

1. Introduction

This document is the Final Preferred Options Report of the Houghton Regis Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This SPD forms part of the suite of Local Development Documents (LDDs) which comprise the Joint Luton and South Bedfordshire Local Development Framework (LDF).

When adopted, the LDF, together with the Regional Spatial Strategy will form the statutory Development Plan for this area. This SPD is a material consideration for decisions regarding new development proposals in the study area.

1.1 Masterplan Objectives

The key objectives of the Masterplan are:

- To identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the town centre
- To understand the issues that affect the town centre and may influence its future
- To explore the opportunities for new development and environmental enhancement
- To set principles and parameters for new development to be realised; site design, capacities, uses, funding, phasing
- To set principles for environmental enhancement to be realised; identification of local distinctiveness / character areas, improvement areas, design, funding, phasing

1.2 The Process of Preparing the SPD

This SPD is made up of a number of documents:

- Baseline Report (Supporting Document 1)
- An Issues and Options Report (Supporting Document 2) and a
- Sustainability Appraisal (Supporting Document 3).

These should be read alongside this Final Preferred Options Report. The Baseline Report and the Issues and Options Report discuss the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities, whereas this Final Preferred Options Report sets the principles for design, development and delivery.

The Baseline Report and the Issues and Options Report were prepared in consultation with South Bedfordshire District Council (SBDC) and the Houghton Regis Town Centre Management Committee (HRTC MC). In addition, key stakeholders played a key role in helping to identify and prioritise the challenges and opportunities for the town.

1.3 Public Consultation

Initial consultation with stakeholders took place in May 2007, which helped to inform the preliminary options. Consultation on the draft SPD took place with both stakeholders and the public in September and October 2007. This then fed into this final version of the SPD.

Further consultations could take place to inform the project's development, involving:

- Younger people - to establish the local need for facilities, activities and training and the appropriate forum for gaining access to these
- Developers and / or operators - to establish whether a space within the new development could be provided for younger people (e.g. internet café / social club, coffee shop)

- Community groups / youth workers - to establish whether a community enterprise venture could be set up and by whom
- Operators of the Library and Community Centre - to establish what facilities would be available for younger people and whether management of this building would be available in the evenings / weekends
- Community groups / schools - for input into the landscaping and heritage proposals
- The wider community - to input into any public art proposals, or improvements for open space / children's play areas etc
- The owner of AA Insulations site - over future use and phasing of site
- Land owners, occupiers and tenants - over affected land and buildings
- The Medical Centre / Bedford Square - over parking and land east of Tithe Farm Road
- Church leaders - over parking requirements
- Netto - over longer term solutions for the new street and parking arrangements
- BCC - over parking management for the town centre as a whole

2. Planning Policy Context; Summary

2.1 The Regional Context

The Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy (MKSMSRS) states that 26,300 new homes are to be built in the sub-region between 2001 and 2021, with a further 15,400 new homes between 2021 and 2031.

In terms of employment, the MKSMSRS refers to the provision of 12,600 new jobs in the period to 2021 and 7,400 jobs in the period 2021 – 2031. However, the emerging East of England Plan has revised this figure and refers to the provision of 23,000 new jobs in the period to 2021 and a further 12,000 to 2031.

The MKSMSRS states;

“Luton / Dunstable / Houghton Regis, where the emphasis should be on building the principal growth towns into a vibrant, culturally diversified conurbation with a major improvement in the local economy and skills base, and capacity to meet housing need. This should be achieved through economic regeneration across the urban area, making the most of its location close to London and other economic drivers in the South East and its good transport links. Leighton Linlade will absorb a proportion of the growth allocated to Luton / Dunstable / Houghton Regis in a way that complements these aims and makes the most of its location between Luton / Dunstable / Houghton Regis and Milton Keynes.”

2.2 The Local Context

The Core Strategy Draft Issues and Options Paper, June 2007, covering Luton and South Bedfordshire identifies the following priorities for the growth area which can be summarised in the following vision: -

By 2021, Luton and South Bedfordshire will be known as the ‘Green Growth Area’, a truly sustainable community. It will be a place that has a strong heritage based on a number of interconnected existing and new communities. There will be easy access to local jobs and it will be well connected by an efficient public transport system with a web of managed green infrastructure, offering safe cycling and walking routes to local services and the surrounding countryside. Our diverse communities will have a range of social opportunities that help to build strong and safe neighbourhoods.

It will be a place that is recognised for its attractive vibrant surrounding villages, whose individual identity will have been conserved within the environment of the Chilterns and Downs. It will also be at the forefront of using the latest innovations to reduce our impact on the environment. Our use of sustainable design will make it possible for our residents to have healthy lifestyles that are environmentally friendly, and affordable.

The M1, railway connections and London Luton Airport provide unrivalled accessibility contributing to the creation of yet more jobs for IT, aviation, science, hi-tech and in new, creative, leisure and knowledge management industries. Schools, colleges and Bedfordshire University are set to achieve national acclaim and be among the best, offering new learning opportunities to meet the new skills needed.

The health of the population is to be paramount and will be well catered for with improved and expanded facilities based on Luton and Dunstable hospital and new and improved local facilities and care.

Luton will continue to develop as the sub-regional shopping and service centre of choice also known for its vigorous learning and skill development culture. Having excellent public transport

links, a well-trained workforce and a thriving business sector, it will be a prosperous centre of enterprise and economic vitality. Its positive image, locally and beyond, will be built upon its extensive regeneration and development of its dynamic retail and leisure facilities. It will be a town where diverse communities are a source of cultural and economic vitality.

Dunstable will have a much better and safer environment following reduction of through traffic. It will offer a strong local service centre that complements Luton town centre with a thriving cultural scene based around the highly successful Grove Theatre leisure quarter. New gateways to the town and distinctive redevelopments will add to its historic qualities.

Houghton Regis and the emerging growth areas to the north will show how new development can reinvigorate older communities, reviving the town centre at the heart and providing new business parks, health and public service facilities, exploiting the improved access to the M1.

Leighton Buzzard will have enhanced its distinctive market town character and be noted for the continuing success of its many high quality independent and specialist stores. The River Ouzel, Clipstone Brook and Grand Union Canal waterways, which reach right in to the centre of the town, will continue to provide spokes in a green wheel which rings the town with attractive and publicly accessible open spaces.

Growth for everyone means giving the opportunity for all to achieve their full potential, with a strong sense of pride in their communities. The new growth will be a catalyst to narrow the health and social inequality gaps that exist today.

The Core Strategy priorities lie at the heart of the SPD, with the key considerations for Houghton Regis being the improvement and diversification of the local economy, the ability to accommodate future housing, employment and social / community needs, relief of traffic congestion, whilst promoting wider sustainability goals, including the protection of the landscape, heritage and townscape character of the area.

The LDF Core Strategy identifies a number of options for growth located on the northern outskirts of Houghton Regis, ranging from between approximately 100 and 600 hectares of land release. There is also a commitment to provide a number of strategic transport infrastructure schemes, such as the A5-M1 Link (Dunstable Northern Bypass) and the Luton Dunstable Busway. These schemes are all essential to improve transport capacity, remove through-traffic from the town centres, and provide a sustainable transport network for the existing conurbation.

2.3 The Implications for Houghton Regis

The implications may be that substantial growth will be highly likely to occur to the north of Dunstable/Houghton Regis. It is therefore essential that the Masterplan can accommodate new town centre growth to meet this extra demand and that any development proposals can respond to demand as it occurs. On this basis, the Masterplan recommends an overarching vision for the town centre yet provides the flexibility for the market to work within it, as and when required.

The Masterplan provides new commercial floorspace; retail, office and leisure opportunities, alongside residential and community uses, to ensure the creation of balanced and diverse new and existing communities.

While the town centre is the focus for the Masterplan, many of the benefits that will arise - increased choice, better public transport, enhanced open space, for example - will be valuable for the wider community.

In terms of local housing provision, the MKSMSRS states that main land release north of Houghton Regis will only be brought forward after 2016 when the Luton-Dunstable bypasses and the M1

improvements are in place. The implication is that prior to 2016, residential development will have to be accommodated within the existing urban area.

As the urban capacity estimates potential capacity of 1,419 dwellings within Houghton Regis, redundant, or inappropriate or low priority employment land will be required for a mix of two and three bedroom properties and for 30% affordable housing.

3. Issues and Options

This section summarises the key issues identified in the Baseline Report and the goals and objectives required to address these issues. It also summarises the preliminary options developed earlier in the masterplan process, briefly explains the design concepts and their rationale and makes a recommendation for the Preferred Option for the town centre.

Reference should also be made to Supporting Document 2: Issues and Options Statement for more detail.

3.1 Goals and Objectives

The overarching goals and objectives required to address the issues identified in the Baseline Report are;

- Responding to income and employment deprivation
- Meeting housing and employment needs
- Building and improving communities and developing local distinctiveness
- Improving community safety
- Safeguarding and improving the natural and built environment
- Improving transport movement and circulation
- Relieving congestion
- Reducing car trips and improving public transport

Specific urban design objectives are discussed in section 4

3.2 Localised Opportunities and Priorities

The table in Supporting Document 2: Issues and Options Statement sets out the identified opportunities in detail and prioritises each of them. In summary, the local priorities are as follows;

Economy

- Increase local jobs and skills
- New High Street to increase retail, leisure and employment choice



Need for increased retail and employment choice

Transport / Movement

- Reduce congestion on High Street / Bedford Road
- Improve crossings over the High Street
- Restore pedestrian and cyclist links between the High Street and The Green
- Improve public transport



Need for improve crossings and restoration of priority for pedestrians and cyclists

Community

- Affordable housing
- Younger people's services / facilities



Wider choice of housing in the town centre

Heritage

- Respect and enhance Conservation Area
- Views of Church to be maintained



Respect the Conservation Area and key views

Public Realm

- Pedestrian priority
- Create a heart to the town, with a new identity



Improve the public realm

3.3 Preliminary Options

Once the issues and opportunities were considered, three broad options were developed. Supporting Document 2: Issues and Options Statement sets out in detail, the design-led approach adopted for the options. In summary, the basis for the options relates to the potential changes to the main transport route – The High Street / The Green – as it passes through the town centre. The three options are based upon;

1. a minimal re-alignment of the road to minimise infrastructure costs whilst enhancing the western portion of the Study Area
2. a partial re-alignment to provide better proportioned development sites in the Bedford Square / Co-op area as well as improvements to the western area
3. a full re-alignment of the road to fundamentally change and improve the image and setting of the town centre

Each option provides a mix of retail, office, leisure, community and residential uses and address highways improvements, pedestrian connectivity and the public realm.

3.4 Option Testing

The benefit of option testing is to identify the advantages and disadvantages of different types, uses and alignments of development more clearly, as well as the effects of including particular elements within the proposals. The intention is to highlight those critical issues affecting sustainability, traffic movement, the economy, heritage, community, the public realm and deliverability of the Masterplan to enable an informed decision in response to these issues.

Supporting Document 2: Issues and Options Statement and Supporting Document 3: Sustainability Appraisal provide detailed information on this process.

3.5 Preferred Option

This report refers you to Plan 1: Preferred Option contained at Appendix 1.

The Masterplan has been developed following testing of the preliminary options, sustainability appraisal and consultations with the client group and stakeholders.

The three underlying design goals – to celebrate the town’s heritage, to improve and enhance the image of the town, and to provide better connectivity in the centre – have been developed into specific proposals and recommendations which together form the Masterplan.

Following review of the three options and from discussions and analysis, it is clear that the achievement of a scheme to accommodate phased change is the most appropriate strategy; working initially within the existing highway framework, whilst maintaining the potential for the relocation of the High Street in the longer term,. This will enable the Masterplan to set a broad framework to encourage regeneration and guide long term growth and development, and to retain sufficient flexibility to respond to new opportunities as they arise, without precluding longer term development for which funding is not currently available. As it is not possible to predict shopping habits or facilities (e.g. location of District or Local Centres) at this time, a solution which would provide immediate change and increased choice, yet able to respond to the growth area requirements over time, is the best option.

The Masterplan consists of two primary areas of change;

- The High Street area to the west
- The centrally-located Bedford Square and Co-op sites

Overarching streetscape improvements including hard and soft landscape, signage, lighting and street furniture will unite the three areas to define a singular and comprehensive image for the town centre.

This report refers you to Plan 2: Development Sites and Key Urban Design Principles, within Appendix 1.

High Street

The western end of the traditional High Street (and the western end of the study area), would see the greatest change in terms of land use and building form.

Currently, the street is dominated by derelict and low density industrial / retail uses on the southern side, with closer knit, mainly detached, two storey offices, retail and residential units on the northern side. The High Street itself contains narrow footpaths, particularly on the northern side, creating a poor pedestrian experience.

The Masterplan envisages the High Street as a vibrant mixed-use quarter, defined by new residential, office and retail uses. In order to improve the pedestrian experience and the setting of properties along the northern side of the street, it is proposed to realign the street a few metres to the south.

New development on the southern side of the High Street - Parcels A1 and B1 - would include ground floor commercial uses – retail, leisure, office – with two floors of offices above. At the eastern end of the High Street, at the King Street junction, a 3-storey block of flats would be provided.

Land further to the south of the High Street, fronting Queen Street, King Street and Cemetery Road - Parcels A2, B2 and C2 - is identified for a mix of residential flats and town homes, however, it must be noted that the principle for suggesting the redeveloping of these sites for residential purposes is as a result of planning permission being granted for residential development on the High Street (Parcels A1 and B1). The current local plan designation does not identify these sites for residential uses.

In addition to the minor realignment of the High Street, two important changes have been made to the street pattern.

It is proposed that the Cumberland Street would be extended northward to create a pedestrian and cyclist link between the residential areas to the south and the High Street; however, this link will be for vehicles only in part, with no vehicle access, except pedestrians and cyclists, directly onto or off the High Street.

The long term vision is to create a new street, almost on the alignment of the current private road, running parallel to the High Street, between the High Street and Queen Street: this street would extend between King Street in the east and Cemetery Road in the west, although other connections at each end may need to be explored.

The new street would provide development frontages and enhanced access for the new residential areas, would reduce the potential impact of traffic movement on Queen Street, and would allow for the longer term solution of a semi-pedestrianised High Street to be safeguarded. The longer term solution is for through traffic to be removed from the High Street, onto the new street, creating an enhanced High Street with pedestrian and cyclist priority, allowing service and public transport access only. The newly aligned street and the development adjacent to it could be designed to modern standards and to accommodate a new section of the Luton Dunstable Busway - with minimum environmental impact - if this is required.

In summary, the formation of the blocks in this area provide a framework for short term change and improvement whilst maintaining the option for a more fundamental change to the structure of the town centre in the longer term.

It is to note that whilst the Masterplan envisages the High Street as a vibrant mixed-use quarter defined by new residential, office and retail uses was under preparation, a planning permission has been already granted (subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement) for the complete redevelopment of the south side of the High Street frontage (Parcels A1 and B1) i.e. 93 residential apartments with some 600 sq m of commercial floorspace.

Furthermore, the redevelopment of Parcels A2 and B2 in accordance with the proposals indicated above, may not however, be possible to implement as a result of the proposed redevelopment of Parcels A1 and B1 as indicated above. This would prevent the opportunity of extending Cumberland Street and the longer vision of the creation of a new street running parallel to the existing High Street.

This section of the Masterplan therefore needs to be considered in the light of the above information.



Indicative image of the High Street, looking eastwards towards the junction with Bedford Road

Bedford Square and Co-op Sites (Parcels D and E)

Parcels D and E provide an important opportunity to improve not only the retail offer and choice for Houghton Regis but also to create a new, identifiable heart to the town, an improved image and a better aspect for the town's historic structures.

The High Street remains generally in its current location, with better accommodation for pedestrians and cyclists, including conveniently located crossing points. There will also be minor realignment to remove unnecessary road space from the High Street close to The Green to provide for pedestrian priority and an improved aspect onto The Green from?

Buildings on both sides of the High Street will face outward creating a new, active frontage and definition to this part of the High Street. Along the south side, buildings will be set back from the current building line to allow views from The Green to the tower of All Saints' Church and also to allow a line of trees to connect the Green to the town centre visually and physically.

Bedford Square itself - Parcel D - will be reconfigured as a new block with retail, office and other commercial and leisure uses on the ground floor and a mix of offices and residential at upper floors. It is important however to ensure the Church / Green view is maintained and the important view corridor between the two is uninterrupted.

Vehicular access and servicing will enter the block from Tithe Farm Road; the western and northern elevations of the block will also provide active frontages at ground floor level addressing and overlooking the public realm.

A small retail pavilion is situated at the south west corner of Parcel D: located to enhance and focus the Church / Green view and to enliven the public space adjacent to the Church. This building should incorporate innovative architecture and should address the public realm on all sides.

On the northern side of Parcel D new retail floorspace is also provided adjacent to the new Library / Community Centre. In this area a new public route focused on the Church Tower is provided between Tithe Farm Road and the new retail development.

The Co-op site - Parcel E - is located on the southern side of the High Street and has been configured to accommodate a new Co-op and other active retail and leisure uses at the ground floor with two floors of residential uses above. Again, it is important to ensure that the Church / Green view be maintained here.

At the rear of the site a new car park will be provided: access into which will be either via Whitehouse Close or a new access point at the eastern end of the High Street. The car park access route will also provide access to a shared service yard for all retail uses on the block.

A pedestrian link will be provided through Parcel E, linking into the residential area to the south via Clarkes Way: this route will extend northward as a pedestrian crossing over the High Street between parcels D and E.



Indicative image of the Bedford Square / Co-op sites and their relationship with the High Street and the Church

The Green

Revitalisation of the children's play areas and new tree planting would also be provided as part of this proposal.

Pedestrian and cyclist access from Clarkes Way onto The Green will be maintained.

The Public Realm

The proposals set out in the Masterplan are underpinned by a high quality public realm that prioritises pedestrian and cyclist movement and enables people to enjoy the High Street environment.

A number of new public spaces are created:

- Church Plaza
- Library Boulevard
- High Street East
- High Street West
- Cumberland Square

Church Plaza

The area in front of the Church becomes a multi-functional community space which serves several purposes:

- Enhances the setting of the Church
- Creates a heart to the town
- Provides a public space that can be used for different uses at different times; e.g. small scale market, events, meeting place, kiosks.

- Small scale limited parking (e.g. disabled spaces, parking on Sundays or other days for Church related uses, e.g. weddings, funerals)

The space could be cordoned off as appropriate and there would be hard and soft landscaping.



Indicative image of Church Plaza, as the heart of the town centre

Library Boulevard

This new pedestrian and cyclist boulevard would be fronted on both sides by retail and community uses and would visually link Tithe Farm Road with the Church. The aim is to draw people from Tithe Farm Road, the bus stop and the Medical Centre into the heart of the town centre providing interest at the end of a vista.

The boulevard would be hard and soft landscaped.



Indicative image of Library Boulevard, looking westwards, opening up new views of the Church from Tithe Farm Road

High Street East

On both sides of the street the public realm would comprise wide, pedestrian friendly footpaths and spill out space from ground floor uses. The northern and southern sides of the High Street would be linked via pedestrian crossings which would improve connectivity and create visual linkages across the street.

The key aim at the eastern end of the High Street is to draw pedestrians and cyclists to and from the town centre onto The Green with the anticipation being that visitors would use both areas during a visit to Houghton Regis: this would be undertaken through high quality hard and soft landscaping.



Indicative image of High Street east, in front of Bedford Square, looking westwards towards pavilion building and respecting views of the Church

High Street West

The public realm would extend onto both sides of the street - with high quality hard and soft landscaping - allowing for unrestricted pedestrian movement, and for units to spill out with, for example, chairs, tables and displays onto the footpaths.

Cumberland Square

This small public space provides a visual link from the residential area to the south onto the High Street encouraging nearby residents to walk or cycle to the High Street. The space will be mainly hard landscaped with the potential for small retail / café / restaurants units to spill out onto the square.

The Green Frontage

The upgraded public realm in this area would benefit from natural surveillance from new properties creating a safer children's play environment and thereby reducing the potential for anti-social behaviour on The Green.

Public footpaths would be extended from Clarkes Way, and new ones created in front of properties, continuing the link between the High Street and Houghton Hall Park: further details can be found within the Public Realm Strategy in section 8.

4. Economic Strategy

The Preferred Option will provide a range of economic benefits such as the creation of new jobs, the safeguarding of existing employment, an increase in land values and the attraction of new inward investment to Houghton Regis.

The following sections examine how the Preferred Option is consistent with the strategic objectives for economic development of the town.

4.1 Employment

The Preferred Option provides for some 7,700¹ m² of retail floorspace (gross external), 1,260 m² of food superstore floorspace (Co-op) and 7,100 m² of office floorspace.

By applying a range of appropriate job densities it is possible to estimate the number of new jobs this development will create. This estimate is based on English Partnerships guidance on employment densities².

The following table sets out this calculation and also shows the assumptions made when converting gross external floorspace to net / gross internal;

Table 4.1: Table showing job creation from floorspace multipliers

Use	Gross external floorspace	Floorspace multiplier (convert gross external to net / gross internal)	Employment densities (retail - net internal, office - gross internal floorspace)	Jobs
General retail	7,690	0.70	20	269
Food superstore	1,255	0.70	19	46
Office	7,105	0.85	19	318
Total				633

In total, the office, food superstore and office developments will accommodate some 630 jobs. These are the jobs that will directly be created / safeguarded by the scheme.

In addition, there will be further jobs created / safeguarded indirectly by the scheme. For example, suppliers to retail stores / offices and pubs / restaurants that will service the needs of people working in the town centre.

Using the same employment density assumptions as above the land that will be redeveloped to provide the 630 jobs now accommodates approximately 260 jobs: this means that the Preferred Option will more than double the number of jobs accommodated in the town centre. The improved range of employment opportunities at Houghton Regis has the potential to help reduce the town's unemployment rate which is significantly higher than the South Bedfordshire average. The provision of new retail and office space will increase local employment opportunities and improve access to local goods and services.

4.2 Retail

The Preferred Option provides for some 7,700 m² of retail floorspace (compared to the existing retail floorspace of approximately 3,100 m²). Furthermore, the food store (Co-op) floorspace provision will also almost double, from approximately 600 m² to approximately 1,250 m².

¹ All floorspace / footprint figures quoted are broad approximations only and will be finalised as detailed development proposals are brought forward

² Employment densities: a simple guide, Arup Economics & Planning for English Partnerships and the Regional Development Agencies, September 2001

The Luton and South Bedfordshire Retail Study undertaken by White Young Green in 2005 suggests that Houghton Regis is adequately served in terms of the current provision of convenience retail floorspace and that there is no quantitative need for additional floorspace over the period to 2016. In terms of comparison retail floorspace, the proximity of a reasonably good range of comparison shopping at Dunstable means that there is currently no imminent need to improve comparison retailing facilities in Houghton Regis.

The Study does however recognise that Houghton Regis town centre appears to be performing an important shopping role, and that despite apparent low levels of patronage, the low vacancy rate suggests reasonable levels of vitality and viability. The Study also recognises that there is considerable scope to build on recent improvements to the public realm in order to improve the overall environmental quality of the town centre, although quality will continue to be compromised by the outdated 1960s buildings; this supports the need to redevelop and modernise the retail provision in the town centre. Moreover, the Retail Study does recognise that, given the potential for future significant population growth in the area, opportunities for retail growth in Houghton Regis should be considered. Options could include the redevelopment of Bedford Square to provide a modern and attractive shopping environment: this is provided for in the Preferred Option.

There is currently no overarching, long term strategy for future retail provision in the Growth Area; this will be set out in the Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents as these are developed over time. For the purposes of testing the retail components of this SPD we have assumed an approximate 300 ha urban extension to the north of Dunstable / Houghton Regis³. Assuming average residential densities of 40 dwellings per hectare and 2.3 persons per dwelling, then the urban extension is likely to bring a minimum of 27,600 new residents to the area when fully developed. This scale of development is significant and serves to emphasise the important potential role of Houghton Regis town centre in meeting future retail needs. Furthermore, the Preferred Option has a strong residential element (over 13,000 m² of residential floorspace) and it will be important that the housing growth in the town centre is accompanied by the provision of sufficient retail and employment floorspace.

Larger retail centres like Milton Keynes, Luton and Dunstable are likely to capture the bulk of the additional comparison expenditure generated by new residents but the likely proximity of an urban extension to Houghton Regis means that its town centre is likely to capture a significant proportion of the additional convenience expenditure generated.

Based on these assumptions, the annual convenience expenditure generated by this level of population growth will be in the region of £55 million to £80 million⁴. Assuming that Houghton Regis will capture at least 50% of that expenditure, there will be scope for the provision of an additional 4,500 m² to 6,000 m² of convenience retail floorspace in Houghton Regis town centre.

It is also likely that Houghton Regis town centre will capture a significant proportion of the additional retail expenditure on eating out. Assuming that 50% of that expenditure is captured by the town centre (some £14 million - £15 million), then there would be capacity and need for a further 4,000 m² - 5,000 m² of floorspace.

Assuming that only 5% of the additional comparison shopping expenditure is captured by Houghton Regis town centre (some £6 million to £8 million), then there would be need for the provision of 2,000 m² to 3,000 m² of additional comparison retail floorspace.

³ Based on the options contained in the Core Strategy Issues and Options Report and the published alignment of the A5 M1 Link Road. This assumption is made purely for comparison purposes and to provide context for the retail proposals in this SPD; it has no formal planning status.

⁴ Additional retail expenditure was calculated based on "Detailed Household Expenditure By Gross Income Decile Group" data (Crown copyright) which present household expenditure by income decile group. We have assumed that the new households in Houghton Regis will have a similar income and expenditure profile to existing South Bedfordshire households (which fall in the eighth decile group).

Planning applications for retail development will need to be accompanied by appropriate retail impact assessments to determine any effects on existing retail businesses and future retail expenditure. However, the above figures strongly suggest that the future growth will generate significant levels of additional retail expenditure and a redeveloped, expanded, modern, attractive retail centre at Houghton Regis town centre would be able to benefit from high levels of patronage.

4.3 *Land Values*

Redevelopment is certain to have a positive impact on land values. As an example, existing employment space values are thought to be in the region of £1,200 m² - £2,000 m² but could rise up to £2,500 m²; residential land values are likely to be even higher.