



have  
**your**  
say...

# ...on the future development of Flitwick Town Centre

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**Central  
Bedfordshire**

# Flitwick Town Centre consultation

## 1. Overview

Flitwick has a population of 13,180 making it the fifth largest town in Central Bedfordshire. Flitwick is situated immediately adjacent to Ampthill. When considered together, they form the third largest settlement in Central Bedfordshire, with a population of over 20,000 residents.

Central Bedfordshire Council has already invested £14.7m in the new Flitwick Leisure Centre, which has been open for just over a year, and is already proving very popular. In addition, Central Bedfordshire Council and Flitwick Town Council have been working together to look at a number of initiatives that could improve Flitwick town centre. Both are committed to improving the overall experience of visiting Flitwick town centre so that local people and visitors want to shop and spend more time there, both during the day and evening. Members of the public are now invited to have their say on some of the ideas being explored as part of this objective.

We're consulting with the public on the early concept stages of two initiatives that, linked together, could have a major impact in helping to revitalise Flitwick. The proposed projects could provide much more of a focal point for the town centre (which is currently divided into different areas by the railway line); improvements to the station area (including more parking and bus links); and more shopping choices. The proposed changes could benefit visitors, commuters and local residents.

This is the start of an ongoing conversation as part of a long-term piece of work, so any improvements won't happen overnight. But we feel it is important for the local community to have their say at this early concept stage in order to ensure the proposed projects deliver what residents want. Both Central Bedfordshire Council and Flitwick Town Council will continue to engage with the public at key stages as the proposals develop further.

## 2. Background

Flitwick is a busy town for its size and has an important role as a rail transport hub. The train station serves not only Flitwick, but a very wide area around the town and nearby communities. The train station links Central Bedfordshire to London St. Pancras and beyond. It offers an important commuter service and generates over 1.6 million passenger journeys per year. Network Rail anticipates that this will rise due to timetable changes that

will increase the number of peak trains. This is likely to attract more commuting residents from the new residential developments in the town and the wider area.

Flitwick also provides the home station for Center Parcs Woburn Forest. As a result, its profile has increased, with considerable promotion of transport links to Center Parcs via Flitwick in London locations such as Waterloo and King Cross. Flitwick Station also links and provides important access to the Millbrook Testing Facility and Technology Park and other major local employers, including Lockheed Martin.

The town is faced with a number of ongoing challenges that affect residents, shoppers and commuters. Many of these are based on how the layout of Flitwick has developed over time. There is no clear single 'town centre' in Flitwick. Instead the town has three main zones – the station area; the Tesco superstore and the library area; and the original High Street.

The Tesco superstore acts as a 'pull' for shoppers beyond the town, but the overall number of retail or service outlets per population is low compared to other towns in Central Bedfordshire. For every 1,000 residents, there are three retail or service units in Flitwick. By comparison, in Biggleswade there are eight retail/service units per 1,000 residents, and in Ampthill, there are seven retail/service units per 1,000 residents.

The ambition is to create a more joined-up town centre for residents, encourage commuters to spend more of their time and money in Flitwick, improve traffic flow in and out of the station and improve the overall experience of visiting Flitwick.

### **3. What is being proposed**

The ambition is to regenerate the area around the railway station, improving the overall experience of visiting Flitwick and encouraging residents and visitors to make more use of town centre retail, rail and bus services and community facilities.

#### **A. Improving the train station**

Flitwick train station is a busy and popular station that is well used by residents and the wider community. So a plan to improve this area could transform its potential in terms of transport, retail, jobs and homes.

Users of Flitwick rail station are primarily (80%) commuters and aged between 46 and 64, who currently travel to the station mostly by car or walking. There has been a recent increase in cycling to the station after investment by Central Bedfordshire Council and Govia Thameslink Rail in new cycle storage facilities. Currently, bus services to and from the

station are not well used, as they are not frequent enough or well coordinated to the rail timetable.

**i) Transport Interchange and station parking**

The council has been working with a broad range of parties including Network Rail and the train operating company, Govia Thameslink Railway. This proposed project aims to provide major improvements to transport facilities in the town through the creation of a public travel interchange, where the public can catch both buses and trains. Bus services that are better coordinated and fit with the rail timetable could encourage more station users to travel to the station by bus rather than car.

Alongside this could be improved traveller information at the station, with digital screens showing both bus and train timetables together, and improved commuter and pedestrian access to the station itself. We are also proposing improvements to the cycling and car parking facilities at the station.

The temporary car park could be removed. Instead there could be a new multi-storey car park with some spaces allocated to the new retail units on Steppingley Road (see below).

We are also proposing a new exit and entry road configuration for easier car access into/out of the train station and its car parks.

Delivery of a redevelopment scheme in the Flitwick Station area and the timetable for this is dependant on a number of external factors including economic conditions and also partnerships with other public and private sector organisations. Implementation of a redevelopment scheme is therefore not solely in the control or influence of Central Bedfordshire Council.

**ii) Future Steppingley Road shopping parade**

Central Bedfordshire Council has recently bought the site of former demolished warehouses (now serving as a temporary extra car park adjacent to the railway station car park); fast food shop; Franklins House; and a residential plot on Steppingley Road specifically to create a regeneration project.

The council has been working on ideas for the site, and on the adjacent station forecourt owned by Network Rail, that could have a major impact and improve the town centre. The idea is to bring new shops, services and homes close to the station area. The layout could provide much more of a focal point for the town centre, which is currently divided into different areas by the railway line. Central Bedfordshire Council has already secured interest from a major national retailer to take a prominent shop unit in the new

development. The scheme could provide 40 square metres of space for retail or services, and also create between 100 and 200 jobs.

Our ideas are still at a very early concept stage but the pictures below, which are artist impressions, give you a sense of how this could look.



## **B. Market Town improvements**

Central Bedfordshire Council is investing £4million in regenerating town centres (called the Market Town Regeneration Fund). As part of this project, Flitwick Town Council has been allocated £1.8million to improve some specific areas of the town and would like your feedback on some of the initial projects that are being considered.

We are seeking the public's views on the following projects, which would be co-funded by Central Bedfordshire Council and Flitwick Town Council, but would be implemented by Flitwick Town Council:

### **i) High Street / Kings Road / Station Road enhancement**

To improve the pedestrian area and make it more accessible to pedestrians. This could include:

- simplifying the layout of the area
- removing any unnecessary street clutter, such as duplicate signage.
- changing the surface in front of Barclays Bank.

We want to know what you think of these ideas and if you have any other suggestions.

### **ii) Community activities in the library**

The local library benefits from the station traffic and Tesco shoppers and is the third busiest library in Central Bedfordshire (after Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable). Flitwick Library attracts a significant number of users from a wide geographical area. During 2015/16 there were almost 117,000 visitors to Flitwick Library, which was an increase of 20% on the previous year.

In collaboration with Central Bedfordshire Library Service, the proposal is to provide interesting activities for the community in the evenings and weekends in the library building. These could provide additional community and social uses for the building beyond the traditional library services, and also encourage people to use the library more. The library has previously experimented with cocktail and comedy nights, and has already scheduled a piano, a language café and other cultural events for this year.

We're interested to find out what other ideas and events could be put on in the Library.

## 4. How to have your say

Both Central Bedfordshire Council and Flitwick Town Council would like your views on these ideas.

You can have your say by answering a questionnaire on our website at [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations) or you can pick up a paper copy from Flitwick library and leisure centre.

We will be holding public drop-in sessions at various stages throughout the consultation, where you can come and ask us questions about the two proposals. These will be at:

The Rufus Centre – Monday 31 July (2pm-7pm)

The Rufus Centre – Thursday 3 August (2pm-7pm)

Flitwick Library – Monday 4 September (2pm-6pm)

Flitwick Library – Thursday 7 September (2pm-6pm)

The consultation is open from 31 July 2017 until 13 September 2017.

## 5. Next Steps

The feedback received during the consultation period will be reviewed and used to inform how these ideas are developed further.

In particular, there will be further consultation on the proposals for Flitwick Train Station, but is not likely to happen before the end of 2018.

### Contact us...

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