

The Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan

It has been a long road to get to this point, but we are almost ready now to bring the plan out for its statutory consultation!

In recent weeks we have had some informal talks with Central Bedfordshire Council, who have given us their initial thoughts. This has been very much appreciated and has led to a few changes, particularly to one section of the plan. The advantage of doing this now is that it is a much simpler process than responding to a formal comment received during the consultation and should result in a smoother formal consultation process with the Council.

The consultation will be a minimum six-week period when various interested bodies, such as other local town councils, Central Bedfordshire Council, and environmental groups, along with all Houghton Regis residents get to look over and comment on the draft plan. Following on from the consultation, the steering group will take that feedback and either make changes to the draft plan or document why no change was made, and then the revised plan will go to an outside expert for one more looking at before it will be put on a referendum for residents to vote on.

As of the time of writing, we are not sure of the exact dates of the consultation, but we are looking at May-July as the most likely window. For residents of Houghton Regis, the consultation will consist of an online questionnaire and several public drop-in meetings. Comments will also be welcome by mail or email. Details of all this, along with a summary of the actual proposals in the plan, will be sent in a flier to every household in the town and there will be an active advertising campaign in various media, so everyone should have a chance to look at and comment on the plan.

The plan document is quite long, but we do hope residents will look at those parts that particularly affect them and at the summary of the proposals. We believe that this is a good plan that will help us, the people of Houghton Regis, have a strong voice in the future of our town, something many have been lamenting for a long time that we have not had.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the consultation events and hope you will all turn out to vote when the referendum comes.

David Gibbons,

Chair, Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.