The provision of new recreation spaces and improvements to existing spaces and equipment will be supported.

(Note: This policy seeks to retain open spaces that are not protected by Local Green Space designation through Policy GSR3)

Policy GSR2: Open space provision as part of new development

Open space should normally be provided within new development to accord with the standards set by Central Bedfordshire Council in the Local Plan and Houghton Regis North 1 & 2 Masterplans. In addition, the following criteria should be met:

- **Efforts should be made to develop green corridors between the built up areas, new open spaces and the countryside;**
- **Developments should incorporate tree and shrub planting.**

Suitable arrangements must be incorporated for the costs of future maintenance of these spaces.

Aspiration GSR1: Play and Recreation

Aspirations to enhance facilities in the Parish include:

- *provision of healthy leisure facilities within the parks and recreation areas including exercise and equipment to charge mobile phones,*
- *provision of better lighting for parks, MUGAs and playgrounds to extend times of use,*
- *the provision of art installations and fitness equipment on the walking routes connecting the open spaces created as part of Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 - particularly along the eastern, northern and western margins of the new developments - and which create connections into existing open spaces/pathways in the Parish,*
- *include major leisure facilities in town centre e.g., drama, dance studios, fitness centre, available to all schools.*

Identify body/bodies responsible to manage and maintain a) open space and green areas, b) heritage sites, c) sports facilities – and how they will be maintained sustainably.

Houghton Regis Town Council will investigate ways to make more use of the pavilion on The Green.

Houghton Regis Town Council will aim to provide, or where appropriate, to make recommendations to Central Bedfordshire Council, to provide additional facilities, play equipment, rubbish and dog excrement bins and spectator seating at appropriate open space locations, for example, additional children's play equipment at Frogmore Road.

Aspiration GSR2: Major New Recreational Facilities

Any proposals for the development of recreational areas within HRN1 and HRN2 per outline planning consents are recognised and supported.

The provision of allotment developments is generally supported throughout the parish.

Any proposals for the development of adult football pitches, are generally supported.

Any proposals for the development of up to two more cricket grounds within the parish are generally supported.

Any proposals for the development of additional rugby union pitches, with parking and facilities, within the parish are generally supported.

Any new recreational facility proposals should allow for the continuity of existing recreational facilities.

Improve Sewell Greenway for multiple users including walkers, cyclists and horses, safeguarded from off-road motorcycling.

The provision of parking at Windsor Drive between the road and the field berm.

Local Green Spaces

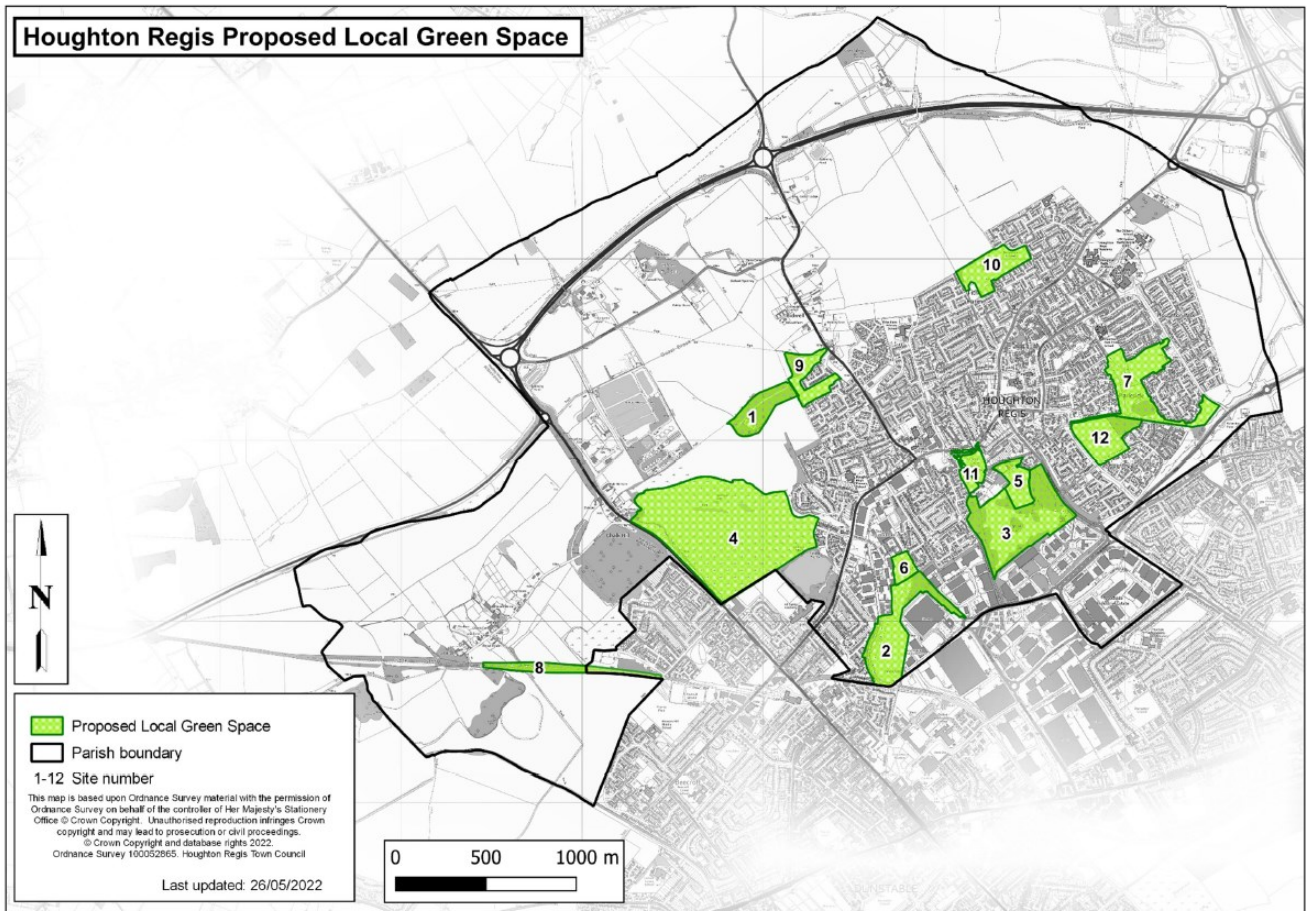
- 12.8 A designation of Local Green Space (LGS) gives a very high level of protection to such open spaces. In the NPPF it is stated that in Neighbourhood Plans, local communities can identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection and to rule out new development, other than in “very special circumstances”. The proposed designations are in accordance with the requirement in Paragraph 100 of the NPPF:
- The green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - The area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife;
 - The area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- 12.9 In 2022, Houghton Regis Town Council commissioned Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BedsRCC) to carry out an audit of green spaces in the Parish. The Local Green Space Assessment Report assessed all the relevant green spaces against the NPPF criteria and 9 spaces fulfilled the criteria and are therefore designated as Local Green Spaces

Policy GSR3 — Local Green Spaces

The following areas shown on the Policies Map are designated as Local Green Spaces:

- **Blue Waters Woodland**
- **Dog Kennel Down**
- **Moore Crescent Recreation Ground**
- **Orchard Close Recreation Ground**
- **Parkside Recreation Ground**
- **Sewell Cutting Nature Reserve**
- **The Baulk and Plaiters Way**
- **Tithe Farm Recreation Ground**
- **Windsor Drive Recreation Ground**

Development within the Local Green Spaces will not be supported except in very special circumstances.



Map 3: Local Green Spaces

Houghton Hall Park

12.10 Houghton Hall Park is set among 42 acres of parkland/woodland within Houghton Regis. The Park was originally part of the Hall’s estate parkland owned by the Brandreth family dating back to 1652. In more recent years it was transformed by “The Renaissance and Renewal Project” (a £2.2 million funding grant from the Heritage and Lottery Funds “Parks for People” grant). As part of this work, a new visitor centre with café was built. Childrens play equipment, additional parking, landscaping and new pathways with signage were also added allowing people to explore both the parkland and woodland areas of the park. Historic formal kitchen gardens (that once served the Hall) were recreated and regular events and family activities occur at HHP. Houghton Hall Park Parkrun is a running club that organises runs around the park every week and the area is well used for walking, dog walking, cyclists and joggers. There are also many special events (e.g. Easter Egg Hunts) that take place throughout the year. During Covid, the Park was a vital area where local people could

go to take in fresh air and exercise. In short, HHP is the most used and important recreational space in Houghton Regis.

12.11 HRTC and CBC have a Joint Venture Agreement to manage the park. Significant capital investment has been made to the park including a Parks for People grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. As a result, the facilities have been much improved and the park now has a much-extended offer to the community including a wide and varied events programme.



Chalk Pit Nature Reserve

12.12 The Houghton Regis Chalk Pit Nature Reserve is the area of former chalk extraction south of Houghton Regis North 2 which for many years served the cement works before closure in the 1970s. The nature reserve, approx. 50ha in area, comprises a SSSI and County Wildlife Site with three main areas:

- Houghton Regis Chalk Pit (CWS),
- Houghton Regis Marl Lakes (x2) Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Houghton Regis Cutting Roadside Nature Reserve

12.13 In 1988 the Marl Lakes Site of Special Scientific Interest was notified. In 1990 the whole reserve was surveyed and recognized as a County Wildlife

Site which is protected to a degree under the NPPF paragraphs 180 and 181.

- 12.14 The Chalk Pit is a large area of colonising calcareous grassland in the northern part supporting typical chalk flora including one of the best Chiltern Gentian populations in the area, and a significant population of chalk hill blue butterflies (a NERC Act 2006 Section 41 priority species). (Natural Environment and Rural Communities)
- 12.15 The Marl Lakes are an example of a habitat type which is the rarest form of standing water in Britain, confined to chalk and limestone areas with very few examples in southern England. Along with the marshy grassland and reed beds surrounding them, these lakes support a range of species associated with wetland habitats, including an outstanding assemblage of dragonfly, as well as being an important site for birds.
- 12.16 The Icknield Way footpath runs close to the Reserve from Watling Street in the west to Blue Waters Woodland in the east, and a range of informal paths have emerged around and through the site. Due to its designation as an important site for wildlife, and being very vulnerable to disturbances, access to the Chalk Pit via existing footpaths is for general walking and enjoyment of nature only. Access on foot at the southern end will remain as at present.
- 12.17 The completion of the A5 link means that the reserve is more accessible and is within a short drive time for a considerable number of people in the wider area/region. Coupled with the expected increase in local population, the Nature Reserve with its rare habitats will be put under increased pressure. Consequently, activities will need to be carefully managed in the Nature Reserve.

Map 4: Chalk Pit Nature Reserve



12.18 At the Nature Reserve and in conjunction with new open space provision arising from Houghton Regis North 2, the proposal is to provide access to the nature reserve and provide car parking serving a new visitor centre/café. Existing paths will be signed as nature trails and a visitor centre is proposed to help communicate the reserve's importance to visitors. The visitor centre will be located on or near the northern rim of the Chalk Pit with access from the HRN2 road network. A small car park is proposed including space for two minibuses, disabled parking spaces and bicycle stands. The building for the visitor centre will be designed with up-to-date 'green' technologies and will incorporate an office for reserve and community engagement staff; space for volunteer work parties; a room for educational use where up to 30 visitors of all ages can learn about the reserve; a café and toilets, and a storage area to keep machinery and other equipment needed to manage the reserve.

Aspiration GSR3: Protecting and Enhancing the Houghton Regis Chalk Pit Nature Reserve

A Masterplan will be prepared by the Wildlife Trust BCN which anticipates resuming management by agreement with CBC and the owners in the near future. The Masterplan will seek to protect and improve the fragile ecology while keeping access on foot open to the public for enjoyment of the flora and fauna in this highly valued outdoor space.

To facilitate the management of the site, a visitor centre with office, storage and parking will be built on or near the northern rim of the Chalk Pit, accessed from the HRN2 road network. To enhance the visitor experience, this building will also house an education room, café and toilets for public use.

In addition, funding for essential infrastructure, such as protective barriers to keep out motorcycles, and signposts and information boards to guide walkers, will be sourced.

Rights of Way

12.19 There is a network of rights of way (footpaths, cycle paths, shared-use paths, bridleways, and National Cycle Network Route 6) running through the parish. These rights of way make connections possible from built up areas into the countryside, or between built up areas including;

- Dog Kennel Path links southwards into the heart of Dunstable,
- Rabbit Lane links the Village Green with Woodside Industrial Estate,
- a path follows Ouzel Brook to the west through Houghton Regis North 1 and Houghton Regis North 2 towards the A505.
- The Icknield Way Trail/Chiltern Way path skirts the northern rim of the Chalk Pit and crosses the A505 to Sewell and Maiden Bower.
- From Bidwell the Icknield Trail runs north-west through Houghton Regis North 2 to cross the A5 by a footbridge and continue on to Wingfield, while the Chiltern Way continues towards Chalton.
- The NCN6 traverses the parish from Luton in the east to Sewell in the west and beyond to Stanbridge and Leighton Buzzard.
- Houghton Regis Parish boundary with Chalton runs briefly along the By-way Open to All Traffic (BOAT 29) running along the ridge between Chalton and Chalgrave, which is a heritage trail also known as Theedway.

- There are a number of bridleways through the north of the parish
- BW35 runs past Sewell and Maiden Bower
- BW49 starts at Chalk Hill Farm on Watling Street and continues through Houghton Regis North 2 with a new Pegasus crossing on Thorn Road. Sewell Lane links BW49 with Sewell and BW35.
- BW15 is a short section of the proposed Boundary Trail running north-east towards a Pegasus crossing on Lord's Hill (with access to BW44 outside the parish to Wingfield). A connection then links it with:
- BW46 to Grove Farm (also part of the proposed Boundary Trail)
- BW22 runs from Grove Farm in both directions, north to meet BOAT29 and south across the A5 by a bridge and through Houghton Regis North 1 to the Tithe Farm Recreation Ground
- BW44 runs east along Ouzel Brook to Sundon Road.

12.20 On the western boundary of the parish the Green Lanes, part of an old drovers' route from Wales and the west towards London, passes Sewell and Maiden Bower, much-used by walkers. Farmland in the west of the parish is open countryside with public footpaths which allow magnificent views from Sewell Lane and Sewell Greenway.

12.21 There is an aspiration to create a 'Green Wheel' for Houghton Regis which is a managed network of rights of way and permissive routes forming a route around the parish, with 'spokes' giving access to built up areas. The route of the proposed boundary trail incorporates the proposed paths in the Houghton Regis North developments with existing paths, plus minor additions to form connections.

Policy GSR5 — Rights of Way

The rights of way network will be retained and new links around the Parish and to the wider countryside will be encouraged.

Aspiration GSR4: Aiming for a Green Wheel around the parish

The Town Council supports the use and development of existing footpaths and bridleways to create a network of walking/running/jogging/family cycling routes that also highlights the history of the parish.

It is recognised that not all routes would ever be suitable for all these different active user groups. The route will be varied in places, for example, a route more favourable to walkers than to cyclists.

The ideal aim would be to complete a Wheel of Paths consisting of 'spokes' leading out from neighbourhood 'hubs', all connected by an outer 'rim' around the parish perimeter.

A complete feasible 'spoke' and 'rim' adult walking and jogging route can already be made that:

- closely follows the entire parish boundary;*
- utilises existing rights of way;*
- links to or includes the majority of the parish's major open spaces.*

In addition, a network of safe cycle paths throughout the parish is envisaged, extending through HRN1 and HRN2, especially accessing schools and those that help to integrate older and newer parts of the parish.

Houghton Regis Town Council will organise support from residents and identify other interested parties, including CBC, to traverse the suggested rim and spoke routes.

Houghton Regis Town Council will consult with local residents, landowners, and other stakeholders before implementing sections of the route.

Houghton Regis Town Council will aim to identify places along the route where improvements may be required. Improvements would aim to make the route more suitable to wider sections of the community including mobility scooters and pushchairs. Funding may be sought to implement schemes.

13. Biodiversity and Natural Features



Biodiversity

- 13.1 The Environment Act 2021 is the UK Government's key piece of environmental legislation in recent years. The Act will require new development to deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain. Provisions for the act will be made through secondary legislation. This means that developers will be required to calculate how much their proposed development will degrade biodiversity (by removal of habitat, vegetation etc) and compensate for that loss and add features which provide increased biodiversity on the site. This can be achieved in a number of ways such as providing planting schemes, green roofs, protecting and enhancing existing hedgerows etc. Landscaping schemes will be required to use native species for planting schemes, particularly those found locally.
- 13.2 In addition to providing Biodiversity Net Gain, all proposals for new development will be required to demonstrate how the design has taken into account its potential impact on existing local habitats and species. Developers will be required to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to protect wildlife and take every available opportunity to link adjoining wildlife corridors and natural features to enhance biodiversity and important habitats.

Natural Features

- 13.3 Houghton Regis Parish sits astride the Chilterns lower chalk bench and the underlying gault clay producing an undulating landscape with springs flowing north and south. The 'spring-line' where the chalk water-table

meets the clay is revealed in the local place names – Bidwell, Sewell, and Puddlehill. The springs that rise on the chalk dip slope can be impermanent features by nature of the chalk's porosity and varying water-table level. There are a significant number of springs from land within the parish: the source of Houghton Brook on the Green which flows into the River Lea in Luton (improvements completed in 2020); four or five springs in or near Sewell Hamlet flow into Ouzel Brook; Thorn Spring Moated Site on private land at Oakwell Park which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and CWS surrounded by marshy grassland and semi-natural broad-leaved woodland; and the source of Ouzel Brook itself, near Sundon Road, which is hidden because it depends on the change in the water table where it starts flowing (it is now integrated with the landscaping of Linmere). Numerous other ditches link to these streams, which only flow intermittently, and are important channels for wildlife to safely traverse the landscape hidden from predators, as well as being vital for land drainage.

- 13.4 This Plan seeks to ensure that in future springs are not built over or channelled underground but left as natural features of chalk landscape to be celebrated, notably
- HRN1, building around the source of the Ouzel Brook in Linmere Park.
 - Kingsland spring.

Hilltops and Viewpoints

- 13.5 A feature of the Houghton Regis landscape are the hilltops on the chalk escarpment with magnificent views of the surrounding countryside: Maiden Bower at 155m is the highest spot in the Parish, Chalkhill on the west side of the Watling Street cutting, Dog Kennel Down, the northern rim of the Chalk Pit and the northern boundary of the Parish is on the BOAT (133m).
- 13.6 Looking from the north, Dunstable almost disappears in the folds of the land, and the most prominent features are Chalkhill on the eastern edge of the Chalk Pit and Blows Down behind. The warehouses built in Houghton Regis North 2 are masking the view of Chalkhill from the A5 and the start of Thorn Road. A number of these views as shown on the Policies Map merit preserving by protecting natural features on skylines from developments that change it and limiting building heights in significant views of those features;
- a viewpoint at Maiden Bower
 - rim of the Chalk Pit
 - Dog Kennel Down which affords great views of the Chalk Hill and is also a rare chalk grassland habitat.

Policy BNF1 — Biodiversity and Protecting Natural Features

New development will be required to protect and enhance existing natural features of sites and provide at least 10% net gain in biodiversity.

Provision of appropriate species-related measures will be required in new buildings, including extensions, for example, swift bricks, bat and owl boxes, hedgehog highways.

Opportunities should also be taken by developers and landowners to link sustainable drainage solutions in new development to complement nature conservation objectives.

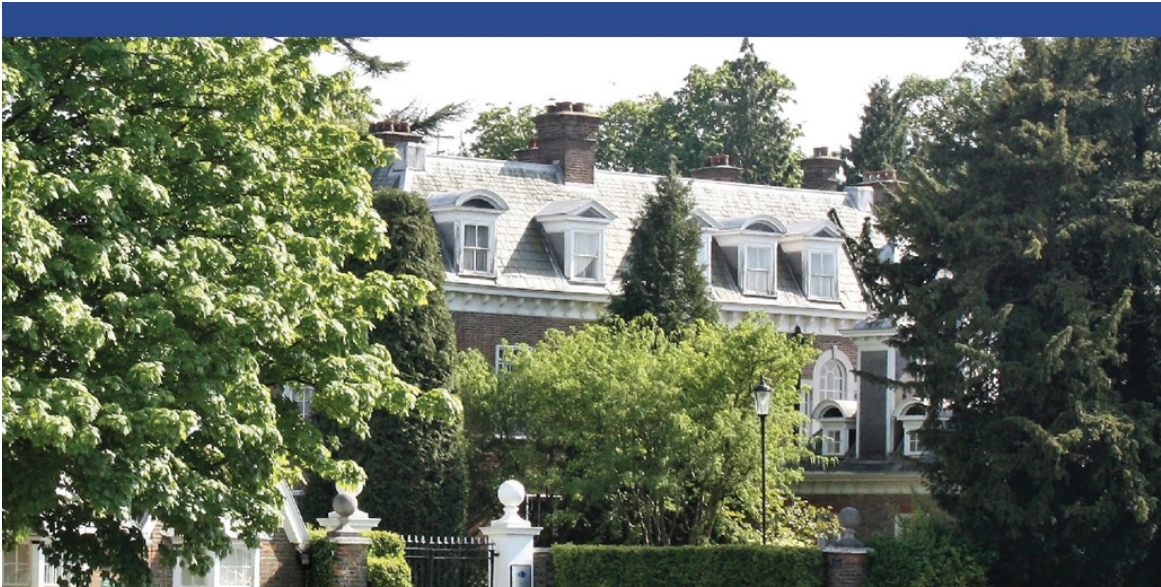
Any proposal to develop areas considered important natural features of the chalk landscape, especially those that are a prominent part of the parish's character, must be protected and preserved, notably:

- **The springs at:**
- **Kingsland,**
- **The Green,**
- **Bidwell,**
- **Sewell,**
- **Thorn,**
- **the source of the Ouzel Brook,**

The natural hilltops and viewpoints over the landscape as shown on the Policies Map

- **of and from Maiden Bower,**
- **of and from the rim of the Houghton Regis Chalk Pit Nature Reserve,**
- **Dog Kennel Down.**

14. Heritage



- 14.1 Houghton Regis has a long history of settlement and industry, with a pre-historic (3500BC) hillfort at Maiden Bower and settlement at Puddlehill. Watling Street, now the route of the A505, was constructed during the Roman period and passed near to the area Houghton Regis now occupies. A Roman settlement was constructed on Watling Street in the area now occupied by Dunstable and was known as Durocobrivae. Following the departure of the Romans, roadside settlements were frequently attacked, and it is thought that many communities moved away from the roads and into the hills. It is likely that this was the time when the earliest settlement of Houghton Regis was established. The name 'Houghton' is Saxon combining 'hoe' meaning the spur of a hill, in this case from the Chilterns, and 'tun' a village.
- 14.2 The medieval manor was owned by the Crown and Thorn, Sewell and Bidwell all have origins dating from more than a thousand years ago. The parish has a long farming heritage and a cottage industry, straw plaiting which served the Luton hat industry, and an industrial heritage, notably the large cement works by Townsend Farm on the edge of Houghton village and the Quarry dug to supply it with chalk.
- 14.3 The recent pre-development excavations for Houghton Regis North 1 have revealed more archaeological evidence of the area's history.
- 14.4 The centre of Houghton Regis was designated a Conservation Area in 1977, the principal features of which are The Green and the buildings around it, Houghton Hall, Lodge and Court, Houghton Hall Park, and the group of 17th-19th century buildings around The Chequers public house.

The 2008 Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan is available on the Central Bedfordshire Council website.
https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/migrated_images/houghton-regis_tcm3-12959.pdf.

Issues Survey

90% of respondents told us that the town's history was important to them, and yet 50% told us they did not know about what is currently protected. Additionally, 80% of respondents thought that more of the town's buildings should be preserved.

- 14.5 The Houghton Regis Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan divides the Conservation Area into 3 zones, Zone 1 – East End/Woodlands Avenue; Zone 2 – The Green/Houghton Hall Park and Zone 3 – The High Street Setting. A set of suggested improvements and enhancements are set out in the Statement and should be taken into account when assessing proposals for new development in the Conservation Area.
- 14.6 The hamlet of Sewell was designated as a Conservation Area in 1995 because of its long history. Very different in nature from Houghton Regis, the homes and farm buildings at Sewell are spread out and the openness and mature trees are a key feature of the local character. There is no Conservation Area appraisal currently, the map is available on the CBC website.
<https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/dge1wp95hy69bsenaxxtowpbkgga10s>
- 14.7 There are twenty-three buildings and structures which are listed buildings, ie on the list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, drawn up by Historic England (see Annex 3) notable amongst them are the Church of All Saints, Grade I, and Houghton Hall, Grade II*, including the recent addition of Oakwell Park as a Grade II listed building in 2018. The Memorial Hall is an important building in the current town centre, typical of the architectural characteristics of the 1950s. The Red House is the only remaining building of its type in Houghton Regis, dating from the early 17th century, possibly earlier - suggestion has been made that the brickworks could be as old, and of the same type, as those used in the construction of Someries Castle in Luton.
- 14.8 The parish's heritage is important to the appearance of the area, the sense of history for local people, and providing unique 'landmarks' in the setting of the town centre.

- 14.9 The Town Council will encourage CBC to prepare a Conservation Area review and updated Management Plan for Houghton Regis Conservation Area. It is expected that any new buildings in the Conservation Area will need to be designed so as to respect the bulk, massing, height and orientation of buildings in close proximity to the site and should be designed in such a manner as to add to the particular character area of the Conservation Area. Similarly, new development in the Sewell Conservation Area will be expected to contribute to the character of the hamlet, without detracting from its historic importance.
- 14.10 There is a strong presumption against any development which would prejudice the site, integrity, setting or appearance of the heritage sites, ancient monuments, the Conservation Areas and listed buildings within the parish.

Policy H1 – Heritage

Development proposals that will result in any harm to the significance of heritage assets (designated and non-designated) must consider the scale of the harm and the impact on the significance of the Heritage Asset. Any such development proposal will be assessed against the relevant criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan.

Development in the Conservation Areas as shown on the Policies Map and their settings should preserve and enhance their special character by achieving high quality design, set in a clear context in terms of materials, scale, setting and layout. The following criteria apply:

- Development should be of an appropriate scale and mass for the immediate area;**
- Use of locally distinctive details will be required (materials, openings/access and boundary treatments etc)**

Development in the Houghton Regis Conservation Area should take into account the principles and potential enhancements set out in the Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan.

Applicants must explain, in a Design and Access Statement and/or Heritage Statement, how the proposal will address these criteria.

Aspiration HE1: Heritage

The Town Council will:

- *Liaise with CBC to update the Houghton Regis Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan: Re-survey buildings and update archaeological information*
- *Ensure that archaeological evidence and other heritage materials from Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 are recorded as part of the town's history and provide information boards at the locations*
- *Explore potential of providing a museum to house items e.g. old Houghton Regis Gaol House door held by Luton Culture and the Houghton Regis Heritage Society's collection of oral history.*
- *Improve local knowledge about Houghton's heritage, including the heritage sites/finds on Houghton Regis North – and erect markers, information boards on those sites*
- *Use the website to describe Houghton Heritage with all the sites and their information*
- *Prepare exercise maps – walks to heritage places, combine with green/exercise paths*
- *Develop a history of local chalk quarrying and cement production – pictures, records, oral history/Living Archive - display in Chalk Pit Nature Reserve Visitor Centre*
- *Develop a history of Houghton Regis people – people who moved to Houghton Regis in the 20th century, or whose families have lived locally for generations - pictures, records, oral history/Living Archive, then build into stories of people who are moving to Houghton Regis now*
- *Create and provide information panels and signs (linked to a heritage website) which describe and explain the historical importance of key sites around the parish*
- *Deliver improvements to the public realm to enhance the setting of key heritage sites.*

15. Business, Employment and Education



- 15.1 Houghton Regis is part of an important economic growth area in the Oxford, Milton Keynes, Cambridge Arc where public resources will be invested to generate business and employment growth. Crossed by a mix of major transport and communications, Central Bedfordshire is adopting a supportive enabling approach to driving business investment, delivering jobs growth with ambitious plans for a further 24,000–30,000 new jobs by 2035. Key growth sectors include high-performance technologies research and development, visitor economy, transport and logistics, and agrifood. The transport infrastructure means that distribution is a major feature of the local economic picture.
- 15.2 In total, less than a fifth of Houghton Regis residents worked within the town (according to data from Central Bedfordshire Council, 2011): 570 residents (7%) worked from home, and 900 residents (11%) travelled to work within Houghton Regis. 1,900 residents (23%) worked elsewhere in Central Bedfordshire, with 1,160 (14%) travelling to Dunstable. Outside of Central Bedfordshire, the main destinations were Luton: 1,730 people (21%), and London: 540 people (7%).

Issues Survey

The most suitable jobs were viewed as manufacturing, technology, warehousing, and office work.

15.3 There are currently well over 200 businesses with a presence or premises in the Parish. Employment within the town presently is focused on seven areas:

- the High Street (retail, offices, services, care homes, car sales and servicing, fuel) and Bedford Square (retail, restaurant, takeaways)
- the Woodside Estate/Porz Avenue (Industry/distribution/warehousing with offices) - part of a more extensive employment area extending south into Dunstable either side of Boscombe Road
- Houghton Hall Business Park (mainly offices)
- Townsend Farm Road/Portland Close/Westbury Close/Blackburn Rd (Light industrial, storage, and services with some commercial recreation e.g. soft play), the area of the former cement works off Houghton Road,
- local centre shops on Tithe Farm and Parkside , public houses and restaurants spread across the parish: The Crown, The Kings Arms, The Chequers, The Old Red Lion, Harvest Home, Bella Calabria, and The White Lion at Sewell
- the range of education, social and 'public service' employment in schools etc.
- farming and rural enterprises in the rural parts of the parish.

15.4 In addition, there are small/self-employed enterprises which operate from domestic properties or have no premises, and offices.

15.5 More major retail food and comparison-shopping outlets are located outside the parish in Dunstable and Luton (part of the commercial area proposed as part of Houghton Regis North 1 lies outside the Parish).

15.6 Education is a significant employer in Houghton Regis. Currently there are 6 Primary Schools. On the Kingsland campus off Parkside Drive is located Chiltern School (special education needs), Houghton Regis Leisure Centre (planned to be redeveloped), Bedfordshire Education and Skills service and, Houghton Secondary School which is open and will relocate to its new facility in 2023 and the Academy of Central Bedfordshire.

15.7 All Saints Academy, a secondary school with sixth form in Dunstable but which abuts Houghton Regis, includes part of the parish in its catchment area.

- 15.8 Three new schools and 2 school enlargements are included in the Houghton Regis North schemes. There are no details of training or higher education facilities proposed at this stage for the new developments.
- 15.9 Planning permissions for HRN1 and HRN2 include up to 202,500 sqm gross of additional floorspace comprising offices, industrial and storage and distribution; a hotel, a care home, and schools. The precise scale and layout of these employment areas are yet to be determined. Also, the developments include a key infrastructure improvement; the Woodside link road connects that area directly to the new M1 motorway junction 11A. The new East-West transport infrastructure linking M40/Aylesbury/A5/M1/Luton North/A1 will create an axis of movement between Oxford and Cambridge likely to have a strong national focus in future supporting the growth of new, high-tech commercial developments.
- 15.10 In anticipation that the proposed commercial developments within Houghton Regis North will provide sufficient scope for employment, this Plan does not allocate further land for employment/ commercial purposes. Development of the commercial and employment areas within HRN1 and HRN2 will be undertaken in accordance with the outline planning permissions and Central Bedfordshire Local Plan.
- 15.11 Home working is also seen as a means of encouraging business and creating a sustainable community with less commuting and a more sustainable lifestyle, saving individuals the cost of travel and increasing their leisure time. The proportion of people working from home is likely to have risen as a result of the recent changes to working practices resulting from the pandemic.
- 15.12 The expansion of local businesses – whether currently existing or potentially new enterprises - must carefully consider the impact on existing residential properties and local traffic flow, including businesses which currently or may in the future employ the frequent use of large industrial or agricultural vehicles.

POLICY BE1 — Employment

In order to ensure the local economic and employment potential of the area is retained, proposals for change of use away from employment uses will not be supported in the following employment areas as shown on Map 2:

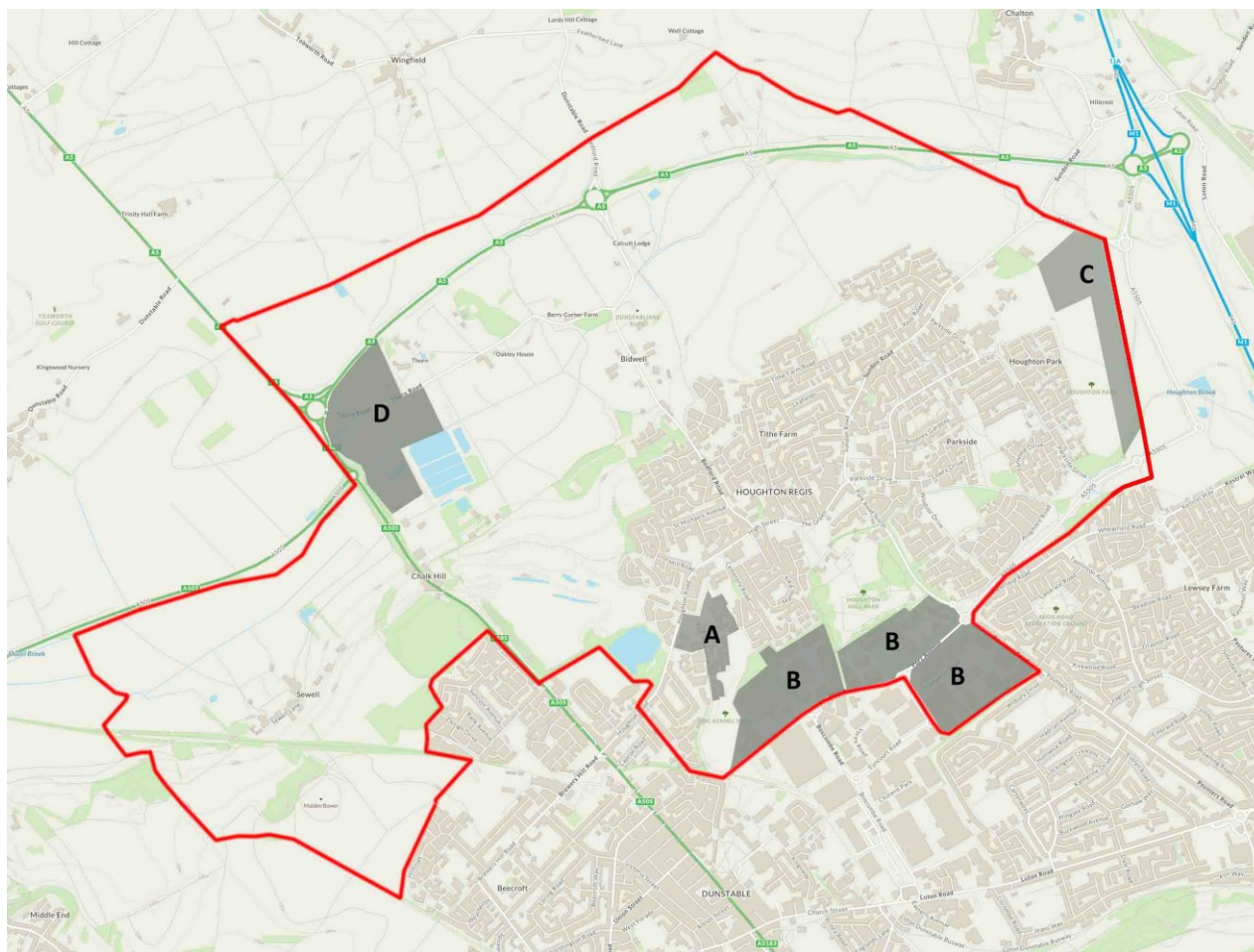
- A. Townsend Farm Road/Portland Close/Westbury Close/Blackburn Rd**
- B. those parts of Porz Ave/Woodside Estate/ Houghton Hall within the Houghton Regis parish boundary,**
- C. the area of Houghton Regis North 1/Woodside link within the Houghton Regis parish boundary,**
- D. Houghton Regis North 2 West**

Proposals for the development of new small businesses and for the expansion or diversification of existing businesses, will be encouraged, providing that:

- it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impact from increased traffic, noise, lighting or other emissions or activities arising from the proposed development;**
- where relevant, opportunities are taken to secure the re-use of vacant or redundant historic buildings as part of the development.**

Applications for extensions or part change of use of dwellings to enable flexible or home working will be supported, subject to there being appropriate parking and that the residential amenity of neighbouring properties is maintained.

Map 5: Employment Areas



KEY

A. Townsend Farm Road/Portland Close/Westbury Close/Blackburn Rd

B. Parts of Porz Ave/Woodside Estate/ Houghton Hall

C. Houghton Regis North 1/Woodside Link

(Note: area shown reflects the original site-wide masterplan. Exact location(s) likely to change)

D. Houghton Regis North 2 West

Aspiration BE1: A new Employment Strategy for Houghton Regis

The Town Council may produce a new Employment Strategy which should link locations for business and skills/vocational training and build on existing strengths with linked training/apprenticeships - planned logistics, local building firms – to create a skilled labour pool and greater job diversity using range of skills and leading to higher income jobs and high value IT work for all age groups.

In developing the strategy, the Town Council should work with Education and other professional bodies in the Parish to build aspirations among local schools towards good quality jobs and remuneration reflecting local opportunities.

16. Transport, Connectivity and Parking



- 16.1 Much of the parish's forms of transport are integrated within the Houghton Regis/Dunstable/Luton conurbation. Of particular importance is the need to connect new development at HRN1 & HRN2 with the existing centre and facilities available at Houghton Regis, both by car and other means of transport, both motorised and unmotorised.
- 16.2 Central Bedfordshire's Local Area Transport Plan (LATP3) sets out a long term framework for investment in transport across Central Bedfordshire to 2026. The fourth iteration is currently being produced by CBC.

Issues Survey

The responses showed strong support for better local roads, links between the new areas and existing parts of Houghton Regis, more parking, and improved walking and footpaths. Improved cycling, reduced commuting, and low carbon transport were the least important in the survey results.

Roads

16.3 In the 2011 Census, nearly 80% of residents had access to a car or van. The parish is well served by roads connecting to the rural areas to the north and into Dunstable to the south, the B5120 runs from Toddington, A505 Watling Street passes through the western part of the parish (although now de-trunked through Dunstable), the A505 runs along the northern edge of the parish at Sewell connecting the A5 westwards towards Leighton Buzzard and Aylesbury, and the M1 runs beyond the eastern boundary of the parish with a new junction 11A with the A5. The A5-M1 link and the Woodside Connection were opened in 2017.

16.4 The main road connections are:

ROAD	CONNECTING AREAS
B5120	Runs from Toddington, through Bidwell to Houghton Regis town centre. It acts as a main distributor connecting with the A5 at and island on the A5-M1 link (Dunstable Northern Bypass), with the A505 at Dunstable High Street North and eastwards to Parkside (residential) and Woodside (employment) areas.
A505 WatlingStreet	A505 Watling Street passes through the western part of the parish providing connections northwards to Hockliffe and Milton Keynes.
A505	Runs along the northern edge of the parish at Sewell connecting the A505 westwards towards Leighton Buzzard and Aylesbury.
M1	runs beyond the eastern boundary of the parish, bridged by the Sundon Road which connects with the B579 between Chalton and Luton.
A5	At Thorn, the A5 becomes dual-carriageway and, crossing the B5120, links with the M1 junction 11A at Sundon (beyond the parish boundary).

Public Transport

16.5 Houghton Regis does not have its own railway station and neither does Dunstable. The two closest are at Luton and Leighton Buzzard. The latter is on the West Coast mainline with trains running from Scotland down to London Euston including branches to Birmingham and Manchester. There are trains 3-4 times per hour into London. The major railway station in Luton town centre is on the Midland Mainline with Thameslink trains running from London's St Pancras station to Leicester, Derby/Nottingham and Chesterfield in the East Midlands. The trains run every 10 minutes or so into London with Links to the Elizabeth tube line at Farringdon. Trains also run to south west and south east London and beyond to Brighton.

- 16.6 Buses are fairly frequent throughout Houghton Regis which has 8 bus routes which serve 56 bus stops, the most notable being the Busway - a route which includes a guided busway partly following the former railway lines providing a fast, regular transport link as part of the response to the area's congestion problems. The Busway opened in 2013 with connections between Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Luton and will continue to be a major factor in access and connectivity for residents of Houghton Regis. As of August 2022, on a typical week day there are 332 buses from Luton towards Dunstable. The services are: A from Luton Airport running 24 hours a day, B to Downside in Dunstable, C to Beecroft in Dunstable, CX to the Amazon warehouse on Boscombe Road, E to Toddington, F70 and F77 via Leighton Buzzard to Central Milton Keynes shopping centre, G to the Langdale area of Dunstable, Hi to Thorn, and Z via Houghton Regis. There is a similar service pattern towards Luton. School services also run locally.
- 16.7 Luton Airport is around 8 miles south east of Houghton Regis and easily accessible to residents of Houghton Regis either via the Busway or by driving to the airport.

Non-motorised transport

- 16.8 The provision of facilities to encourage walking, cycling, and the use of public transport is of high importance in reducing the impact of cars on the area and the environment in general. Just over 20% of residents in the 2011 Census had no access to a car or van. They are therefore dependant on walking or public transport to get where they need to go. Connectivity via footpaths and pavements is mixed through the Parish.
- 16.9 Central Bedfordshire Council is currently consulting on Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans to identify and create routes within areas such as Houghton Regis.

Cycle Routes

- 16.10 The main cycle route through the parish is the Sustrans (National Cycle Network) Route 6 from Luton and Leagrave, through Parkside and past Houghton Hall Park, along Dog Kennel Path to Dunstable then along Sewell Greenway, towards Stanbridge and Leighton Buzzard.
- 16.11 More dedicated cycle routes (and footpaths) are to be provided throughout HRN1 and 2 to encourage sustainable forms of transport.

16.12 Many of the pavements and other footpaths are shared use, i.e, marked with the blue circle and pedestrian and bicycle sign, e.g. Houghton Road, Porz Avenue and Route 6. However, improvements need to be made to both signposts and markings on the surfaces to improve clarity for users.

Policy TCP1: Access and Connectivity

New development proposals should be well connected to services and facilities and demonstrate how walking, cycling and public transport will be prioritised.

The planned extension of public transport links through HRN1 and connections to the town centres of Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Luton is supported.

Aspiration TCP1: Improving foot and cycle connections

The Town Council will work with landowners and Central Bedfordshire Council to seek S106 funding to improve connectivity by:

- *extending an existing cycle/footpath parallel to Park Road North.*
- *making up a casual footpath to a cycle/footpath between Balmoral Road and Kingsland Close.*

Parking

16.13 There are around 600 parking spaces spread across the Parish, a combination of public spaces supporting the High Street and local centres, private parking areas for commercial premises and schools, plus visitor parking. The trend over the past few years has been to provide differentiated parking for short and long term visitors during the day, which provides space for employees to park all day at the sites further from the town centre and shorter- term parking near the town centre. Among these spaces approximately 50 are allocated for disabled drivers.

16.14 There is extensive private car parking supporting the commercial areas of the parish, at Woodside/Porz Avenue, Houghton Hall Business Park, and Townsend Farm/Blackburn Road. In addition, some facilities have their own car parking areas, e.g:

- Old Red Lion, Bedford Rd
- Bella Calabria Restaurant has two car parks for customers
- Parkside Recreation Ground car park.

16.15 It is important to retain public parking spaces where possible to ensure that residents can continue to access facilities and services.

16.16 Residential parking can be an issue, particularly in parts of the area where houses were built prior to private ownership of cars e.g. Manor Park which was constructed in the 1950's. There are currently no residents parking schemes in the Parish and on-street parking is available in many places. Poor parking behaviour is not a matter which the Neighbourhood Plan can provide policies to control. Central Bedfordshire Council have launched a consultation on an 'On-Street Parking Management Strategy' which looks at the reasons why the demand for on-street parking has become so high, and the effect this has on other road users. The strategy looks to give practical advice of how to consistently manage the most common issues that Central Bedfordshire Council faces with on-street parking.

16.17 For new housing and commercial development, adherence to CBC's parking standards will reflect local factors and ensure that new development does not add to current levels of congestion. Where appropriate, new parking should provide a degree of permeability to reduce the risk of surface water flooding.

16.18 Electric vehicles are a broadly sustainable mode of travel that is increasing market penetration. Building Regulations now require that one new charging point per new home is provided and all new non-residential buildings with more than 10 parking spaces must have a minimum of one charge point and cable routes for one in five (20%) of the total number of spaces. The provision of electric charging points in public car parks is encouraged.

Policy TCP2: Parking

Proposals for new housing and commercial developments will provide parking in line with CBC's parking standards and have adequate on-site parking to meet current and future needs, unless alternative and accessible car parking arrangements can be made which do not add to on-street congestion.

New development should not result in the loss of publicly accessible off-street car parking. Developments which propose to remove off-road parking spaces will only be supported where alternative provision is made which increases or maintains the number of accessible parking spaces available on or within the immediate vicinity of the site.

Where possible, new car parking and hard-standings will be constructed using permeable materials or surfacing to allow natural drainage and reduce the risk of surface water flooding.

Where existing car parks are renovated, new car parks proposed, or extensions made to existing car parks, an appropriate number of charging points must be provided to the level set out in Central Bedfordshire Council's Parking standards. Further provision of appropriate charging facilities in existing relevant locations will be encouraged.

Aspiration TCP2: Improving connections

To improve connectivity within and between the existing and proposed new parts of the Houghton Regis community, the Town Council will work with Central Bedfordshire Council and operators to look for ways to:

- connect the busway to link Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 with Houghton Regis Town Centre as principal routes,*
- link the new open spaces within Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 link with an integrated network of paths and leisure routes,*
- expand the network of paths and cycleways where possible and ensure that routes will be clearly marked with good directional and information signage e.g. about the location and walk/cycle time to specific locations,*
- see that improved bicycle facilities will be created including safe routes and secure parking/storage in the town centre to encourage greater use of cycling,*
- improve road safety on Tithe Farm Road, Parkside Drive and Bedford Road with more speed restrictions and pedestrian and cycle crossings, and greater use of CCTV,*
- conduct a review of parking layouts (e.g. High Street), bay marking in residential parking 'hotspots' and parking for facilities to help meet the needs of residents, visitors and business users,*
- Consider further improvements to public transport in general e.g. to Leagrave Station.*

17. Infrastructure Provision

- 17.1 Development can bring significant benefits to the community including new homes and jobs. However, it can also have a negative impact, for example where additional demand is placed on facilities and services which already may be near capacity. Additional infrastructure needs arising from new development must be addressed at the earliest opportunity and provided in a timely manner whether that be roads, road improvements, medical facilities, school infrastructure, public transport etc. Development that comes forward should also provide for future needs such as maintenance of open spaces.
- 17.2 Planning obligations can be used to secure infrastructure or funding from a developer although there are strict regulations controlling the circumstances in which such contributions can be sought and spent. The money raised can be used to help fund infrastructure which will meet the needs of the community and improvements include roads, schools, parks and playgrounds.
- 17.3 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge per square metre on new developments and applies to new dwellings of any size and any development where the internal area of new build floorspace or extension exceeds 100 square metres. CBC does not currently have a CIL charge in place.
- 17.4 The majority of the funding will be spent by CBC on strategic infrastructure. Developer contributions that are able to be locally determined may be directed to any of the following priorities:
- Improvements to the centre of the town
 - Parks and recreational facilities
 - Footpaths, Cycleways
 - Public Transport
 - Community facilities

- 17.5 Developers are encouraged to engage with the Town Council prior to the preparation of any planning application to ensure that where appropriate and viable, facilities proposed are in line with the local priorities.

Policy I1: Infrastructure for new development

Development proposals must, through Section 106 agreements, Community Infrastructure Levy or other mechanisms, provide for timely delivery of essential infrastructure needs arising from the scheme which may include:

- **site access and any additional road capacity, car parking and public transport provision,**
- **new infrastructure to ensure the development is accessible by foot, cycle and people with mobility impairment and connections to link with existing walking and cycling routes,**
- **provision of convenient access to the middle of the town by foot,**
- **any additional capacity in local services in particular health and schools,**
- **recreational open space and amenity open space,**
- **future maintenance of open spaces, hard and soft landscaping and other public areas and facilities,**
- **appropriate and adequate lighting; and**
- **suitable capacity in local infrastructure including power supply, sewerage and drainage.**

18. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

18.1 This section outlines the approach to the implementation of the Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan, including: working in partnership, funding mechanisms, priority projects and monitoring/review. The approach will be that new development should be supported by the timely delivery of infrastructure, services and facilities necessary to provide a balanced, self-sufficient community.

Working in partnership

18.2 Houghton Regis Town Council is committed to Localism and locally informed influence over planning decisions and it will be the key organisation in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will build upon its excellent track record in engaging in planning decisions (reactively through consultation and proactively through promoting the policies of this plan) and by delivering related projects for the local community. However, it is recognised that partnership working is needed for the potential of the plan to be realised. Partnership and joint working will be key elements in the successful implementation of the plan. The main organisations and the roles that they can play are summarised below.

- **Central Bedfordshire Council** - Planning Policy, Development Control, Housing Management and Improvement, Economic Development, Open Spaces, Recreation and Community Facilities, Highways and Transport, Education, Landscape and Social Services.
- **Adjoining Parish Councils** – Assessing impact of cross boundary planning applications.
- **Environment Agency** The planning, design and delivery of development, taking account of: Flood risk management; Water quality and water resources, Waste management, Land contamination & soil and Environmental permits and other regulation.
- **Site owners and developers** will need to liaise with the Town Council as well as the other relevant agencies involved in development.

Funding and Implementation

18.3 Financial contributions will be sought from developers through Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or Infrastructure Levy which provides a legal framework to raise funds to provide the infrastructure needed to cope with new developments.

- 18.4 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations of the 2011 Localism Act enable areas with a Neighbourhood Plan in place to receive at least 25% of the CIL (25% uncapped, paid to the Town Council) raised in their area to direct to their own local infrastructure priorities. However, Central Bedfordshire Council does not have CIL in place, although the emerging Government proposals for an Infrastructure Levy may change the way in which contributions can be sought from developments.
- 18.5 In addition, the Town Council will seek to influence annual and other budget decisions by CBC on housing, open space and recreation, economic development, community facilities and transport, through the Local Transport Plan.
- 18.6 The Town Council will also work with the appropriate agencies and organisations to develop funding bids to help to achieve Neighbourhood Plan policies and objectives. This might include, but not be limited to: The National Lottery; UK Government programmes; land fill tax credits, EU Funds and LEP funding.
- 18.7 The Plan will be used by the Town Council to:
- guide comments on planning applications
 - negotiate with landowners and developers to achieve the best possible outcomes from new development
 - direct financial resources to the village in a structured way
 - bring together groups or working parties to improve the village environment
 - lobby local authorities to support the parishioners wishes and aspirations

19. Monitoring and Review

- 19.1 It is important to check that progress is made towards meeting the objectives and policies of the Plan. The Town Council will report on the implementation of the Plan at least every 5 years and consider:
- if progress is being made to achieve the vision and the objectives of the Plan
 - if progress is being made towards the implementation of the policies in the Plan
 - if financial contributions available to the community arising from development is being targeted towards the identified plans and projects
 - if the Plan remains based on the most up-to-date information

- if the Plan is being taken into account by CBC when determining planning applications

19.2 It will then conclude whether a review is required. If so, it will secure opinions of residents and stakeholders to update the Plan.

Annexe 1: Policies Map

Annexe 2: Listed Buildings and Structures

There are 23 buildings and structures which are listed buildings, i.e. on the list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, drawn up by Historic England, plus there are two scheduled monuments in the town:

- Church of All Saints, Grade I,
 - Houghton Hall, Grade II*,
 - C17 Range of Outbuildings to Northwest of Houghton Hall, Grade II*,
 - Houghton Court, Grade II,
 - Lodge to Houghton Hall, Grade II,
 - Wall and Gate Piers to Houghton Hall, Grade II,
 - 104 and 106, High Street, Grade II, High Street,
 - Red Cow Farm Cottage, Grade II, Bedford Road,
 - The Crown Public House, Grade II, The Green,
 - The Red House, Grade II, The Green,
 - The Red Lion Public House, Grade II, Bedford Road,
 - Vane Cottage, Grade II, Park Road North,
 - 21,22 and 23, East End, Grade II, Crossways,
 - Barn to Northeast of Springwell Cottage, Grade II, Sewell Lane,
 - Bodger's Barn and Barn to Rear, Grade II, Sewell Lane,
 - Lane Farmhouse, Grade II, Sewell Lane,
 - Manor Farmhouse, Grade II, Sewell Lane,
 - Sewell Farmhouse, Grade II, Sewell Lane,
 - Springwell Cottage, Grade II, Sewell Lane,
 - Sundial Cottage, Grade II, Sewell Lane
 - Dene Hollow, Grade II, Sundon Road,
 - Easthill Farmhouse, Grade II, Sundon Road, (Townsend Farmhouse, delisted)
 - Oakwell Park, Grade II, Oakwell Park, Thorn,
-
- Thorn Spring moated site and associated woodbanks (Scheduled Monument)
 - Maiden Bower hillfort (Scheduled Monument)

Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest.

Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest.

Grade II buildings are of special interest.

Annexe 3: Table of Aims and Policies

Neighbourhood Plan Aims		Policies	Aspirations
1	To identify and support measures to develop the appearance, vitality and facilities of the town centre and local centres of Houghton Regis	TC1, TC2, TC3, TC4, TC5, TC6	Aspiration TC1
2	To support, protect and enhance the social assets, community facilities and services (including schools and healthcare, leisure and recreation) to meet residents' needs.	TC5, TC6, GSR1, GSR3	Aspiration H1
3	To ensure that all new development is well-designed, sympathetic and sustainable and enhances the character and function of Houghton Regis.	H2,	Aspiration H1 Aspiration H2
4	To respond to housing needs by supporting suitable housing for people of all ages and means.	H1	Aspiration H1
5	To protect the rural aspect of the countryside outside of the urban areas.	GSR4, BNF1	
6	To protect, enhance and where possible add to the green and blue infrastructure of the Parish.	GSR1, GSR2, GSR3, GSR4, BNF1	Aspiration GSR3 Aspiration GSR4
7	To preserve and enhance Houghton Regis's Green, Conservation Area and heritage assets (whether listed or not).	H1	Aspiration H1
8	To support existing local businesses and encourage new small and medium-sized businesses which provide sustainable employment opportunities.	BE1	Aspiration BE1
9	To identify and support measures to encourage walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of transport as means of fulfilling shorter journeys.	GSR5, TCP1	Aspiration GSR4, Aspiration TCP1
10	To identify and support measures which improve traffic management including parking and speed control.	TCP2	Aspiration TCP1, Aspiration TCP2
11	To identify and support appropriate infrastructure developments which reflect the community's needs and keep it an attractive, well-planned and safe place for everyone.	I1	