

Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (reporting to Planning Committee)

Committee Functions

The Steering Group comprises Members of Houghton Regis Town Council, a Member of Central Bedfordshire Council and representatives from the Community.

HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE	
1.	Background
1.1	Houghton Regis Town Council has resolved to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and has determined that it will cover the Parish of Houghton Regis.
1.2	The Town Council, while retaining full responsibility for the Plan, recognizes that the content of the Plan must be driven by the community and the need to draw on skills and expertise from outside the Council.
1.3	A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will lead the project to successful completion.
2.	Name
2.1	The name of the group will be Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. (HRNPSG)
3.	Purpose
3.1	The main purpose of the Group is to oversee the preparation of the Plan in order that it will be progressed to Independent Examination and a successful community referendum and ultimate adoption.
3.2	The Steering Group will engage the local community to ensure that the Plan is truly representative of the ambitions of Houghton Regis. The Group will maximize support for the approach taken in the NP by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process.
3.3	Liaise with, and direct the work of, consultants and specialists engaged to further the Plan as appropriate.
3.4	Consider the options and develop policies to inform the future development and use of land in the neighbourhood area.
3.5	Be aware of the development areas identified in the Local Plan, including establishing further development areas if they are required.
3.6	Ensure the NP is supported by effective on-going programmes of communication and consultation with the community, CBC, businesses, adjoining parishes, developers and other key parties.
3.7	Identify sources of funding.
3.8	Liaise with statutory, and other, relevant authorities and organizations to ensure the Plan is as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.
3.9	Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many groups and organizations in the community as possible.
3.10	Determine the types of consultation and information gathering to be used.
3.11	Be responsible for the analysis arising from consultations and the production and distribution of the final reports.
3.12	Conform to national policies and with EU and Human Rights legislation.
3.13	Report back regularly to the Town Council on progress, significant issues and budgetary implications.
3.14	Present key documents and the draft NP for consultation with the Town Council, local residents, CBC, businesses, the Independent Examiner, and assist in arrangements for the Referendum.
3.15	Present recommendations for the implementation of The Plan.

4. Membership and Conduct	
4.1	The HRNPSG will be formed from current Town Councillors, CBC Councillors for the town and local members of the community. The Group will be comprised of 12 members, the composition of which to be 5 Town Councillors, (appointed by the full Town Council), 1 CBC Councillor and 6 representatives from the local community. The Town Clerk, or Senior Manager, will be present in an ex-officio , non-voting capacity at all meetings. The Group will only be quorate when 50% of its members are present.
4.2	The HRNPSG may co-opt additional support to carry out specific task for as short or long a period as necessary.
4.3	Membership is voluntary.
4.4	All members of the HRNPSG must abide by the Code of Conduct of Houghton Regis Town Council and in doing so must submit a register of interests.
4.5	All members of the HRNPSG must declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to the decisions or recommendations made by it. This may include membership of an organization, ownership of interest in land or business or any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the HRNPSG.
4.6	A person will cease to be a member of the HRNPSG upon notification to the Chairman in writing of their wish to resign.
5. Meetings	
5.1	The HRNPSG will elect a Chairman (to be a Town Councillor), Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer from its membership to remain in these positions until the project is complete. If these positions should become vacant, the Group will elect an alternative.
5.2	In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the HRNPSG will elect a Chairman from its members present at the meeting, for that meeting.
5.3	The HRNPSG will arrange its own meeting schedule and will meet as required.
5.4	At least 7 days clear notice of meetings will be sent to members via email.
5.5	The Secretary will keep a record of meetings and circulate the Minutes to HRNPSG members and the Town Council (via the Planning Committee Clerk) no more that 14 days after each meeting.
5.6	Decisions made by HRNPSG will be by consensus at Group meetings. Where a vote is required, each member will have one vote. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion. The Chairman will have one casting vote.
6. Working Groups	
6.1	HRNPSG may establish working groups for dealing with specific issues, made up of volunteers from the community, to aid them in any NP related work.
6.2	Each working group will have a lead person from the HRNPSG.
7. Affiliations, Interests and Contributions.	
7.1	The HRNPSG will not itself be affiliated to any particular political party. It is recognized that Councillors and community members may have such affiliations, which will be declared where relevant.
7.2	The Localism Act and Houghton Regis Town Council's Code of Conduct will apply to all members of the HRNPSG. All members of the HRNPSG must declare any pecuniary interest that may be perceived as being relevant to a decision of the HRNPSG. This may include membership of an organization, ownership of land or a business, or any other matter that may be considered to be relevant. Such declarations must be recorded and publically available.
	Having declared an interest, that member will not take part in a discussion or vote on the related issue. In event of disagreement, the Chairman's decision will be binding. Organizations and businesses may assist in the production of the NP and may contribute

	7.3	to the cost of producing it. Details of any donations or assistance must be made publicly available and must not influence the recommendations of The Plan.
8. Finance		
	8.1	Funding, including grants, will be applied for and held by the Town Council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan development work.
	8.2	HRNPSG will notify the Town Council (via the Planning Committee) of any planned expenditure before it is incurred
9. Conduct		
	9.1	It is expected that all HRNPSG members will abide by the principles and practice of the Town Council Code of Conduct, including the declaration of interests.
	9.2	Whilst members as individuals will be accountable to their parent organizations, the HRNPSG as a whole is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that The Plan reflects their collective expectations.
	9.3	HRNPSG will achieve this through applying the following principles:
	i	Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict;
	ii	Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion and belief; and
	iii	Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.
10 Changes to the Terms of Reference		
	10.1	This document may be amended with the support of at least two-thirds of the current membership at a HRNPSG meeting and with the approval of the Town Council.
11 Dissolution of the HRNPSG		
	11.1	The HRNPSG will continue to operate until the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan.
	11.2	Upon dissolution of the HRNPSG, any remaining resources will be passed to the Town Council.