

# **HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

## **Planning Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on**

**23<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: M Herber Chairman  
E Billington  
E Cooper  
Y Farrell  
D Jones  
C Slough  
D Taylor

Officers: Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services  
Amanda Samuels Administration Officer

Public: 3

Apologies: Councillors: 0

#### **13261 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

None.

#### **13262 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

A letter had been received from a member of the public regarding planning application CB/25/01554/REG3. Members agreed that this should be read out under the relevant agenda item when a presentation would also be made by the Headmaster of the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB).

#### **13263 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **13264 MINUTES**

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025.

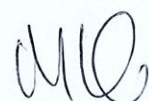
Members enquired if there had been an update on minute 13209. The Head of Democratic Services advised that a response was still awaited.

**Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

#### **13265 PLANNING MATTERS**

**(a) The following planning applications were considered:**

CB/25/01554/REG3 Demolition of the former leisure centre. Creation of a new car  
(click for more details) park. Change of use of building to a pre-school and access to



adult skills area. Alterations to windows, doors and wall treatments following demolition.  
Houghton Regis Leisure Centre, Parkside Drive, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5PX  
Central Bedfordshire Council

The Headmaster of ACB stated that the old leisure centre had been an invaluable resource for vulnerable pupils who would be negatively impacted by the loss of facilities and the proposed solution of transporting them to other sites.

ACB had been in dialogue with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and had requested that the old school gym be maintained. The Surveyors report had stated this proposal would mean a reduction in the cost of demolition.

The additional parking facility proposed at this site was felt to be unnecessary as sufficient parking was available elsewhere, e.g. areas around the school and the new leisure centre.

HRTC was encouraged to submit a letter rejecting the proposal and requesting that it be redesigned and reconsidered.

There had been no process of consultation to air concerns.


A letter from Bruce Hallam of the Houghton Regis Badminton Club was read out.

The letter questioned the justification for the demolition of the site. Access to Houghton School – the proposed alternative facility - was unable to provide the level of access required by the local community.

It was urged that the demolition should be paused and a transparent public review held to establish how this decision had been reached.

Members were in agreement with the points raised:

- Sufficient parking was available in the surrounding area, including the campus and the new leisure centre.
- There was no clear rationale for the demolition of the building or for why the gym hall could not be used. There had been no satisfactory response to concerns or questions.
- A lack of consultation.
- Demolition of the site, with no alternative facility, meant that the needs of vulnerable children would fail to be met.
- Sports hall provision did not match previous provision levels and failed to meet the CBC Leisure Strategy.
- The proposal for increased parking provided no benefit to the community of Houghton Regis.





Members were advised that Cllr Alderman had been attempting to engage with Cllr Steven Watkins prior to the demolition of the building but had not been successful as yet.

It was requested that a suitable objection was composed.

Members noted the following items from the decision document for the original leisure centre application in 2022:

- 1.8 Leisure Strategy  
this stated that the sports hall within the existing leisure centre would be replaced with a new sports hall; and that a Community Use Agreements would be sought to secure community access for any new sports halls within schools.
- 1.13  
This outlined what the CUA was expected to cover.

Members felt that these objectives had not been achieved.

Houghton Regis Town Council raised strong objections to the application.

**Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council wishes to formally raise strong objections to the proposed demolition of the former leisure centre and associated plans for redevelopment. This objection is made on the grounds outlined below, reflecting both public and councillor concerns.**

The leisure centre has, over many years, been a vital community resource. It has not only served recreational needs but has provided a critical support mechanism for students with learning disabilities and those at risk of exclusion. The removal of this facility would have a tangible and detrimental impact on the educational experience and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable young people in our town.

It is disappointing that the only stated benefit of demolishing the leisure centre is the provision of additional parking spaces. The application documentation itself admits that there is no associated improvement to site safety. The suggestion that parking is a driving factor appears to be unfounded when considering that the newly constructed car park is not currently being used to full capacity during the day. In addition, there is already substantial parking provision across the wider campus site.

It has been suggested by residents and councillors alike that a more suitable and cost-effective alternative would be to retain the old sports hall, which could be repurposed as needed. This would not only preserve an important facility but also reduce





overall project costs. Documents previously presented to Central Bedfordshire Council indicate that this approach has merit and deserves further exploration.

There is significant concern that no meaningful or official public consultation has taken place regarding the proposed demolition. Members of the community feel that they have not had the opportunity to engage with or influence this decision-making process. In a project of this scale and with such lasting implications, this is unacceptable.

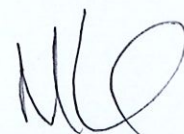
Further concerns have been raised in relation to the lack of alignment between this proposal and Central Bedfordshire Council's own Leisure Strategy. The current plans do not appear to deliver the strategic objectives as outlined in that document. Councillors have also queried the logic behind demolishing part of the existing structure – particularly the section which is most frequently used – whilst leaving less functional parts of the building intact.

The application also references a change of use to accommodate a preschool; however, it is unclear whether this is necessary given that such a provision is already in situ. This raises further questions about the purpose and coherence of the development proposals.

In summary, we object to this application on the following grounds:

1. Lack of meaningful public consultation – Local residents and councillors were not properly consulted prior to submission of the proposals.
2. Loss of vital community facility – The demolition of the leisure centre would negatively affect students with additional educational needs and broader community access.
3. Questionable justification for increased parking – Current car parks are underused, and alternative solutions have not been fully explored.
4. Inconsistency with CBC's own leisure strategy – The application does not appear to align with the aims set out in the leisure strategy.
5. Unclear benefits to the town – The wider community does not stand to benefit from the proposed changes, and the justification provided lacks substance.
6. Concerns about the proposed change of use – There is confusion over the requirement for a preschool use in a building that is already accommodating such services.

Houghton Regis Town Council urges Central Bedfordshire Council to revisit this application in full, properly consult with the local community, and work to deliver a proposal that reflects the genuine needs and values of Houghton Regis.





CB/25/01273/FULL  
(click for more details)

Improvement works to the roof including new roof. Removal of old plant equipment installation of new plant equipment. New condensers to elevations.  
Unit 17, Humphrys Road, Woodside Industrial Estate, Dunstable, LU5 4TB

**Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council raised no objection to this application.**

***Permissions / Approvals / Consents***

None received.

***Refusals:***

None received.

***Withdrawals:***

None received.

**13266     CB/25/00370/FULL 65 – 67 CEMETERY ROAD – APPEAL NOTICE**

Members were advised that the committee considered this application at the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

The Town Council submitted the following objections/comments:

Members felt this application constituted overdevelopment. Members also supported the report from the Tree and Landscape Officer objecting to the removal of trees, most notably those outside of the boundary.

Houghton Regis Town Council raised an objection to this application on the grounds of:

- Overdevelopment
- The removal of trees outside of the boundary

Members were asked to consider whether:

1. The Town Council wishes to maintain its previous objection and submit representations to the Planning Inspectorate reaffirming the grounds of objection; or
2. The Town Council wishes to modify or add to its previous comments; or
3. The Town Council has no further comments to make on this matter.

Members agreed that no further comments would be made on this matter.

**Resolved:**

**To consider the appeal notification and determine what action, if any, the Town Council wishes to take in response to the planning appeal.**



**13267     CB/24/00677/FULL     LAND BETWEEN ARENSEN CENTRE AND FOSTER AVENUE, ARENSEN WAY – APPEAL NOTICE**

Members were advised that the committee considered this application at the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.

Members highlighted that this application was also later represented at the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 (Minute 13061).

The Town Council submitted the following objections/comments:

Houghton Regis Town Council raised objections to this application on the grounds of:

Houghton Regis Town Council raised an objection to this application on the grounds that this parcel of land is designated as a Local Green Space in the recently approved referendum and adopted Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan (NHP).

Policy GSR3 of the NHP, Local Green Spaces, states that inappropriate development within the Local Green Spaces will not be supported except in very special circumstances.

The Town Council is not aware of the existence of any “very special circumstances” in this case.

Members were asked to consider whether:

1. The Town Council wishes to maintain its previous objection and submit representations to the Planning Inspectorate reaffirming the grounds of objection; or
2. The Town Council wishes to modify or add to its previous comments; or
3. The Town Council has no further comments to make on this matter.

Members agreed that no further comments would be made on this matter.

**Resolved:**                      **To consider the appeal notification and determine what action, if any, the Town Council wishes to take in response to the planning appeal.**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.33pm**

**Dated this 4<sup>th</sup> day of August 2025**

**Chairman**

