



## Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan – May 2020

Just when you thought you were making progress life decides to temporarily make you slow down.

### **So, where did you get to?**

Well the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group managed to finalise the draft of the Neighbourhood Plan and submitted this plan to Central Bedfordshire Council.

All neighbourhood plans must meet 'the basic conditions' set out in planning legislation. These relate to having regard to national policy, achieving sustainable development, general conformity with strategic local policy and not breaching EU obligations. The plan must also comply with human rights law. As Central Bedfordshire Council are the planning authority it is down to them to consider the draft plan and provide a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report, based on their findings.

Strategic environmental assessments may be required for neighbourhood plans, where they are likely to cause significant environment effects.

It is a requirement that all neighbourhood plans submitted for examination be accompanied by either a strategic environmental assessment report or a screening determination stating that the plan would not have significant environmental effects and does not require a strategic environmental assessment, giving the reasons for that determination.

Central Bedfordshire Council have completed their screening report this report has been sent out to statutory consultees

The statutory consultees have until the 19<sup>th</sup> May to provide a response. Following these responses Central Bedfordshire Council will provide an outcome to the group, hopefully this outcome will be issued late May. Fingers crossed this outcome will allow the group to move on to the stage of the process which is to undertake a 6-week, Regulation 14, public consultation on the plan. Well, that would be the intention however, even if given the green light, things have changed due to the current Covid-19 pandemic.

**What changes have been introduced to neighbourhood planning in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) have provided details on some important changes as detailed in their communication below.

Neighbourhood planning groups or local planning authorities intending to undertake public consultation and notification (as set out under Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 respectively of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012) should consider the Government's current guidance on staying at home and away from others, or any superseding guidance.

**What impact does this have on the Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan?**

This means that unfortunately, until the current restrictions have been lifted and regulations change, the group cannot progress to the next stage of the planning process which would be the Regulation 14 public consultation stage prior to then submitting the plan for examination. Of course, when things change, I will update everyone, in the meantime please take care and keep safe.

David Gibbons, Chair, Houghton Regis Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group  
6<sup>th</sup> May 2020