



(DRAFT) MINUTES OF FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 15th MARCH 2022
AT 7:45PM AT THE RUFUS CENTRE & VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS

Present

Cllr A Snape (Chairman)
Cllr J Dann (Vice Chairman)
Cllr A Lutley
Cllr G Mackey
Cllr M Platt
Cllr D Toinko
Cllr P Earles
Cllr K Badham
Cllr C Thompson
Cllr J Gleave
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr A Chacko

Cllr R Shaw (via virtual access)

Cllr C Gomm – Central Beds Ward Member
Cllr N Bunyan – Central Beds Ward Member

Also present:

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Joe Daly – Member of the Public

5217. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and approved from Cllr J Roberts – On Holiday.

Apologies were received and approved from Cllr I Blazeby – Unwell.

5218. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Cllr R Shaw item 10a.

Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None declared.

5219. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised that he had attended the following Civic engagements.

- Civic Charity meal in Leighton Linlade.
- Civic Charity meal in Sandy.

The Town Mayor informed members that the Murder Mystery event being held on the 19th March 2022 had to be postponed due to illness and the date for the event would be moved to the 28th May 2022.

5220. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Ward members informed Councillors that DMC at CBC would be hearing the Steppingley Crematorium application on the 16th March 2022. A number of Councils have objected including Flitwick. Ward members noted that no speaker from FTC was on the speakers list.

FTC members raised serious concerns that the opportunity to speak at DMC had been missed and the TC was asked to investigate this.

Ward members informed that Govia Thames Link were committed to delivering the step free access at the railway station with a start date of 2024, after the interchange project is complete.

Members were informed that the enabling works for the older persons accommodation in Steppingley road had started.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Bunyan for following up on the materials that were to be used for the fencing of the Transport interchange scheme.

The Chairman raised concerns that the current road works and road closures were having an impact on local businesses, no information on the works were being passed to local businesses, this is not helpful when businesses need to plan ahead.

Ward members do chase to establish when roadworks are happening, and changes do take place when we have raised concerns. Shopkeepers and Businesses should contact the contracts manager.

The Chairman commented that the works so far are of a good quality.

The Chairman asked Members if they had any questions for the Ward Members.

Members raised a question on the older people's accommodation on Steppingley Road, at the launch event we were informed that the accommodation would be one and two bed flats that the elderly could downsize into. It would appear that the flats are going to be shared ownership or rental, what is the rational for not being able to purchase a flat.

The Ward Members would seek answers on this point and suggested that we seek a presentation from the contracts manager of the scheme.

Members asked Ward Members if they had received any response on the question raised at the September 2021 meeting regarding wheelchair users crossing from Tesco's and drop off points at the Railway Station.

Ward Members had received a plan of what will be going where in regard to the development and believed that the Chairman may have received a copy of this. The Chairman would pass a copy of this plan to members.

Concerns were also raised about disabled bays being completely blocked and members of the public receiving fixed penalty notices for turning around at the Station, more information would be helpful.

Ward members would speak with Councillor Dixon.

5221. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There was one member of the public present, who did not wish to speak.

5222 INVITED SPEAKER

There was no invited speaker.

5223. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Members raised a question on councillors not being named in the minutes. Some members felt that Councillors names should be used in the minutes.

The Town Clerk felt that the minutes would end up being inordinately long. The Town Clerk was instructed to take this back and discuss it with SMT.

5224. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. Subject to minor amendments, members **ADOPTED** the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on Tuesday 15th February 2022.
- b. Members considered and **APPROVED** the resolutions and recommendations of the Planning Services Committee Meeting, held on Thursday 17th February 2022.
- c. Members **RESOLVED** that the **resolutions and recommendations** of the Personnel Committee Meeting, held on Tuesday 22nd February 2022 be taken under **Exempt**.
- d. Members received and **APPROVED** the resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on Tuesday 1st March 2022.
- e. Members received and **APPROVED** the resolutions and recommendations of the Planning Services Committee Meeting, held on Tuesday 8th March 2022, the item relating to the Rural Match Funding would be taken under item 10e of the Council agenda.
- f. Members received and **APPROVED** the resolutions and recommendations of the Business Services Committee Meeting, held on Thursday 10th March 2022.
- g. Members **noted** the Planning Committee decisions from 17th February and 8th March.

5225. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 15th February 2022.

Members asked if the Town Clerk had received a response on the concerns around the crossing and drop off points at the Transport interchange. The Town Clerk had received no response.

- b. For Members to receive any updates from Officers.

There were no officer updates.

5226. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Councillor Vacancies – Co-option**

Members were asked to consider the circulated report prepared by the Chairman and consider the recommendations presented. (Cllr Shaw left the meeting).

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Joe Daly as Co-Opted Councillor to Flitwick Town Council.

Cllr Daly signed the acceptance of office form and took part in the remainder of the Council meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Ms Becky Meredith Shaw as Co-Opted Councillor to Flitwick Town Council

b. Corporate Risk Management Scheme

Members were asked to review the Corporate Risk Register circulated.

Members asked how regularly the risk would be updated and asked if any major changes would be brought before Corporate. A number of anomalies were identified within the scheme, it was **RESOLVED** to defer this item to the next Town Council meeting.

c. Fuel Card – Public Realm Team

Members were asked to consider a report from the Environmental Services Officer and consider recommendations within the report.

Members asked what the difference was in using a fuel tank as opposed to using fuel cards. The Town Clerk advised that we would receive a reduction on pump prices using fuel cards, but that members should note that after the Steppingley Road development is complete there would no space to site a fuel tank.

It was **RESOLVED** to dispose of the current fuel tank and obtain fuel cards.

*The Chairman moved that members resolve to go into exempt to take item 13b, as the outcome from this item may impact on the next item on the Town Council agenda item 10d Financial Regulations. It was **RESOLVED** to move to exempt.*

*Following a resolution on item 13b of the agenda, Members **RESOLVED** to move out of Exempt to take the next item on the agenda.*

d. Financial Regulations

Members were asked to review the Council's Financial Regulations.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations

e. Rural Match Funding

Members were asked to consider options from Community Services and Planning relating to the Rural Match Funding. Business Services and Corporate Services did not put ideas forward.

Members discussed the proposals put forward; it was felt that we should be mindful about the use of the RCF. Members felt that match funding benches would be the preferred option and would have the best impact. The remaining proposals could be looked at in the future and could be taken back to Community as they are not a priority at this time. The Council at the same time should investigate what pots of 106 were available as an addition to the RMF Scheme.

It was **RESOLVED** accept the 4 potential sites put forward for benches with a maximum of £2,000 match funding from the Town Council RCF.

f. Planning Application – 2 High Street

Members were asked to consider the following application for 2 High Street, Flitwick, Beds, MK45 1DS – CB/22/00735/FULL – Erection of 2 no two storey buildings to create 6 self-contained flats with associated parking and ancillary works.

It was **RESOLVED** to neither support nor object to the application, that we ask planning at CBC to look at the constraints this application may cause with regards to overdevelopment.

g. Rolling Capital Fund (RCF)

Members were asked to consider the following application to the RCF:

Community Services – £216 contribution to hold a laser light show from the roof of Barclays Bank (with permission) from 22:00 on Thursday 2nd June (£1,900 to be funded from Jubilee Budget).

It was **RESOLVED** to support the event and ask officers to look at the revenue budget to fund the £216.00 contribution.

h. Joint Committee

Members were asked to note the circulated update report on the Joint Committee and consider the recommendations presented.

The Chairman gave some background on the meeting held with CBC around setting up a Joint Committee for Flitwick Town Council. It has been agreed that initially meetings will go ahead informally whilst CBC revisit Joint Committees in general. Running these meetings would give everyone an opportunity to get up to speed before any decision is formalised.

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor will be FJC members with one other to be elected at the Annual Statutory meeting. The three Ward members will be the CBC representatives.

It was **RESOLVED** to go ahead with the FJC Committee / CBC joint Committee as laid out.

5227. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Land Off Church Road, Flitwick

Members were asked to formally note a copy of recent correspondence regarding a proposal for development for an elderly person's housing scheme (Class C2). The letter sets out changes to the original proposal based on feedback from public consultation and information on this can be found via www.flitwick-grange.co.uk.

This item was noted.

5228. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

To adjourn for a period of up to 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Council, through the Chairman, in respect of any other business of the Town Council.

Each Speaker will give their name to the Chairman prior to speaking, which will be recorded in the minutes, unless that person requests otherwise. Each Speaker will be allowed **(one) three-minute slot**.

No members of the public were present.

5229. EXEMPT ITEMS

The following resolution was **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

13a Minutes & Recommendations of Meetings – for consideration

13b Responsible Finance Officer – for consideration

13c Car Park Use Request – for consideration

13d Local Organisation Lease – for consideration

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolved** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

Meeting ended at 21.43

**Recommendations and resolutions of the Community Services Committee
12th April 2022**

The Town Council are asked to consider and **approve** the **Resolutions** of the Community Services Committee

968. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the apologies for absence from Cllr Chacko being out of the country and Cllr Platt having work commitments.

974. MINUTES

- a. It was **RESOLVED** to move this item to exempt as members had questions relating to the exempt items contained within.

976. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Village Hall / Hub Car Park Lights

It was **RESOLVED** to instruct Officers to investigate an alternative power supply and external lights.

b. Commonwealth War Graves Commission Signage at the Burial Ground

It was **RESOLVED** to accept that the signage be placed at the entrance to the burial ground indicating that there are Commonwealth War Graves are present.

d. Grant Applications

It was **RESOLVED** to decline the grant application by Beds & Herts Community Rail Partnership

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the grant application by Food Extra, operating out of St Peter and St Paul's Church, Flitwick for the total amount requested of £1,500.

It was **RESOLVED** to decline the grant application by Flitwick Cricket Club.

It was **RESOLVED** to decline the grant application by Flitwick Scout Club.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the grant application by Golden Age, Flitwick for the total amount requested of £300.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the grant application by Share: Flitwick and Ampthill for the total amount requested of £850.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the grant application by Steppingstone for the total amount requested of £500.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the grant application by Templefield Association for the amount of £500.



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Report to Town Council, 19th April 2022: Rolling Capital Fund Overspend – Christmas Lights Switch on Event

Implications of recommendations

Corporate Strategy:

Finance: Rolling Capital Fund

Equality: Increases inclusivity.

Environment: Takes forward policy objectives directly.

Background

It was Resolved at Town Council on Tuesday 19th October to allocate £1,100 from the Rolling Capital Fund to pay for a PA system and the Ampthill Town Band to perform at the Christmas Lights Switch on Event.

Members discussed concerns around rising Covid cases and the need to do a scaled back event to ensure any Covid restrictions at the time could be met.

Introduction

After the Town Council meeting had taken place, it became apparent there would not be any further Covid restrictions put in place by Government. Outdoor events were able to go ahead and all paperwork regarding the Christmas Lights Switch On event was submitted to SAG to ensure all safety measures were being met.

Due to the public response when promoting the event, it became apparent that extra lighting and power supplies would be needed for vendors and for Health & Safety reasons.

Needing the extra lighting and power added an additional charge to the PA system invoice, totalling £525. Offline discussions with some Councillors led to the event being larger than originally planned for.

With the total cost of the invoices (including Ampthill Town Band) being £1,725

Officers realise the overspend is above the margin approved. The consideration of this request would have been put to Council sooner however it was only raised as an issue by the Accountant as part of the Year End close down.

Recommendation

1. To approve the additional funds of £625 from the Rolling Capital Fund for the project to cover the expenditure for the PA System, Lights, Power, and Ampthill Town Band.

Susan Eldred
Community Services Manager

Rolling Capital Fund Balances 2021-22

31 March 2022

315	Rolling Capital Fund	Opening Balance	£	228,260	
		21/22 Funding	£	126,900	
		21/22 Available Funds	£	355,160	Accepted RCF budget variance at 5%
		LESS Actual Spending	£	189,085	
		LESS Committed Spending Remaining	£	45,441	
		LESS Overspend Funded by Central RCF	£	754	
		21/22 RCF Funds Available	£	119,880	

RCF Code		Description	Committee	Minute Ref	Budget Committed	Spend to date	Funding Received (1177)	Overspend Funded by Central RCF	RCF Commitment Remaining			2022/23 RCF Actions	
4212	110	PROJ - Country Park RCF	Community	None	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%		No amounts have been committed for this project.	Roll over RCF balance of £0
4215	110	PROJ - Flit Valley Walk RCF	Corporate & Community	None	£ 2,000	£ 2,946	£ 2,405	£ -	£ 1,459	73%	Green	Greensands grant of £2,405 received (1177/110) in addition to stated budget	Roll over RCF balance of £1,459
4801	110	PROJ - Rendezvous Air Con RCF	Business	1248b	£ 7,865	£ 7,865	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%		RCF COMPLETE	RCF Complete - Close
4802	110	PROJ - The Hub Refurb RCF	Community	809a 833c	£ 20,000	£ 14,554	£ -	£ -	£ 5,446	27%	Green		Roll Over RCF balance of £5446
4803	110	PROJ - Manor Park Heritage RCF	Community	809c	£ 28,000	£ 175	£ 6,198	£ -	£ 34,023	122%	Green	\$106 Grants monies received £6,198 (1177/110) in addition to stated budget - rolled forward to 22/23 (jnl 2697)	Roll over RCF balance of £27,825 Roll Over Funding Rec'd of £6,198
4804	110	PROJ - Gym Equipment RCF	Community	None	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%		NO LONGER ACTIVE - match funded so RCF not required	RCF Complete - Close
4806	110	PROJ - Wildflower Meadows RCF	Community	821f	£ 1,240	£ 1,465	£ -	£ 225	£ -	0%		18% overspend to be addressed by Business Services. Spend relates to single invoice. Original budget under estimated. DECISION REQUIRED	RCF Complete - Close & cover overspend from RCP
4807	110	PROJ - Rufus Centre Refurb RCF	Business	20/21	£ 4,870	£ 4,870	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%		RCF COMPLETE Balance of spending from last year's authorisation.	RCF Complete - Close
4808	110	PROJ - Manor Park Fencing RCF	Community	730e	£ 3,950	£ 3,500	£ -	£ -	£ 450	11%	Green	21/22 RCF 'rolled forward' budget set at original level of £15,450 without subtracting previous year's spending. Budget adjusted to reflect 21/22 spending only and true balance remaining.	Roll Over RCF balance of £450
4809	110	PROJ - Barclays Bank Build 21/22	Council	4142a	£ 89,510	£ 89,510	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%		Agreed from EMR but to be managed through RCF. Original budget did not account for legal costs and stamp duty. Following DCK consultation budget adjusted to reflect true costs.	RCF Complete - Close
4810	110	PROJ - Play Equip Repairs 21/22	Community	892e 5150i	£ 15,907	£ 15,907	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%	Green	RCF COMPLETE	RCF Complete - Close
4811	110	PROJ - Tenant Office Refurb 21/22	Business	5152b	£ 16,000	£ 19,725	£ 4,307	£ -	£ 582	4%	Green	CBC dilapidation payment of £4,307 received into 1177/110	Roll over RCF balance of £582
4812	110	PROJ - War Memorial Clean 21/22	Community	5152b	£ 858	£ 858	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%		RCF COMPLETE	RCF Complete - Close
4813	110	PROJ - Xmas Tree & Works 21/22	Community	5164 a i	£ 5,926	£ 5,104	£ -	£ -	£ 822	14%	Green		RCF Complete - Close & return unspent funds to RCP
4814	110	PROJ - Town Noticeboards 21/22	Corporate	718 a	£ 1,860	£ 921	£ -	£ -	£ 939	50%	Green	Negotiated discount of 5% within 5% accepted variance	Roll Over RCF balance of £939
4815	110	PROJ - Xmas Lights Event	Community	5164 a i	£ 1,100	£ 1,625	£ -	£ 525	£ -	0%			RCF Complete - Close & return unspent funds to RCP
4816	110	PROJ - Manor Park Gates RCF	Community	708c 5091b	£ 19,472	£ 17,753	£ -	£ -	£ 1,719	9%	Green		RCF Complete - Close & return unspent funds to RCP
4817	110	PROJ - Village Hall Barriers RCF	Community	928g	£ 600	£ 1,861	£ 1,261	£ -	£ -	0%		RCF to be confirmed (+ £357 \$106 from CBC & £904.02 from Village Hall Comm Funds)	RCF Complete - Close
4818	110	PROJ - Electric Fencing 21/22	Community	856b	£ 442	£ 446	£ -	£ 4	£ -	0%		1% overspend within accepted 5% variance in according with Standing Orders.	RCF Complete - Close
4819	110	PROJ - Barclays Defibrillator 21/22	Council	5213d	£ 1,770	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 1,770	100%	Green		Roll Over RCF balance of £1,770
4820	110	PROJ - Purchase Camera Phone	Corporate	740c	£ 650	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 650	100%	Green		Roll Over RCF balance of £650
4821	110	PROJ - Rufus Disabled Toilet	Business	1356c	£ 8,750	£ 8,750	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%			RCF Complete - Close
4822	110	PROJ - Café Furniture	Council	5213 j	£ 7,782	£ 7,782	£ -	£ -	£ -	0%		RCF COMPLETE	RCF Complete - Close

Please note:
All RCF spending should be in line with RCF resolution. Unspent funds will remain as annual Rolling Capital Programme (5014/110) funds.
Full review of RCF completed in March 2022 to ensure all spending captured. Part-completed RCFs will have balance only carried forward as budget set for 22/23.

Development Management

Central Bedfordshire Council

Priory House, Monks Walk
Chicksands, Shefford
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Mr R McGregor
Clerk to Flitwick Town Council
The Rufus Centre
Steppingley Road
Flitwick
Bedford
MK45 1AH

Date 14 March 2022

Dear Mr McGregor,

Application No: CB/22/00571/VOC
Location: Land to the rear of Hilledene Close, Flitwick, MK45 1AQ
Proposal: Variation of condition number 25 of planning permission CB/15/04675/FULL (Demolition of three residential units and the erection of 56 (dwellings comprising 15 no. 3 bed houses, 1 no. 4 bed house, 18 no. 1 bed flats and 18 no. 2 bed flats and 4 no. studios), pumping station, access, boundary fence and associated works.) Variation sought to move Block B.

I have received an application for planning permission in respect of the above property which can be inspected on our website within 3 working days from the date of this letter.

This application can be viewed at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/planning-register> by entering the application reference 22/00571.

Please provide any comments by no later than 11 April 2022.

How coronavirus is affecting planning

For the safety of staff and customers our offices remain closed to the public and officers continue to work from home. A small number of our planning admin team are in the office to register post, scan documents and print. However, as most applications can be registered remotely, please help us by making electronic submissions. Hard copy applications and postal comments are still being received, but there could be a delay in logging these. Please also be advised that we are unable to offer case history copies or other printing requests at this time.

Site visits by officers will only be carried out after the applicant / agent has first been contacted to discuss the suitability of a visit. Case officers will make a judgement as to whether a site visit can be made in a safe way – if this is not possible we will discuss the potential for alternative ways of assessing the site or in appropriate cases request your agreement that consideration of the application be paused.

As our offices remain closed to visitors we are still unable to have face to face meetings, so we are asking customers not to come into our offices. Your case officer will contact you to discuss alternative arrangements which could be via phone call or video conferencing.

Read about our Development Management Committee for updates and information about meetings.

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/31/meetings/219/development_management_committee_-_meetings_and_agendas.

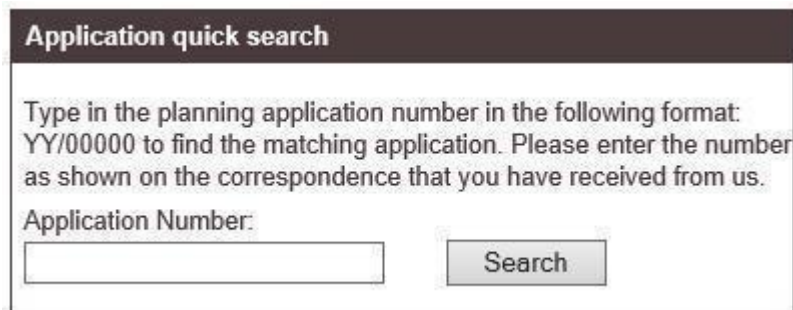
All of these arrangements will be kept under review and we would like to thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Ward
Planning Officer

Submitting Consultee Comments Online Guidance

1. Open webpage: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/planning-register>
2. Enter the case reference in the search field: 22/00571

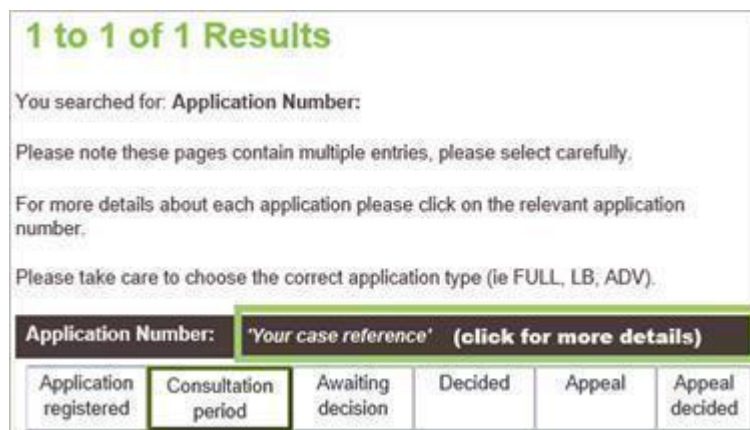


Application quick search

Type in the planning application number in the following format: YY/00000 to find the matching application. Please enter the number as shown on the correspondence that you have received from us.

Application Number:

3. The case summary will be displayed
4. Click on CB/22/00571/VOC (click for more details)



1 to 1 of 1 Results

You searched for: **Application Number:**

Please note these pages contain multiple entries, please select carefully.

For more details about each application please click on the relevant application number.

Please take care to choose the correct application type (ie FULL, LB, ADV).

Application Number: 'Your case reference' (click for more details)					
Application registered	Consultation period	Awaiting decision	Decided	Appeal	Appeal decided

5. Scroll down to the bottom of the page - there will be a link to 'Submit a Consultee Online Comment'



Statutory Consultee

If you are a Consultee and would like to submit an on-line Comment on this application please [Submit A Consultee Online Comment](#)

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FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Report 1 – Full Town Council, 19th April 2022 Scheme of Delegations and Changing our Approach to Planning

Implications of recommendations

Corporate Strategy: Takes forward policy objectives directly.

Finance: Nil

Equality:

Environment:

Background

At the Town Council meeting on 22nd December 2020, the Town Council adopted its first Scheme of Delegations.

It was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Town Councils Committees with accompanying terms of reference.

The Scheme of Delegations in the main has worked very well, items can be actioned by Committees in a timely manner, however, there has been some uncertainty around recommending some major items back to Council, particularly in relation to major planning applications.

Initial Influencing

Recent planning training sessions have strongly indicated that a more pro-active approach to involvement with the wider planning process may realise better outcomes for the Town in relation to key planning applications and the next generation of the CBC Local Plan. This is in stark contrast to the current route of commenting on planning applications for the Flitwick area only once they are received and published by CBC.

Moving to a more 'front-foot' approach to initiate discussion with developers of major proposals, before any planning application is submitted, requires careful consideration. Advance engagement would enable Flitwick Town Council to highlight desirable improvements they would like to achieve, while plans are still being created, rather than after they have been submitted. This significant change, towards prior engagement, rather than post submission confrontation with developers is not necessarily intended to stop development going ahead but would be an opportunity to influence submitted plans.

The same nature of discussion with CBC surrounding any areas identified in any new call-for sites for further development areas in Flitwick may also stand a better chance of improving the final design of any proposed developments.

A new approach to Planning engagement

To ensure that such engagement with developers and CBC is open and transparent and not an arena for behind closed-door deals, it will be necessary to evolve the current Council

planning structure to enable working in partnership with interested residents. The creation of a "Planning Improvement Working Group" reporting into the main Town Council would be a forum which would be made up of both 'planning-trained' Councillors and co-opted Flitwick residents who are looking to be involved in discussion about the future development in the town. The group would be the forum to discuss options and opportunities and to provide recommendations to the full Town Council for approval. As the main thrust of these discussions would be prior to any formal planning application it does not prejudice any eventual Council commentary on the final submitted application. A move in this direction to 'planning inclusion' may also lessen the confrontational creation of pressure-groups that directly oppose any form of development, primarily generated post an applications' submission.

What about a Neighbourhood Plan?

Research and discussion within the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group has led to a view that the creation of this type of plan is likely to be lengthy, time-consuming, and costly – both monetarily (around £50 to £80k) and in Officer resources. No Government funding for neighbourhood plans has been announced for 2022/23. Rather than completely ruling it out as an option, it is proposed to include further discussion of this avenue within the scope of the Planning Improvement Working Group, should initial pre-planning discussions prove fruitless.

Responding to planning applications - major and minor

A study of planning applications received in the last 18 months, by Officers, has identified that the Planning Committee looked at 173 planning applications of which 144 (83%) were supported by the Committee and 29 were objected to.

Most applications received related to single or two storey side or rear extensions. Other applications received are for flat roof extensions, car ports, listed building consent, lawful development certificates, works to trees and change of use.

Within the 173 applications, only 7(4%) of the applications could have been considered to have a significant impact on the Town. It is considered that all would have benefitted from being debated by the full Town Council, even if they ended up with the same decision to support or object.

It is desirable and more democratic that all Councillors have the opportunity to discuss, debate and vote on major planning applications that are likely to have a major impact on the Town e.g., the former Leisure Centre, the Crematorium, Station Square, 101 Field Development, and the Station Interchange. This was the original intent of providing all Committee Chair's with the option - within the Scheme of Delegations - of referring key decisions or projects to the full Town Council for resolution, rather than a pre-defined recommendation for approval.

Delegated support from Officers to keep the current process running

Moving the debate surrounding major planning applications direct to the Town Council, alongside the creation of a new advisory Planning Improvement Group to deal exclusively with the pre-planning engagement with developers and CBC, means that we need to consider an alternative to the resource heavy process which has historically tied up both Cllr and Officer time in the administration (Currently 8- 10 hours per current planning meeting).

Officers have looked at introducing a different delegated process, which will remove Planning from the Council's list of Committees. Commenting on smaller applications could be replaced with either of the two following alternatives:

Process 1

The proposal would be to delegate to Officers the responses to non-major planning applications as they are received with a list of decisions being presented to Council each month for noting. Major planning applications would come before the Town Council for consideration and based on the major applications in the last 18 months (7), this would mean that Council are unlikely to be overwhelmed by planning applications. Highways matters, footpaths, diversions, modifications and adoptions, CCTV along with comments on TPOs would become part of Communities Services Committee remit.

The Town Council could post a link on the web and social media sites to show the CBC weekly list of planning applications relating to Flitwick, this would inform the public and allow them to comment through the CBC process.

Officers objecting to planning applications would use the Town Councils Planning Guide, the Guide is clear on the reasons that you can object (material considerations), and the key issues that you can apply when responding to planning applications. – See Appendix 2

Process 2

A weekly list of new planning applications, reserved matters and Tree Preservation Orders for Flitwick is received from CBC via email. These are forwarded by email to all Councillors on the Planning Improvement Group where they are able to access details online via CBC website.

Councillors are asked to email the relevant delegated Officer or a Planning Response specific email address with any observations they want to make about specific applications, within 7 working days.

Officers would also review the planning applications on the weekly list and make any observation within their sphere of responsibility.

Staff will compile all observations received and:

- Where no observations are received, advise CBC that the Town Council does not wish to make any comments.
- Where the consensus view is to support, to forward that view to CBC, along with any planning justifications expressed.
- Where the consensus view is to reject, to forward this view to CBC along with material planning reasons. Sometimes the Environmental Services Manager may need to contact the Lead on the Planning Improvement Group for further clarification about reasons for objection.
- Where a clear view cannot be determined from replies, strongly opposing views are expressed, opposition is received by the public are received, or a Councillor requests the matter is referred to Committee, the application will be referred to an online meeting of the Planning Improvement Group to agree direction.
- Where CBC ask the Council to reconsider their comments, Members will be re-consulted by email. This will result in either the same view, or a revised view being sent to CBC, or a Planning Improvement Group meeting being arranged.

Copies of planning applications or decisions are not retained by FTC as they remain available on the CBC website.

Members of the public, applicants or lobbyists may make representations directly to CBC and or to FTC. Where representations are received by FTC (via a Planning Application

Comment email address) they will be available for Councillors to review in order to take account within any comments they may wish to make on any application. Councillors will make observations in the knowledge of the representations but must balance them against possible alternatives and their own Planning knowledge.

Encouraging and managing feedback

The Town Council will encourage the views of interested parties by making known in newsletters, social media and on the website, how people can contact Councillors or have written information brought to the attention of the Planning Improvement Group.

If observations have been sent under delegated authority by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, a list of observations sent to CBC, will be circulated to Councillors on the Planning Improvement Group in a regular "Planning Information Bulletin".

If appropriate, the Council may request a Councillor, an Officer, or a Consultant on its behalf to speak at the CBC Development Management Committee.

It is open to any Town Councillor, either directly or through the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, to approach a relevant CBC Councillor and suggest that an application listed for delegation, should be called in and referred to the CBC Development Management Committee, where it is considered necessary to get Member input to the decision. CBC councillors only have 10 days from receipt of notice of the application to call it in and will need to give valid planning reasons to do so.

On rare occasions where Councillors on the Planning Improvement Group feel there may be a benefit from a site visit, they should notify the Environmental Services Manager who will seek this in advance. However, Town Councillors have no right onto a site without the permission of the owner, applicant, or agent, the visit should be conducted from off-site. Information may be sought from the applicant, but the merits of the application must not be discussed, nor opinions stated.

Both new appeals, and determined appeals are notified to the Council and these are reported by email to all Councillors. Where appeals are notified, the Committee may ask an Officer or a Councillor, or an appointed Consultant to appear and give evidence at a public inquiry or make written representation. In such cases, careful preparation is essential, and the advice of a Planning Consultant may be sought.

Improved Communication and Support for Residents

Regular social media Planning posts: These would include CBC's Planning Application list and links to both the CBC Planning Portal and new Planning Pages on the FTC website. The posts and information on the Council Notice boards will alert residents on how they can contact or have written information brought to the attention of Councillors on the Planning Improvement Group.

New Planning website pages:

These would include a lay persons guide to the Planning Application Process and information about what grounds – material planning arguments - can be used to object to applications.

It would also include a link to download the Town Planning Guide for offline reading – see Appendix 2

An additional link will take visitors directly through to the CBC Planning Portal.

Further inclusion of the contact details of all Planning trained Councillors will be listed in order that residents are able to contact them for advice regarding applications that have been made and to which they are looking to object.

The Town Council Website will also contain a link to the weekly list.

Officer Recommendations:

- 1. To remove Planning from the Council's list of Committees**
- 2. Establish a new Planning Improvement Group, reporting directly to the Town Council**
- 3. Agree the proposed make-up of the Planning Improvement Working Group to be 8 Councillors who have undertaken the most recent training regarding planning processes, alongside up to 8 Flitwick Residents**
- 4. Agree the outline Terms of Reference for the Planning Improvement Group – see Appendix 1**
- 5. Agree a draft Planning Policy Guidelines document which will be finalised through discussion by the Group and then adopted by the Town Council for use by Officers to aid positioning of their delegated response to applications – See Appendix 2**
- 6. Agree the delegation of responses to the listed range of CBC Planning Applications for Flitwick be processed directly by Officers (See Appendix 3) either through:**
 - a. Process 1 or**
 - b. Process 2**
- 7. Create dedicated Planning Pages on the FTC Website, including a lay persons guide to allowable planning objections, the contact details of Councillors who have undertaken Planning Training and a direct link to the CBC Planning Portal**
- 8. The promotion of the regular CBC Planning Application lists on FTC Social Media channels, alongside links to the FTC website Planning Pages and the CBC Planning Portal**
- 9. Agree the removal of current delegated responsibilities from the Scheme of Delegation 2020 – See Appendix 4**
- 10. Redistribute selected previous Planning Committee responsibilities to relevant Full Town Council (See Appendix 5) or Community Services management. See Appendix 5 and 6**

Rob McGregor
Town Clerk & CEO

APPENDIX 1

Terms of Reference for the Planning Improvement Group

The following general principles are designed to set out the Council's overarching policy in relation to planning matters and will act as the scope of activity to be covered by the Planning Improvement Group.

When exercising its functions in relation to the development of planning proposals the Group will:

- Evaluate the benefits from developing a Neighbourhood Plan and using it to assert more control over local planning issues and to provide a stronger voice for the town in planning decisions.
- Pro-actively engage with the planning authority at all stages of the development of the Local Plan, with the intent to develop planning policies and sites that contribute to the sustainable development of the town
- proceed in a manner that is evidence-led, collecting its own relevant evidence where applicable and feasible
- Pro-actively engage with residents at all stages of planning through means available to it
- Develop a plan to support improvements in the Town by the use of monies that come to the Council through planning consents.

In relation to major development sites and applications, the Planning Improvement Group will:

- engage with developers and the planning authority in a positive, open, and transparent manner, setting out clearly the Council's priorities for each site.
- seek planning conditions and/or planning obligations where the impacts of development can be mitigated, to provide improvements that will benefit the whole town and are consistent with the Town Council's Strategy
- generally, not support applications for major developments on greenfield sites that are not part of the approved Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, unless exceptional circumstances are proven
- seek that adequate provision is made for schools, healthcare facilities, sustainable transport links, leisure and sport provision, cultural facilities, and local employment is made to mitigate the impact of development
- consider applications for major developments in the Local Plan on their merits, notwithstanding any discussions that have taken place with developers prior to the application being submitted

When considering planning applications, the Planning Improvement Group will

- exercise sound judgment for each application, considering each on its planning merits, and giving regard to the Town Council's objectives, the Local Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework
- support applications that will ensure Flitwick will be a thriving centre for employment and leisure and are able to achieve the Town Council Strategy
- support commercial and leisure development that re-invigorates the Town Centre and allows a night-time economy to develop
- support additional housing as set out in the Local Plan provided it brings a range of homes necessary to meet the needs of our residents, provision for both young people and our elderly population.

- support developments within the Town that have a reasonable percentage of affordable housing.
- not ordinarily support the conversion of family housing into multi-occupation housing, in the areas of the town that already have a high level of economic deprivation.
- wish to ensure that developments will provide adequate play and public space as a part of the design.
- welcome housing (and other developments) that include energy saving and generation features.
- wish to see the existing “Green Gap” around Flitwick maintained.
- support the residents of villages and the Parish Councils which border Flitwick who oppose undesirable planning applications.

APPENDIX 2

FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Planning Guide

Scope

This describes Flitwick Town Council's (FTC) role as a consultee in respect of Planning & Development Control coming within the Terms of Reference of Planning Committee. Town & Parish Councils and Councillors have a crucial role in representing their locality and leading local development in the best interests of residents. It also gives guidance on the Planning System.

PLANNING

General

1. A Town Council has no direct powers in the field of planning control. Although Town Councils are no longer statutory consultees, they have a right to be notified in writing of every planning application in their area, provided they have requested the planning authority to do so, which FTC have. They may make representations to the local planning authority, be heard at planning inquiries or make written representations. The Town Council may also make representations on consultations about Local Plan documents and supplementary planning documents such as design briefs.
2. The local planning authority is Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).
3. The Town Council's strength is in its very local knowledge. It can influence planning policies and decisions by making informed observations backed up by evidence. It must make observations which are material planning considerations. Matters such as the enjoyment of a view or house valuations may be important to local people but are not planning arguments.

It can undertake:

- Checking plans are accurate and appropriate.
- Assessing local needs and informing the planning authority.
- Gathering views and making them known to the planning authority
- Making effective views on planning applications
- Producing design guides for the town
- Taking the lead as the community draws up a town plan
- Actively engaging in the development plan process
- Asking the planning authority to enforce planning decisions
- Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan

See Appendix 2 – Introduction to the Planning System.

4. FTC's Planning Committee Meets every three weeks on a Thursday at 7.45 pm to consider planning applications for the town and give a response to the Unitary Council. The Lead Officer is the Amenities Officer, who along with the Planning Chairman has the responsibility of ensuring and circulation of plans for discussion and may be required to attend [CBC](#) Planning Meetings to speak on any planning application decision where it is particularly controversial or some impact on the community.

Although the Planning Committee has delegated authority to make observations, particularly large development applications or controversial applications are considered by full Council.

Arrangements within Central Bedfordshire

5. Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) have currently adopted their new Local Plan 2015-2035. The Pre-Submission Draft was submitted to government on 30 April 2018 and was subject to an independent examination by a Planning Inspector. This followed the last consultation which ran from January to February 2018. The Planning Inspector's task was to consider the soundness of the submitted plan, based on the criteria within paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The inspector also considered whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with the duty to co-operate and meets the legal and procedural requirements. CBC officers submitted additional evidence to the Inspectors on 15 May 2020, to address the concerns raised in their letter of 30 September.
6. CBC Local Plan is the key strategic planning document for Central Bedfordshire and will guide and support the delivery of new infrastructure, homes and jobs. It sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the area, what is going to happen, where, and how this will be achieved and delivered over the next 20 years. It is important to note that all policies within the local plan will apply to all development where appropriate.

Chapter 4 provides a short summary of our overall vision and strategic objectives.
Chapter 5 sets out how CBC propose growth should be distributed across Central Bedfordshire;

Chapter 6 provides a general overview of the proposed large-scale growth locations.
Chapter 7 is concerned with implementation and delivery and how the plan targets are calculated;

The chapters that follow are then themed by topic area.

7. Until the new Local Plan was finally adopted, a retained policy-the North Local Development Framework, covers the north area of Central Bedfordshire, formerly the area covered by Mid Bedfordshire District Council. It is currently the adopted local plan for this area. It includes the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, the Site Allocations Document and the Proposals Maps. There are also a number of saved policies from the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan 2005.
8. In addition to general policy, the Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Strategic Sites and Policies (MWLP: SSP) was adopted by the full council of all three councils in Bedfordshire (Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council & Luton Borough Council) in January 2014. Waste and Mineral planning had been a function of the county council before it was abolished in 2009, being replaced by the three unitary councils.

The MWLP: SSP sets out the strategic allocations for mineral extraction and for waste management development in the Plan area together with strategic policies which will guide the ongoing supply of minerals and development of waste management facilities. Some of these policies supersede those set out in the Bedfordshire and Luton Minerals and Waste Local Plan adopted 2005.

FTC will also be consulted on mineral and waste applications.

9. CBC Design Guide sets out the key principles and standards to ensure all new development is of the highest quality. It was published in September 2014 and is supported by other guidance on specific areas such as:

- Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Local Transport Plans and Strategies
- Landscape Character Guidance

It sets out the key principles and standards to ensure the delivery of high-quality design in Central Bedfordshire and the Council's expectations in relation to:

- layout
- street developments
- parking provision
- home dimensions

It is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and should be used to guide all types of new development in Central Bedfordshire.

It is in 10 parts. One core document and 9 accompanying themed supplements.

- Placemaking in Central Bedfordshire
- Green Infrastructure, Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Buildings
- The Historic Environment
- Public Realm
- Residential Development
- Accommodating Specific Housing Needs
- Householder Alterations and Extensions
- Larger Footprint Buildings
- Town Centre Vitality
- Highways Construction Standards & Specifications Guide

10. Central Bedfordshire Council provides considerable information about making a planning application on its website, where applications can also be tracked, and decisions found. This also links to the Planning Portal which is the UK Government's online planning and building regulations resource for England and Wales. CBC produce a weekly list of new applications which is made available to FTC. CBC offer pre-application advice to applicants, however in most cases this is a chargeable service.

11. CBC's online register allows the public to:

- View and monitor the progress of planning applications online
- Submit representations about planning applications made to the council
- See whether an appeal has been lodged and the result
- View weekly and monthly lists of applications and decisions
- Set up search profiles and be automatically notified by e-mail
- View registers of formal enforcement action taken by the council

12. Planning decisions are made through a quasi –judicial process. The majority of applications are dealt with under 'delegated powers'. This means that the case officer for the application makes a recommendation to the Head of Planning Delivery and planning managers who have the authority to make the decision on the application. All other decisions are made at the [Development Management Committee](#) which is made up of elected members and is held once a month at the Priory House offices. The committee is open to all members of the public to attend and speak.

CBC councillors have the right to “call an application in,” this means that an application that would normally be delegated to officers would instead go before a committee.

Process at Flitwick TC

13. A weekly list of new planning applications, reserved matters and Tree Preservation Orders is received from the CBC via email. It is arranged in Parish alphabetical order so Flitwick Town or significant applications just beyond its boundaries can be quickly identified. These are forwarded by email to all councillors. They are able to access details online via CBC. The Town Council Website will also contain a link to the weekly list.
14. Hard copies of all plans may be obtained from CBC if necessary, but they are normally received electronically. Any member of the public asking to view them are referred to CBC planning portal.
15. The Planning Committee meet every three weeks and have delegated authority to make observations to the Planning Authority. The Amenities Officer compiles the agenda and includes all applications received since the last meeting, except for particularly large or controversial applications which are placed on the next full Council meeting.
16. All relevant plans will be available for members to view as required, by being projected onto a screen during the Planning Committee meeting.
17. Electronic copies of planning applications are retained in accordance with the Council's Document Management Policy. Planning history is available from CBC.
18. Where views are expressed by the public, applicants or lobbyists, they should be drawn to the attention of Committee who should be encouraged to consider them but balance them against possible alternatives. The Town Council should encourage the views of interested parties by making known in Newsletters and on the Web site, how people can have written information brought to the attention of Councillors or the Planning Committee and about their rights to speak.
19. Requests to speak at Planning Committee are to be dealt with in accordance with the public participation rules in the Standing Orders
20. The Committee make their recommendations on each application, which are recorded in the Minutes. Because the local planning authority work to statutory deadlines, it is important that the Minutes are written within 2 days and a copy e-mailed sent to the CBC. Planning Committee minutes are taken to be formally noted by Council in the normal way.
21. It is open to any Town Councillor, either directly or through the TC, to approach a relevant Central Bedfordshire Councillor and suggest that an application listed for delegation, should be called in and referred to the CBC Development management Committee, where it is considered necessary to get Member input to the decision. Central Bedfordshire Councillors only have 10 days from receipt of notice of the application to call it in and will need to give valid planning reasons to do so.
22. On rare occasions, members of FTC's Planning Committee will request a site visit. Remember, Town Councillors have no right onto a site without the permission of the owner, applicant or agent and this should be sought in advance, by the officer, otherwise, the visit should be conducted from off-site. Information may be sought from the applicant, but the merits of the application must not be discussed, nor opinions

stated. There should always be an officer present. Occasionally, Members will be invited by Central Bedfordshire Council to attend a site visit arranged by them. This will be emailed to all councillors, but relevant Ward Councillors will get priority, if numbers are limited.

23. Both new appeals, and determined appeals are notified to the Council and these are reported by email to all councillors. Where appeals are notified, the Committee may ask an officer or a Councillor, or an appointed consultant to appear and give evidence at a public inquiry or make written representation. In such cases, careful preparation is essential, and the advice of a Planning Consultant may be sought.
24. A Planning Authority (CBC) may enter into an agreement (Section 106 Planning obligations) with any potential developer for the purpose of restricting or regulating the development or use of the land either permanently or during such period prescribed in the agreement.

Types of obligation:

- restricting the development or use of the land
- requiring specified operations or activities to be carried out
- requiring the land to be used in any specified way
- requiring a payment to the authority

A Section 106 Agreement is enforceable as a contract. A payment is usually to offset a negative impact of the proposed development and the money is ring fenced for that specific purpose. For example.

- to improve a road junction to negate the impact of increased local traffic.
- to provide a play area or other facility for new houses.

It is legitimate for the FTC to request CBC to “ring fence” Section 106 money for a specific purpose such as implementing part of the Town Centre re-development.

25. Section 206 of [the Planning Act 2008](#) gives ‘charging authorities’ (local planning authority) the power to charge the Community Infrastructure Levy(CIL). It is a charge that local authorities can choose to impose on new developments to fund local infrastructure. This could include infrastructure such as: Transport schemes; Schools; Hospitals; Green spaces; Leisure centres etc.

The levy is charged by square metre of floor space of a development. It can be charged on any new dwelling or any other development that has 100 square metres or more gross internal floor space.

Once [planning permission](#) is granted, collecting authorities will issue applicants with a levy liability notice which becomes due when development commences. Where there is a neighbourhood plan in place that has been accepted in a referendum, town councils will be given 25% of the levy when [planning permission](#) for a development is approved. This money will be available to spend on infrastructure from an approved list, including improvements such as to re-roof a village hall, refurbish a municipal pool or take over a community pub. Where there is no neighbourhood plan in place, communities will receive 15% of the levy.

FTC have not currently produced a Neighbourhood Plan. CBC have consulted on a CIL Scheme but have not so far adopted one.

26. The Town Council will provide as necessary training on all aspects of planning including

the Local Plan, Development Control, material consideration, enforcement. and urban design, to help members in making the best decisions.

27. FTC will respond to the consultation on each part of the Local Plan, of particular importance will be the Core Strategy and Site Allocations. The Town Council will also respond to consultation on other aspects of planning such as Supplementary Planning Guidance or Design Briefs.

Making the Best Decisions

28. It is essential to know the policies contained in the local plan. The Town Council may well have no objections and recommend approval. Alternatively, it may recommend refusal and state the grounds on which that decision should be based. (see Appendix 1 Introduction to the Planning System and Appendix 2 Planning Use Classes) or may support the application subject to CBC imposing conditions to make it acceptable.

Material Considerations

29. The Town Council's recommendations will only carry weight if its recommendations are backed up by reasons based on these. In determining a planning application, the planning authority must have regard to the Local Plan, national policies and material considerations.

The law has always made a clear distinction between whether something is a material consideration and the weight it should be given. The former is a question of law. The latter is a question of planning judgement which is entirely a matter for the planning authority. Provided the planning authority has regard to all material considerations; it is at liberty (within the test of "reasonableness") to give whatever weight the planning authority thinks fit, or no weight at all.

Three main type of material consideration:

- Policy – natural, regional, local
- Views of consultees
- Factors on the ground

Material

- design
 - visual impact
 - privacy/overbearing
 - day light sun light
 - noise, smell, pollution
 - access/traffic
 - health & safety
 - ecology, landscape
 - crime (and fear of)
 - economic impact
 - planning history/related decisions
 - cumulative impact
- circumstances

Not Material

- the applicant
 - land ownership
 - private rights (e.g. access)
 - restrictive covenants
 - property value
 - competition
 - loss of view
 - moral issues
 - better site or use*
 - change from previous scheme
- "Need" is material in some

30. A quick check list of key issues to apply to each application is:

Amount - size of development (ha) or size of building (sq m), and number of units
Layout - where is it, space about dwellings, parking, turning areas etc

Scale - overall size and scale, is it designed to reflect that of neighbouring properties does it respect the existing building line & heights of other buildings

Landscaping - what landscaping is proposed, green areas etc. Are existing trees or hedges disturbed.

Appearance - has building been designed to minimise overall impact. Are materials in keeping?

Access - how will traffic & pedestrians get in and out? Is it a significant generator of additional vehicle movement? Is public transport available?

31. CBC may grant permission subject to conditions. The Town Council may therefore prefer to recommend approval subject to conditions such as:

- Colour & style of bricks or roof tiles
- Positioning of windows & doors
- Need for landscaping or tree preservation order (TPO)
- Times of the day when operations are permitted
- Need to re-route rights of way
- The requirement for the developer to contribute to a community facility such as a play area, or to a road improvement.

Remember – if suggesting conditions on permissions, they must be:

- relevant to planning
- relevant to the development
- reasonable
- necessary
- precise
- enforceable

32. **Urban design** is the art of making places for people. It is therefore concerned with how they function, not just how they look. It covers the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric and the processes for ensuring successful places are delivered and maintained.

Good urban design is essential if we are to produce attractive, high-quality, sustainable places in which people will want to live, work and relax? It is fundamental to our objective of urban renaissance.

Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes and the establishment of frameworks and processes that facilitate successful development. Criteria for assessing Urban Design should be found in Appendix 3.

33. Even though the Town Council is not the final decision maker, Councillors must at the Planning Committee meeting, declare any interest in an application and comply fully with the Members Code of Conduct. Planning is a sensitive and high-profile service and an individual's actions can easily be misread by the public. Where applications do not go to Planning Committee, Members should declare an ordinary or disclosable pecuniary interest in their response to the weekly list. If it is a disclosable pecuniary interest, they should refrain from expressing any opinion. Any interest will be recorded and if it is a disclosable pecuniary interest, which is not on the register, the councillor must ensure it is notified to the monitoring officer.

APPENDIX 1.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

Why Planning Matters

- Balancing economic needs and environmental concerns
- Homes where people want them v social exclusion
- Balancing long term strategies and today's pressures
- Balancing maximising brownfield development against town cramming
- Retail "market forces" v viability of town centres
- Balancing individual interest against public interest

Purpose of Planning System

- Making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social & environmental objectives to improve peoples' quality of life
- Contributing to improve peoples' quality of life
- Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of countryside and existing communities
- Ensuring high quality development through good design and the efficient use of resources
- Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable and mixed communities with good excess to jobs and key services for all members of the community

Legislative & Policy Framework

- Primary legislation (Acts of Parliament)-sets framework, rarely changes. e.g. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – key act including definition of development and parish council right to be notified of and power to respond to planning applications.
- Secondary Legislation (Regulations & Orders, approved by Ministers)-crucial regulators of the Planning system. e.g. The Use Classes Order, Statutory Instrument 1987 No. 764 – defines use Classes for development of land.
- The National Planning Policy Framework was published on 27 March 2012. This is a key part of Government reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth. The Framework sets out planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It provides guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications.
- The Framework does not contain specific waste policies, since national waste planning policy will be published as part of the National Waste Management Plan for England. The Framework should be read in conjunction with the government's planning policy for traveller sites.
- There are no specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects in the Framework. The Secretary of State determines these in accordance with the Planning Act 2008 and relevant national policy statements for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are considered both important and relevant (which may include the Framework).
- Court decisions-about definitions, interpretations, procedures etc.

- Local Policies including Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 and retained policies.

Statutory Consultees include:

- Highways
- Highways Agency for Trunk Roads (can direct refusal/conditions)
- Environmental Agency for flood risk
- Health & Safety Executive for toxic substances etc.

APPENDIX 2.

PLANNING USE CLASSES

The following classes of use are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and its subsequent amendments.

- **A1 Shops** – Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops and funeral directors.
- **A2 Financial and professional services** – Banks, building societies, estate and employment agencies, professional and financial services and betting offices.
- **A3 Restaurants and cafés** – For the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises – restaurants, snack bars and cafés.
- **A4 Drinking establishments** – Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not a night clubs).
- **A5 Hot food takeaways**- For the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises.
- **B1 Business** – Offices, research and development, light industry appropriate in a residential area.
- **B2 – General industrial**
- **B3-B7 Special industrial groups** – See 'Use Classes Schedule'.
- **B8 – Storage or distribution** – This class includes open air storage.
- **C1 Hotels** – Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided.
- **C2 Residential institutions** – Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.
- **C2A Secure Residential institutions** – Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders' institution, detention

centre, secure training centre. custody centre, short term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks.

- **C3 Dwelling houses** – Family houses, or houses occupied by up to six residents living together as a single household, including a household where care is provided for residents.
- **D1 Non-residential institutions** – Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries, museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non residential education and training centres.
- **D2 Assembly and leisure** – Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not night clubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or sports arenas (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).
- **Sui Generis** – Theatres, houses in multiple paying occupation, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol Filling stations and shops selling and/or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, launderettes, dry cleaners, taxi businesses, amusement centres. Casinos.

CHANGE BETWEEN USE CLASSES

The following changes of use are permitted without the need for planning permission:

These changes are permitted only in the direction shown.

FROM	TO
A1 Shop (see Definition below)	Mixed use within A1 and as a single flat (ie over the shop)
A1 Shop and Single Flat above in mixed use	A1 Shop
A2 Financial & Professional Services	A1 Shop – where premises have a display window at ground level
A2 and single flat above in mixed use	A1 – where premises have a display window at ground level
A2 and single flat above in mixed use	A2
A2 Financial & Professional Services And any other services (including a betting shop) deemed to be appropriate to a shopping area	Mixed use within A2 and as a single flat
A3 Restaurants & Cafes Where food and drink are consumed on the premises	A1 Shops
A3 Restaurants & Cafes	A2 Financial & Professional Services
A4 Drinking Establishments Public House, Wine Bar and other drinking establishments	A1, A2 or A3
A5 Hot Food Takeaways The sale of hot food for consumption off the premises	A1, A2 or A3
B1 Business Permission limited to 235sq.m of floorspace in the building	B8 Storage & Distribution
B2 General Industrial	B1 Business

A general industrial process not falling within B1	
B2 General Industrial Limited to 235sq.m of floorspace	B8 Storage & Distribution
B8 Storage or Distribution Permission limited to 235 square metres of floor space in the building	B1 Business

SHOP – Definition

Retail sale of goods other than hot food

Post Office

Sale of Tickets/use as a travel agency

Sale of sandwiches and cold food for consumption off the premises

Hair Dressing

Funeral Directors

Display of goods for sale

Hiring out of personal and domestic goods

Washing or cleaning of clothes on the premises

Reception of goods to be washed, repaired where the sale is to visiting members of the public

An Internet cafe

APPENDIX 3

Urban Design Quality Assessment

Urban Design Criteria	Explanation/ Expectation
Continuity and enclosure – The definition of streets and enclosure of open spaces	Streets and open spaces should be defined and enclosed by building frontages to create well defined public realm. Continuity and enclosure along streets should help to hold space and create views, vistas and improve legibility. (This does not necessarily mean continuous blocks of buildings or very hard street edges are necessary)
Townscape value – Buildings, blocks, streets and squares create the urban form	Buildings should combine together (new and existing) to create street patterns, open spaces, landmarks, vistas and gateways which develop legibility and ease of understanding of the urban environment. (The best traditional historic towns create distinct legible and valued townscapes)
Fronts and backs – Fronts of buildings overlooking the public realm	Fronts of buildings should overlook the public realm and other built frontages. Backs of buildings should adjoin other backs and should not edge the public realm. (Fronts of buildings are vital to generate natural surveillance for the public realm.)

Public and private areas – Clearly delineated and designed	Public spaces should be well defined and clearly delineated from private areas in a development to ensure public areas are well used and private areas are securely designed. (This does not mean creating gated communities)
Urban Design Criteria	Explanation/ Expectation
Plan form and site coverage – efficient layout where development capacity of the site is balanced with amenity and site issues	The layout of development should be efficient and responded appropriately to the potential capacity of the site creating development which is appropriately intense and urban for its context. Retained buildings should be well integrated into the layout where necessary. (Overdevelopment and underdevelopment are often key weaknesses in the layout of development. Whilst this is as much about height, the layout is also fundamental.)
Height and Massing of scheme - considering opportunities for mixed development across different storey heights.	The design should develop opportunities for mixed use development where appropriate within a development across different storeys to make an efficient and effective use of the site. This should include where appropriate activity generating ground floor uses as well as economically active upper floor uses. Good neighbourliness between different uses will be important. (The height and massing of development can help create more efficient layouts and the mixing of uses within developments across the ground floor, but also upper floors can help to generate value added.)
Inclusion of streetscape and public realm – which will be important in locations where open spaces can add value	Development should provide new streets and open spaces where these would be of value to the wider townscape and where these could assist in generating new routes and destinations. (In some cases, an optimum design might not be filling the whole site with development. Open space can add another dimension to a development and provide a stronger sense of place. In residential schemes this can provide local amenity. In mixed use schemes this can provide outdoor rooms.)
Innovation in the design and layout of the development – responding to the challenges of the site through creative design	Innovative and bespoke design and architecture should maximise the development of the site in relation to site constraints and design challenges. (Design challenges often include access, topography, nearby buildings, nearby or new uses, parking or service requirements.)
Urban Design Criteria	Explanation/ Expectation

Identity, character and response to context – through the external appearance of new buildings	<p>New development should have a strong identity and be well integrated within an existing context in terms of any prevailing character, through design and materials.</p> <p>(This does not mean new buildings should copy old buildings. New buildings and contemporary design can work well alongside historic development providing the design and quality is high.)</p>
Design language/Architecture - The design vision for the scheme	<p>New development should be based on a clear vision and create a strong and deliberate design response through its architecture and 'elevation' treatments.</p> <p>(Without wishing to prescribe the style or look of the building/development it is important that a clear designed philosophy underpins the design language of the scheme and that this should be well justified in relation to both context and the design aspirations of the scheme.)</p>
Scale and proportion – articulation of the building facades	<p>Building and development should be well scaled and well-proportioned in themselves and in terms of nearby buildings, but also in terms of the public realm where creating a human scale and strong relationship with the public realm will be important.</p> <p>(The scale and proportions of buildings can create unity, variety and harmony along the street both in terms of architecture but also in terms of the streetscape.)</p>
Materials and detailing – the quality and finish of the scheme (buildings/public realm)	<p>Building and construction materials should be fit for purpose, locally relevant and/or based on a clear design vision for the scheme. Detailing should be related to the design/architecture of the scheme and be well finished.</p> <p>(The use of materials and thorough detailing are vital for success.)</p>

APPENDIX 3

Delegate to Officers

- To consider planning applications on their merit and to make comment and pass resolutions in respect of these in line with the Town Councils Planning Guide.
- Related Matters including, but not limited to: Extensions, Permitted Development, Prior Approvals, Advertisement Consent, Change of Use, Lawful Development Certificates, Lawful Development Certificates and Building Consent.

- Officers are prohibited from determining applications in circumstances where the application is made by the Council or an elected member of the Council or where the application relates to land in which the Council has an interest.
- Furthermore, the legislation requires that applications falling within the Major category of development 10 or more houses be determined by the Council.

APPENDIX 4

Remove the following categories of application from the scheme of delegation

- Applications which are significantly contrary to the Local Plan.
- Applications which are submitted by members of staff directly involved in the consideration of planning applications, Councillors and Officers of the Council
- Applications attracting objections from statutory consultees.
- Applications which are submitted by Council, or which relate to land in the ownership of the Council or in which the Council has a financial interest.

APPENDIX 5

Move decisions on the following to full Town Council

- Street naming.
- To consider issues relating to community and public transport services
- Licencing.
- Mineral Plans, Waste Plans and regional Plans or any other plans or studies as considered appropriate.
- To consider a Neighbourhood Plan.
- To appoint Members or instruct Officers to attend Central Beds Councils Development Management meetings to make representations on behalf of the Council where necessary.

When considering planning applications, to take the statements of any adopted Local Plan, Master Plan, Town Plan or Neighbourhood Plan into consideration.

APPENDIX 6

Move the following delegated responsibilities to Community Services Committee

- To comment on behalf of the Council in relation to any consultations on footpath diversions, modifications, or adoptions.
- To consider any maintenance and repair works on footpaths and public rights of way.
- Other matters relating to Highways.
- To comment on behalf of Council in relation to any Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).
- To consider issues relating to traffic calming and signage, car parking, street lighting, CCTV and other highway matters.



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Report 2 Council 19th April 2022 Scheme of Delegations – Business, Corporate & Community Services

Implications of recommendations

Corporate Strategy: Takes forward policy objectives directly.

Finance: Nil

Equality:

Environment:

Background

At the Town Council meeting on 22nd December 2020, the Town Council adopted its first Scheme of Delegations.

It was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Town Councils Committees with accompanying terms of reference.

The scheme of delegations in the main has worked very well, items can be actioned by Committees in a timely manner, however, there has been some uncertainty around recommending some major items back to Council.

Introduction

Officers have undertaken a review the Scheme of Delegations. The purpose of this review was to understand if the Scheme of Delegations was still fit for purpose, to review the Committees responsibilities and to understand if the Committee process could be streamlined further.

The main Committees (Community, Corporate and Business) have been operating monthly which equates to five meetings per month, including Council - Planning meets every three weeks.

Business Services and Corporate

The Corporate Services Committee in 2021 met monthly, for 2022/23 the Committee will be meeting quarterly. Some of the work covered by the Committee relates to items that would be covered annually, quarterly or on election years.

The Committee tends to focus in the main on marketing and communications, leases, business continuity and strategy.

The process for Corporate begins with producing the agenda, supporting papers and reports, seeking the Chairman's views on the proposed agenda, finalising the agenda, and converting documents to pdf, agendas are uploaded and distributed along with the public

notices. Meetings last on average between 45 minutes to 1.5 hrs and are attended by between two and three Officers. Following the meeting, draft minutes have to be produced and sent to the Chairman for a view on the accuracy, followed by uploading draft minutes to the web. Any actions from the meeting must be progressed.

Time involved in this process are attached to this report (Appendix 1).

The Business Services Committee in 2021 met monthly and intends to continue to meet monthly in 2022/23.

The Committee tends to focus in the main on the finances of the Council along with all matters relating to the Rufus Centre and the Rendezvous' Café. The Committee has recently taken on responsibility for Barclays Bank property, with Communities having responsibility to develop events for the frontage to the bank space.

The process for Business Services begins with producing the agenda, supporting papers and reports, seeking the Chairman's views on the proposed agenda, finalising the agenda, and converting documents to pdf, agendas are uploaded and distributed along with the public notices. Meeting last on average between 1 to 2 hrs and are attended by between two and four officers. Following the meeting, draft minutes must be produced and sent to the Chairman for a view on the accuracy, followed by uploading draft minutes to the web. Any actions from the meeting must be progressed.

Time involved in this process are attached to this report as (Appendix 1).

The Business Services Committee has a Working Group which has been operating for just short of one year. The focus of the Working Group was to improve the Town Councils business arm, the Rufus Centre bookings, tenanted offices, café, and renovations programme. The Group has held irregular meetings and has focused on a plan of proposed business improvements. The Working Group can only make suggestions back to Committee and this process has felt very disjointed, and it was difficult to progress matters with any certainty.

Conclusions

Corporate and Business Services

Officers are proposing that Corporate Services and Business Services are amalgamated with a view that the Committee meet monthly. Officers feel that neither Committee is operating at full capacity and by amalgamating the two Committees this would make meetings purposeful and would tie in with some crossover on each Committee.

The proposals are laid out below:

Items proposed to be moved over from Business to Corporate

- Monitor and make recommendations to the Council for the use of Earmarked Reserves.
- Review the Financial Regulations annually and make recommendations to Council.
- Receive and review the reports from the Internal Auditor before presentation to Town Council for adoption.
- Track and review the budget vs actual spending across the Council based on September figures providing a report with recommendations to the Town Council.

- Considering investment opportunities.
- Debt management (considering bad debt write-off proposals at year end).
- IT (split with Business Services) – responsibility to IT infrastructure and systems used by FTC as well as service and maintenance contracts with the exception of the Rufus Centre Website.
- Organising of all Civic Events.
- Recycling and Environmental Impact including energy efficiency
- Annual residents survey and any other surveys.

Corporate Services Current Remit

- Business Continuity.
- Policies and procedures, Member/Officer Protocol, Code of Conduct.
- Initiation of new Projects (i.e., On completion, project move to the relevant committee.
- S106 applications and grant funding from external sources., that fall within the committee's areas of responsibility.
- Elections/Councillor vacancies, Town Mayor/Dep Town Mayor, regalia, etc.
- Honorary Citizenship.
- Town Council Communications – e.g., Flitwick Papers, FTC website, leaflets, etc.
- Town Council Strategy, vision, mission statement, objectives etc.
- Communications and Marketing Strategy
- Marketing related to Corporate activities.
- Training – Councillors and staff.
- Development of Plans – e.g., corporate plan, emergency plan.
- Approval of its minutes as true and correct records.
- Any other matters that may be delegated to it by the Council from time to time.

Business Improvement & Development Board

Officers are proposing that a Board is set up with delegation from Council and will function in line with Committees, producing agendas and minutes along with a recommendations and resolutions sheet for Council. The Board could be named the Business Improvement & Development Board, or something similar. This Board would undertake the work that was previously given to the Working Group of Business Services and would be in a position to fully focus on developing and improving the business.

The proposals are laid out below:

- Development of business strategy for commercial activities as well as the development of the Rufus Centre building including the provision of office space.
- Management of the Rufus Centre building including maintenance and cleaning contracts.
- Reviewing tenant rent rates, conference rates and function rates with the objective of ensuring the business remains financially viable.
- Rufus Centre Marketing related to commercial activities.
- Develop the Strategy for Barclays Bank.
- Barclays Bank lease.
- Rufus Centre website.
- IT (split with Corporate Services) – responsibility to IT infrastructure and systems used by FTC as well as service and maintenance contracts with the exception of the FTC Website.
- Approval of its minutes as true and correct records.

- Any other matters that may be delegated to it by the Council from time to time.

Community Services

A review of Community Services has highlighted a number of items that are not previously covered under the Scheme of Delegations. Additionally, and depending on the outcome of the Scheme of Delegations Planning Report, additional items could be added to this Committee.

Further Additions Proposed for Communities

- Street Lighting
- All green spaces including Manor Park, Millennium Park, Hinksley Road
- Implementing elements of the Environmental Policy and Action Plan
- Recycling and Environmental Impact including energy efficiency
- Develop design and implement an environmental enhancement scheme for Maulden Road
- Organising events on and making enhancements to - Frontage Barclays Bank
- Arts and Culture, to include developing a strategy

Additions proposed depending on the outcome of the Planning report

- To comment on behalf of the Council in relation to any consultations on footpath diversions, modifications, or adoptions.
- To consider any maintenance and repair works on footpaths and public rights of way.
- Other matters relating to Highways.
- To comment on behalf of Council in relation to any Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).
- To consider issues relating to traffic calming and signage, car parking, street lighting, CCTV and other highway matters.

Officer Recommendations

- 1. To Approve the amalgamation of Corporate Services and Business Services as laid out.**
- 2. To create a Business Improvement and Development Board with delegated authority, as laid out**
- 3. To approve the additional elements to the Community Services Committee under the scheme of delegation, as laid out.**

Rob McGregor
Town Clerk & CEO

SEE BELOW – Administration Times. Appendix 1

Appendix 1

Clerks and Chairs Meeting – Scheme of Delegations

Council & Committee Meetings Administration

Task	Time per month (Unless stated otherwise)	Who
Set up agenda & minute templates	4 hours (Done once at beginning of calendar year)	SA-P
Add agenda items	1 hour (for all meetings combined)	SA-P/JT add items under instruction from SMT SL/MT for planning as on a package system not Word
Prepare reports (including investigatory work, writing, proofing)	2 hours per report (average) Average number of reports over past 6 months: BSC – 8 Comm – 7 Corp – 8 (4 meetings) Personnel – 3 (2 meetings had reports) = 34 + Finance reports: BSC - 12 hours Comm/Corp - 3 hours Planning - 0.25 hours + Planning CBC decisions work – 1 hour Average time in total: 68.25 hours	SMT + others where necessary BSC: SS/TL/HG/SB/LC
Seeking Chairs approval of agenda and amendments	0.5 hours per agenda	SL/SS
Seeking Chairs approval of draft agendas/minutes and amendments	1 hour (for all meetings combined)	SL/SS/LC/ZP/SA-P
Minutes (and drafts) upload to website	1 hour (for all meetings combined)	SA-P/JT
Upload supporting papers on website	4 hours (for all meetings combined)	SA-P/JT
Agendas on website	0.5 hours (for all meetings combined)	SA-P/JT
Convert papers to PDF and upload to SharePoint,	5 hours (for all meetings combined)	SA-P/JT

including creating combined file		Personnel – RM/SS
Circulate papers to members by email and create Teams link	0.5 hours per meeting	SA-P/JT
Attend meetings	2 hours per meeting (average) = 10 hours (approx. as Personnel and Corporate not monthly / Planning 3 weekly)	Council – RM/SS Community – SL/SE/ZP (+RM when required) Planning – SL/MT (alternate) Business – SS/TL/LC/HG (+RM/SB when required) Corporate – SS/RM/BJ/SA-P Personnel – RM/SS
Type minutes	2 hours per set of minutes = 10 hours (approx. as Personnel and Corporate not monthly / Planning 3 weekly)	Council – SS Corporate – S-AP Community – ZP Business – LC Planning – SL/MT (alternate) Personnel – SS/RM

TOTAL HOURS per month: 103

This does not include hours for implementing Council/Committee decisions

Attended but not on the committee

[illegible]

F.A.O Flitwick Town Council

Dear Cllrs,

I am writing to notify you about a pre-application planning consultation event which is shortly to be carried out by our client, Persimmon Homes, in relation to a proposed development on land at Steppingley Road, Flitwick. As you may be aware, the site concerned has been allocated for residential development in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and our client is now seeking to bring forward a development which would see the erection of 210 homes.

Please find enclosed a public consultation leaflet and questionnaire which outlines details of the proposed development. The leaflet/questionnaire is due to be posted out today to approximately 600 addresses within the vicinity of the site and invites comments by Friday 29th April 2022. The leaflet also directs residents to a website which has also been created to provide details of the proposal. The website can be viewed at <https://www.steppingleyroad.co.uk> and is due to go live later today.

We wanted to contact you in advance out of courtesy so that you would be aware that the consultation is taking place and to give you the opportunity to raise any queries you may have. If you would like more information on our proposals or would like to discuss the development, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I trust this is of assistance.

Yours faithfully,
Steven Drury

Land South West of Steppingley Road, Flitwick

Proposed Residential Development

Persimmon Homes are preparing a full planning application for a residential development on the Land South West of Steppingley Road, Flitwick



We would like to hear your views

This leaflet has been prepared so we can share our vision and emerging proposals with you and most importantly ask for your feedback. Your comments will help to shape the final proposals which we will submit to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Land South West of Steppingley Road, Flitwick

The site is located on land south west of Steppingley Road, on the north western edge of Flitwick. It is located within walking distance of a range of services and facilities including Flitwick Railway Station, approximately 800m to the south east.

Our emerging proposals comprise the development of up to 210 dwellings which include a mix of market and affordable homes, including 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 bed houses, bungalows, landscaping and areas of public open space including recreational routes and children's play facilities.

The site has been allocated for residential development in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (adopted in 2021) with a suggested capacity of approximately 216 dwellings. The proposal is therefore slightly below the allocation capacity.

Our vision is to develop a high-quality residential development which provides a mix of housing types and styles and takes reference from the character and appearance of Flitwick and surrounding area.

In advance of the planning application, we are now consulting the local community on our emerging proposals which have been informed by various site assessments, including a series of technical and environmental studies.

We would like to hear your views and we will review feedback as we finalise and submit our proposals and designs.

About Persimmon Homes

Founded in 1972 by Life President Duncan Davidson, and with our headquarters in historic York, the Group is made up of a network of 31 regional operating businesses, giving us nationwide coverage. We're building places to call home from North Scotland through to the South West of England.

We are proud to be one of the UK's most successful housebuilders, committed to the highest standards of design, construction and service and build over 13,500 beautifully-designed new homes a year in more than 350 prime locations nationwide. The Persimmon Midlands Office have extensive experience building homes within Central Bedfordshire.

We have recently been awarded a Five Star Award for customer service. As a leading British homebuilder, we believe it is right to strive to deliver the best possible service and build quality for our customers.



Our Proposals

The emerging proposal will deliver the following:

- 210 dwellings, including a mix of market and affordable homes;
- 30% affordable housing, including the provision of 'First Homes';
- 10% of the development as custom and self-build homes;
- A range of new homes ranging from starter homes to family dwellings;
- The provision of access via two new vehicular access points from Steppingley Road,
- A new footway on southern side of Steppingley Road with improved access to the bus stop and the pedestrian crossing;
- Connections to existing PROWs to the south and west of the site;
- Areas of public open space with natural trails for recreation and the provision of a children's play area;
- High quality landscaping sensitive to the existing landscape character;
- Sustainable drainage with features to support and enhance ecological value;
- Retention of trees along the Steppingley Road frontage;
- A scheme which achieves Biodiversity Net Gain requirements;
- Enhanced planting along the north west and south west boundaries;
- Good accessibility to Steppingley Road and the centre of Flitwick.

As part of the planning application, the proposals will also be required to make financial contributions towards local infrastructure through Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions, including towards education and community facilities, together with on-site play and open space.



Illustrative Masterplan



Illustrative Street Scenes

We would like your comments

We are keen to hear your views on the emerging development proposals before we submit our planning application. We welcome any comments that you may have, including what you might want to see on the site. We would like to reassure you that we understand the importance of involving and supporting the community during the development process and will carefully consider any comments which are received.

This is not the last time you will be able to make comments on these proposals. Once the planning application is submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council you will also be able to submit formal comments to the Council directly. These comments will be considered by the Council when they determine the planning application.

Please send your comments via email to feedback@steppingleyroad.co.uk, visit our website www.steppingleyroad.co.uk or alternatively by filling in the enclosed Freepost comments form.

Please submit your comments by Friday 29th April 2022.

Your Views

We would be grateful if you could complete and return this questionnaire.

Q1: What type of housing do you consider is needed in Flitwick?

Q2: What are your thoughts on the Illustrative Masterplan?

Q3: What do you consider are the most important issues for this site?

Q4: Please provide any other comments you have on our proposals.

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Freepost RPS PLANNING CONSULTATION



Persimmon

Together, we make a home.

Land South West of Steppingley Road, Flitwick

RPS Consulting UK & Ireland (321 Bradford Street, Birmingham, West Midlands B5 6ET) are conducting this consultation on behalf of Persimmon Homes. When we refer to “we” “us” or “our” we mean the two of us. If you submit comments and include your address we will only use your address to analyse the areas from which comments are being submitted. The information you submit and your personal data will not be passed to any third party. The information you submit will only be retained for as long as is necessary for the purposes of the planning process for this development. If you wish to withdraw your consent at any time or you would like to know more about how your information will be processed, please contact us by email at: feedback@steppingleyroad.co.uk.

Prepared by RPS Consulting UK & Ireland

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Prepared by RPS Consulting UK & Ireland



Flitwick Town Council

Report to Town Council 19th April 2022: Neighbourhood Plan for Flitwick

Implications of recommendations

Corporate Strategy: There are no direct implications from this report

Finance: There are no direct financial implications from this report.

Equality: No equalities implications have been identified from what is discussed in this report.

Environment: There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

Background

At the Council meeting of 15th February 2022, the report of the Planning Committee into the establishment of a Neighbourhood Plan for Flitwick. Whilst there were no formal resolutions, the minutes noted that the Neighbourhood Plan would be taken back to the Council for further consideration, following comments raised at the meeting.

Since that Council meeting, members of the Planning Committee have also been attending formal training on the role of town councils in the planning system, and how best to influence it. This has informed the discussions of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group not only on the need for a Neighbourhood Plan, but on the approach that the Council should be taking to planning matters.

Neighbourhood Plan

At the Council meeting, several concerns about developing a Neighbourhood Plan were raised by Councillors:

- Unclear benefits of producing a Neighbourhood Plan;
- Whether this is something the community wants;
- The objectives of producing a Neighbourhood Plan;
- Impacts on officer time and the costs of producing a plan;
- Managing expectations;
- The influence of Neighbourhood Plans in making decisions.

A summary of the considerations of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group on these matters is provided below. The Working Group has considered these matters in its deliberations, as well as the content of the planning training that all of its participants have taken part in over the last two months. This is set out in further detail in the next section, but in summary this training has shown the group that whilst Neighbourhood Plans have their merits, there are more significant planning priorities for the Town Council.

Based upon these deliberations, the Working Group has recommended that the Town Council not pursue the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Flitwick at the present time. Whilst there are

merits to developing such a plan, and a means for doing so is set out in the report to the Council meeting of 15th February, developing a Neighbourhood Plan should not be the Council's planning priority at present.

Unclear benefits of producing a Neighbourhood Plan

The Working Group considers that the strengths and opportunities from producing a Neighbourhood Plan outlined in its previous report are still valid – notably the contents of it forming part of the Statutory Local Plan and specifying how local contributions will be used for local projects. In addition to this, research undertaken by the University of Reading¹ indicated that there were several community and wider benefits. These included:

- Over half of local planning officers saying that Neighbourhood Plans have a significant or moderate influence over planning decisions;
- Neighbourhood Plans acting as a catalyst for the creation of placemaking initiatives such as Community Land Trusts and Community Interest Companies;
- Neighbourhood Plans being frequently referenced to in planning appeals, with the majority of appeal decisions going in favour of Neighbourhood Plan policies;
- Additional allocated sites for housing as part of the Neighbourhood Plan to the tune of (on average) 39 additional dwellings;
- Significant uptake of Neighbourhood Plans across the country, numbering over 2600 as of November 2019.

A critical success factor is the support of the local planning authority. In the worst cases, local areas felt they were being ignored by local planning authorities. There is no comparative ranking of how well Central Bedfordshire Council is performing in comparison to other planning authorities. However, it is notable that unlike many authorities, CBC does support and directly finance technical work associated with Neighbourhood Plan such as statutory impact assessments.

Whether this is something the community wants

The Working Group has identified that planning matters are often subject to much discussion locally on social media, and when asked several volunteers came forward to offer assistance in developing the Neighbourhood Plan. However, no specific question has been asked of the community as to whether they would like to see a Neighbourhood Plan.

The objectives of producing a Neighbourhood Plan

The overall aim of producing a Neighbourhood Plan is so that future development in the Neighbourhood Plan area is guided in a manner that achieves local objectives – such as those adopted by the local town or parish council – and so that local communities can have a meaningful influence over local planning policy. This is both for currently allocated development sites and additional development sites.

Achieving these outcomes can be done through other means, such as more proactive engagement as part of the Local Plan (a review of which may be initiated soon) or early engagement with developers of major development sites. The challenge with both of these is that the control of the process is outside the remit of the Town Council, being led either by the planning authority or by developers. Consequently, reflecting local priorities becomes more reactive, as opposed to being proactive through a Neighbourhood Plan.

Impacts on officer time and the costs

The Working Group is mindful of these impacts. The former has often been mitigated by areas that have produced such plans through the effort of volunteers, meaning that the volunteers could take on more of the technical work and co-ordination. Should the Town Council wish to pursue the development of a Neighbourhood Plan in the future, then utilising volunteer time and effort will be

¹ Parker, G., Wargent, M., Salter, K., Dobson, M., Lynn, T., and Yuille, A. (2020) The impacts of Neighbourhood Planning in England - Final Report to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. University of Reading

critical to its success. In such a scenario, Town Council staff could assist in a more light touch administrative role, but this would need further scoping work.

On costs, Locality have confirmed that government grants for the development of Neighbourhood Plans will continue for the foreseeable future. It is estimated that this would initially be for up to £10,000, although this could be more depending on the nature of the work to be undertaken. Combined with Central Bedfordshire Council being willing to finance much of the technical works and the use of volunteers, the costs of producing the Neighbourhood Plan could be significantly reduced. It is estimated that doing this could reduce the cost of a Neighbourhood Plan from £40,000 to £10,000 or even less.

Despite this reduction in cost, the use of volunteer time poses a significant risk to any Neighbourhood Plan, and staff resource to support the Neighbourhood Plan is currently not available. Research by the University of Reading noted that “the process remains burdensome for community volunteers with the time taken to reach completion around three years” and that Neighbourhood Plans “take longer when Local Plans are in progress.”

Managing expectations

The Working Group considers that what a Neighbourhood Plan can and cannot achieve would need to be clearly stated to the community should the decision be made to progress with a Neighbourhood Plan in the future. This would need to be a core part of the communications plan that would accompany the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. This would need to include the Neighbourhood Plans relationship with the Local Plan, in particular highlighting how Neighbourhood Plans cannot override sites that have been allocated for development in the Local Plan.

The influence of the Neighbourhood Plan in making planning decisions

Central Bedfordshire Council maintains overall authority for planning decisions affecting Flitwick. National planning guidance states that such decisions should be made in accordance with the adopted Local Plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise. An adopted Neighbourhood Plan would be part of the Local Plan, and consequently occupies a strong position in planning policy terms. It does, in effect, carry the same weight as planning policy contained within the Local Plan itself.

It should also be noted that through several policies in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan, the role of Neighbourhood Plans in protecting green spaces and bringing forward smaller scale housing developments is supported. These are specifically policy SP1 (Growth Strategy) and paragraph 15.14.2 of the Local Plan (Local Green Spaces). The Local Plan specifically states in paragraph 6.8.1 that Central Bedfordshire Council “is supportive of Neighbourhood Plans and support will be given to those communities who choose to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.”

The Town Council's approach to planning matters

When coming to this conclusion as to whether or not to progress with a Neighbourhood Plan, the Working Group also considered the Town Council's current approach to planning matters more generally. All members of the Working Group have been participating in formal planning training, which in turn has encouraged the Working Group to consider how the objectives of the Town Council could be achieved through planning by means other than the Neighbourhood Plan.

The conclusion of the Working Group is that the current approach of the Town Council to planning matters is reactive and does not achieve from new developments the objectives of the Council nor a wider community benefit. It is the view of the Working Group that the Council needs to take a more pro-active approach to planning matters and be more on the front foot when it comes to matters of planning policy and major developments.

A more detailed proposal for approaching planning is being considered as part of the review of the Scheme of Delegations to be considered at the Town Council meeting on 19th April 2022 and will

be considered as a separate agenda item. In this report, the Working Group wishes to make the following observations with regards to how the Council approaches planning matters.

Being open and transparent

In being pro-active on planning policy and major development applications, it is essential that the Town Council does so in a manner that is open, transparent, and subject to public scrutiny. This is essential so that the confidence of the community that the Town Council is acting in its best interests is attained and maintained throughout the planning process.

The Town Council particularly needs to be open and transparent on its future work relating to the development of planning policy and engaging with developers. In achieving this, the Working Group recommends that the following principles be applied at all stages of the engagement with Central Bedfordshire Council as planning authority, and developers:

- Any such discussions on planning policy and development matters should be subject to public scrutiny;
- The desired approach to such engagement is through meetings which the public can attend and have their say, whether through a formal committee or a similar meeting;
- There is likely to be occasions where having the public in attendance at a meeting may not be desirable. Where such instances occur, at the minimum minutes of the meetings must be taken, and published on the Town Council's website after the meeting;
- Only in exceptional circumstances, such as detailed negotiations on planning obligations that may be commercially sensitive during negotiations, should the outcome of such discussions not be made available to the public. In all instances, all Councillors must be informed of the outcomes of such discussions as soon as is practicable;
- Regardless, any agreements made such as planning obligations must be subject to full consideration, debate, and approval by Town Council.

Engaging with local planning policy

Regardless of whether a Neighbourhood Plan is progressed or not, the Town Council needs to engage positively with Central Bedfordshire Council as part of the review of the Local Plan. Whilst the current Local Plan was adopted in 2021, from engagement with the Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Policy Team as part of this work on the Neighbourhood Plan, it has been indicated to the Working Group that the process of reviewing the Local Plan will commence during this year. The overall process is summarised below.



In addition to the development sites identified in the current Local Plan, a number of other sites for development in Flitwick were considered and not taken forward for adoption in the current Local Plan. It is likely that these development sites will be submitted again for consideration as part of the review of the Local Plan.

It is critical that the Town Council engages in the development of the Local Plan. It must engage with the community and undertake its own evidence collection and deliberations to ensure that its views are represented by the Town Council as part of the Local Plan process, and to ensure that any development sites that are identified deliver outcomes for residents as a matter of planning policy, as opposed to being only considered at the application stage. Such activity may consist of the following:

- Make residents aware of the Local Plan process, and encourage them to have their say including where to submit their comments;
- Engaging with the Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Policy Team directly and through Ward Councillors to make clear local development priorities and views on emerging proposals;
- Undertaking its own evidence collection to inform the Issues and Options Stage, such as on housing need, transport issues, and demand on local services;
- Identifying and engaging with site promoters at as early stage in the policy development process as feasible, in line with the process of being open and transparent;
- Participate in the formal consultation stages of the Local Plan as required;
- Participate in the Local Plan Examination as required.

The process of how this is done requires further development by the Town Council.

Engaging with major developments

The Working Group considers that the Town Council needs to be much more proactive in engaging with developers as development sites are brought forward. It is imperative that such engagement is undertaken before the formal planning stage, and certainly prior to planning applications being formally submitted. This needs to be undertaken with the view to achieving the following, amongst other matters:

- Ensuring adequate improvements are made for a variety of services in the town used by current and future residents, notably healthcare facilities, schools, transport links, and leisure and cultural facilities
- Where development is to proceed, seeking planning conditions or obligations where the impacts of development can be mitigated;
- Ensuring that the views of the Town Council and local residents are fully considered prior to the submission of the planning application.

This should not prevent the Town Council from considering the subsequent planning application on its own merits. Furthermore, any prior discussions with developers with the Town Council should not affect the Town Council's deliberations of the relevant planning application, which needs to be determined on its planning merits.

What was noted by the Working Group that in previous discussions about engaging with developers, the Town Council had expressed a reluctance to do so. It is the view of the Working Group that such discussions are feasible as long as they are undertaken in a transparent and open manner, and in a way that seeks positive community outcomes.

Consideration of smaller planning applications

It was noted by the Working Group that smaller applications, such as household extensions, take up a considerable amount of time of the Planning Committee. The impact of these deliberations on the outcome is uncertain, and the impact of the individual small developments of such types is often limited. Although members of the Planning Committee do receive correspondence from residents on such applications.

The Working Group considers that, relative to the impact of the developments and the time taken to consider and comment on these applications, a more prudent course of action is to only consider these applications by exception. It is the view of the Working Group that the priority of the Council should be on influencing planning policy and on engaging on major applications.