

The future of Townsend Day Centre

Consultation results

By

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Purpose of consultation

The consultation for Townsend Day Centre was published on the council's website on 8 January 2024. This included a summary of the proposal - to relocate the current service to a community space at the new Houghton Regis Community and Leisure Centre.

The consultation process

The consultation ran from 8 January 2024 to 3 April 2024. Service users and local residents were encouraged to comment on the proposal by completing a short online survey. Paper response forms were also available on request.

Activities included:

- Press release – press release was picked up by Luton Today on 9 January 2024
- Posters sent to libraries and leisure centres
- Article shared with parish, town council and voluntary newsletters
- Social media
 - Facebook – 25,996 people reached, and 277 engagements
 - Twitter – 3244 people reached
- E-bulletins – 3 e-bulletins were sent out:
 - E-bulletin 1 – sent to 26,551 people, with a 45% open rate
 - E-bulletin 2 – sent to 27,160 people, with a 45% open rate
 - E-bulletin 3 – sent to 27,539 people, with a 44% open rate

*engagement is the number of interactions your content received from users - likes, comments, shares, saves, etc.

Feedback on the proposals

In total, 56 responses were received for this consultation.

How they accessed the questionnaire:

- 35 (62%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through a pc/laptop
- 16 (29%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the mobile version
- 4 (7%) respondents accessed the questionnaire through the tablet version
- 1 (1%) respondent submitted a paper version of the questionnaire

To make sense of the feedback received, we have employed two types of analysis. We have looked at the headline quantitative measures, followed by coding of the free text comments to help understand the sentiment behind respondents' agreement or disagreement with the order. The

codes we generated identified frequently mentioned comments and concerns. The findings of the consultation are set out in the next section of this report.

Any consultation findings reported should *only* be those identified in this consultation report.

Please note, all quotes are shown as received, so may contain spelling mistakes. Also, the percentages shown in the charts may not total 100% due to rounding.

The findings

Respondents were asked what their views are on the Council's current preferred option. 53 chose to provide comments and they have been summarised below. Respondents were most likely to be supportive of the proposal, however concerns were raised about the types of facilities and amount of space that would be available at the proposed new centre.

Theme	Number of comments
Good idea/supportive	27
Are there appropriate facilities/opportunities for current users, such as time out spaces, sensory spaces, hot drinks, etc.?	12
Is this big enough/ will there be enough space?	10
This is inclusive	4
Townsend isn't fit for purpose now	4
Concern about safety	3
Refurbish Townsend	3
Questions/concerns about car parking/access	3
Stop using leisure spaces for other things	3
This is just a cost saving exercise	3
I want to stay at Townsend	2
Listen to service users / this is a big change for them	2
The leisure centre is too far from shops / the current location is better	2
Other	4

Some examples of the comments received are:

Good idea/supportive

"I agree to the proposal of moving Townsend day service to the new Houghton Regis Community & Leisure Centre."

"I agree with it. I would like to see the new facilities"

"I think this is a beautiful idea because the current building is old with no additional facilities."

Are there appropriate facilities/opportunities for current users, such as time out spaces, sensory spaces, hot drinks, etc.?

"My first question is why is there no room size quoted on the forms sent out. Is it just one room. Are the toilets easily accessible. Will there be enough space for individual groups to be doing various activities. Does the room have a kitchen to enable customers to have a hot drink during the day. At the Townsend centre the customers have a hot drink morning 10.00 am 12.00 pm and afternoon. It would be much to expensive to buy three hot drinks a day from the cafe. Will customers that only attend two or three days a week be able to return to a full week like they did before covid. Most parents are in their 70s and 80s so need the full week."

"Townsend Court is not fit for purpose. An option would be run a day care service at the Leisure Centre, however, this would only be suitable for some clients. Others would need a much more bespoke facility with more space and specialist facilities. Especially those young adults with profound autism would not be able to access a community based facilities if they are dis-regulated. They will need a specialist facilities with sensory facilities and large open spaces."

Is this big enough/ will there be enough space?

"Will there be enough space for everyone? would all customers needs be met when they are all in the same room severe LD and moderate LD? What happens when someone needs a quite space?"

This is inclusive

"Excellent idea as creates a more inclusive environment and access to more facilities"

Townsend isn't fit for purpose now

"I think this is the correct option as the current building isn't fit for purpose."

Concern about safety

"I like the idea of inclusion, community presence and accessing a shared space. It's also open longer hours which may support individual's needs better. But safety would be a factor and appropriate spaces: sensory rooms, changing places, time out zones etc would also need to be included and resources."

Refurbish Townsend

"I feel that we should stay here at Townsend day centre and do nothing as customers are comfortable here in surroundings that they know with a clear routine, we have plenty of space for wheelchair users, and less able customers whereas we wont have that going to the new location it will be much smaller and is not ideal for our people who attend. This new building would have cost a lot of money to build? So why not use that money in decorating existing centre? Also is everyone at the new centre DBS checked such as members of the public to keep our people safe?"

Questions/concerns about car parking/access

"Is the facility proposed adequately equipped to support all disabilities and needs of those attending the current Townsend facility? Is there adequate FREE car parking for service users ? Is there adequate space for service users to have their "own" space and time out space if required depending on needs Is there provision for 1-2-1 conversations to support individuals that present themselves in a distressed state and require calming and support ? Is the new leisure facility really the right place for this ? I'm personally not sure it is ... it will be run by a contractor of CBCs with no personal care and attention and needs of service users will be ignore - just like the issues at The Dunstable Centre that now exist ..."

Stop using leisure spaces for other things

"Why is it that CBC feel that they can constantly use facilities purpose built for leisure to house vulnerable groups? The new Leisure Centre in Houghton is totally inappropriate for this group....the Day Centre in Parkside has recently closed ...could this not be adapted as its a much better site !"

This is just a cost saving exercise

"A Leisure Centre is not a Day Centre. You have not asked the residents of Houghton Regis if they want a Day Centre Provision although that is the officers preferred version. These adults require space and CBC is cramming them into a small enclosure because that is what a small room is. These customers will require quite spaces at times. Is the hustle and bustle of a Leisure Centre the right environment? They should have a purpose built building and the opportunity to visit the Leisure Centre but then have their own space to retreat to that makes them feel more comfortable. What CBC is proposing is a cost saving exercise so they can sell off their assets. Is that the way we treat our most vulnerable?"

I want to stay at Townsend

"I feel upset and would like it to stay here (at Townsend)."

Listen to service users / this is a big change for them

"My views would align only with those who now use the service. They should be the ONLY voices who matter."

The leisure centre is too far from shops / the current location is better

“This centre is nowhere near the shops i.e. morrisons and Bedford square. The customers like to go shopping thats something they enjoy doing. They like to walk around Houghton hall in the summer that's to far for them and they like a pub lunch also this centre is nowhere near. Keep them where they can access what they enjoy.”

Of the 6 responses from users of Townsend, 5 provided comments that were supportive of the move. Only 1 wanted to stay at Townsend. Of the 9 relatives, 3 provided comments that were supportive of the move, and 5 raised concerns about parking, the amount of space available and the types of facilities available at the new centre.

Are there any options listed that you think the Council should investigate in more detail?



Respondents were most likely to state ‘don’t know.’ Current users of Townsend, or family members of users were most likely to respond with ‘don’t know’ (11 users/family members of users).

Of the respondents that stated yes, 16 provided more detail and their comments have been summarised below.

Theme	Number of comments
Refurbish/modernise Townsend	7
Keep using Townsend	3
Redevelop Townsend for other groups to also use the building	3
Listen to users about their needs of a centre	2
Other	3

Some examples of the comments received are:

Refurbish/modernise Townsend

“Refurbishing townsend day centre”

“staying at the current site but investing in updating and improving it.”

Keep using Townsend

“Either leave them where they are or move the school children from the rooms by the Houghton Regis library and move them into there. the rooms you have in mind should be more suitable for the children . They should be moved to the leisure centre so they can take on more activities in there school day . The customers in Townsend will be more than happy staying as a unit where they are . If they had to be moved from Townsend I think them rooms the children still occupy would be more suitable because they are more central to the shops.pubs and Houghton hall especially with some of them not being able to walk far.”

Redevelop Townsend for other groups to also use the building

“Refurbish Townsend to provide the best facilities for the current & future clients and develop parts of the building to be used by other community groups/organisations”

Listen to users about their needs of a centre

“Have you asked the users directly, using appropriate materials, to identify the users opinion? Have you stated clearly what the upgrade would include, and are you having more on offer?”

Are there any other option(s) that you think the Council should consider that are not in the document?



Respondents were most likely to state ‘don’t know’. Current users of Townsend, or family members of users were most likely to respond with ‘no’ (6 responses) or ‘don’t know’ (also 6 responses)

Respondents that answered ‘yes’ were asked to explain what the options were.

Theme	Number of comments
Use a purpose built facility	4
More information is needed about the proposal	2
Retain Townsend Centre	2
Use spaces near to the library (Bedford Square)	2

Theme	Number of comments
Other	4

Some examples of the comments received are:

Use a purpose built facility

“Merge the provision for Adult Day Care and Townsend and provide a state of the art, purpose built facility.”

More information is needed about the proposal

“Pictures of the proposed changes, and plans. The type of any upgrade, and what that would include, a profile of what Townsend House looks and provides now, and what any new facility would look like. Please can you state clearly that the current provision would not be affected whilst building/changes is going on. Have you consulted the users themselves, they have a say too... Would any transport links and provision be affected by proposing to change a building. Please ask the users –“

Retain Townsend Centre

“I want it (Townsend) to still exist./ I don't want it to get knocked down, it could be a college instead.”

Use spaces near to the library (Bedford Square)

“Using the currently empty spaces in the library/community centre in Bedford Square.”

Respondents were asked what else the council could do to minimise the impact of any changes on the existing people accessing the service and their relatives/carers at Townsend Day Centre. 46 chose to provide comments and they have been summarised below. Respondents were most likely to highlight the need to keep users informed, and to listen/consider their individual needs.

Theme	Number of comments
Keep users informed/ updated	14
Consider the individual needs / listen to users	10
Have visits/a phased move	6
Involve staff and users in the new centre – decorating, activities, how it would work, etc.	5
Keep Townsend	5

Theme	Number of comments
Consider transport needs to the new centre	4
Update the families of those that use the centre	3
Be honest about the Townsend site/process	2
Supportive of the process	2
Other	8

Some examples of the comments received are:

Keep users informed/ updated

“Keep them informed and prevent rumour and mis-information.”

“Ensure day centre users are comfortable with the changes before during and after the transition”

Consider the individual needs / listen to users

“information sessions both in person and face to face ; asking people how they wish their service to be delivered; ensuring that there is a overlap from old to new to support transition.”

Have visits/a phased move

“Visits in advance for people to get used to it. Have a settling in period. Have an open day. Have pictures on the wall in the room and creative work by the people we support.”

Involve staff and users in the new centre – decorating, activities, how it would work, etc.

“I think that the staff and people who know and use the service should be involved with the set up of the new space.”

Keep Townsend

“As the current building is large it seems reasonable that you could continue to operate the service at the same site while completing some of the refurbishment. You could generate additional income by offering places to out of county people once the site was of a better standard.”

Consider transport needs to the new centre

“You may have to consider transport help”

Update the families of those that use the centre

“Need to discuss with current users and families their views of the impact and their ideas/priorities for how the changes are implemented with least disruption.”

Be honest about the Townsend site/process

“Be up front and honest as to why you want to close the current venue - what will the land be used for ? What will the residents of Houghton Regis gain by the closure If this facility - what is the plan for this area”

Supportive of the process

“I'm not worried about moving to the new centre. I could help with making cups of tea to help people settle in.”

Current users and family members of users were most likely to discuss the need for visits/a phased move (3 comments), consider individual needs (2 comments) and keep users informed/updated.

Respondents were asked if they have any further comments about the proposal. 25 chose to provide comments and they have been summarised below:

Theme	Number of comments
Listen to staff / users	5
These are some of the most vulnerable groups of people	5
Leave it as it is / stay at Townsend	4
Supportive of the proposal	3
More information is needed	2
You have already decided what will happen	2
Will this provide more opportunities for inclusivity?	2
Other	6

Some examples of the comments received are:

Listen to staff / users

“I think that the people who use the service and staff that work there are the experts and need to be involved with the space layout and have some power with any changes that need to be put into place.”

These are some of the most vulnerable groups of people

"Townsend Centre is under used but provided a lifeline to many families - the pandemic served to illustrate how important services for person with additional needs are to families and our budget - we cannot afford to give all of the services users a PA and risk their care packages becoming a 'sitting service' where nothing is achieved."

Leave it as it is / stay at Townsend

"I would like to stay at Townsend day centre as everyone is happy here"

Supportive of the proposal

"Its a good idea and the service needs a update, the leisure centre provides so many opportunities"

More information is needed

"To gauge our decision on the plan, which has no real dimensions or clear usage is difficult. Security could be a challenge at the leisure centre. Are the facilities at the leisure centre FREE to Townsend clients? Will parking be free for drop off/collection of clients? Deep consideration given to clients vulnerability. The small second room could be better used as an activity centre for say Arts & crafts, singing, signing, role play etc. Modern teaching technology should be provided for guided learning and fun activities. Intelligent white board, PC centres and or interactive 'magic' table e.g. OMI projection table for adults with special needs. The larger room will accommodate various tables or 'workstations' for personalised or small group activities - tea, coffee breaks for social interaction!"

You have already decided what will happen

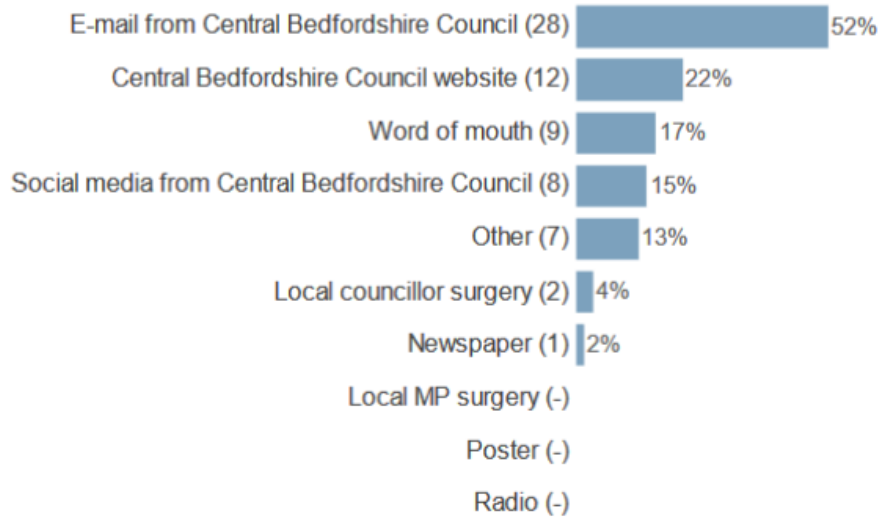
"Seems the council have already made its mind up as the options point very much towards moving the centre."

Will this provide more opportunities for inclusivity?

"What opportunities would there be for service users to work, even if only in a voluntary capacity, at the new venue, eg in the coffee shop? Many have learned skills in the past at the local college in the coffee shop and have then not had the opportunity to use their skills fully. Opportunities have been missed at the current venue to engage with neighbours around, eg by offering some sort of lunch to those working in nearby units. For those with more profound learning and physical disabilities, many more opportunities are needed for them to go out and about, eg into the town centre to the shops. Would there be opportunities to increase staffing or work closely with the college to get health and social care students to support as work experience, enabling 1:1 opportunities for those needing them. How will the new service be evaluated? Will service users views still be sought? Will independent advocacy services continue? How will parents and carers be involved? Could there be a management committee that includes all relevant stakeholders and interested local people? These services need to be improved through this change so that the service users have a better quality of life."

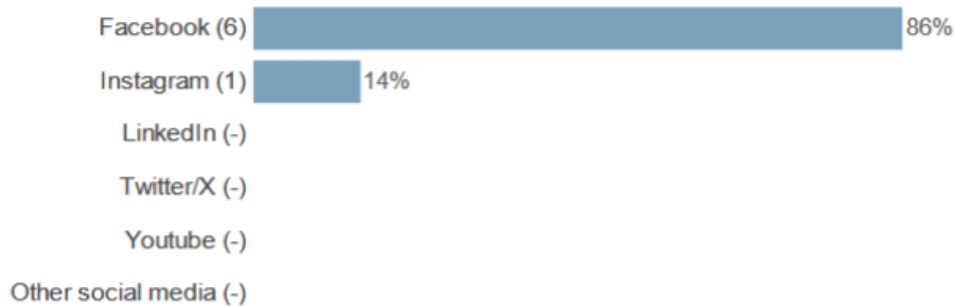
There was no significant trend in response from family members or users of the centre, compared to other respondent groups.

How did you hear about this consultation?



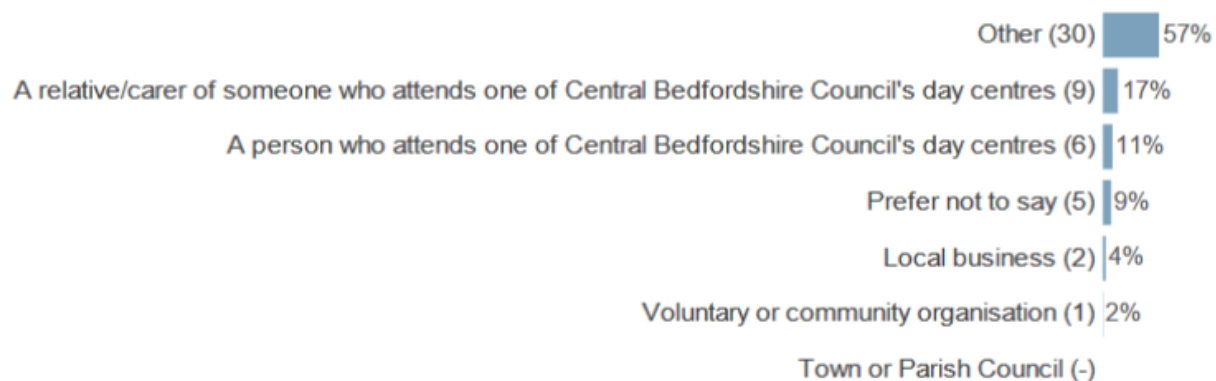
Respondents were most likely to hear about the consultation through an email from the council.

If social media, please tell us which one:



Demographics

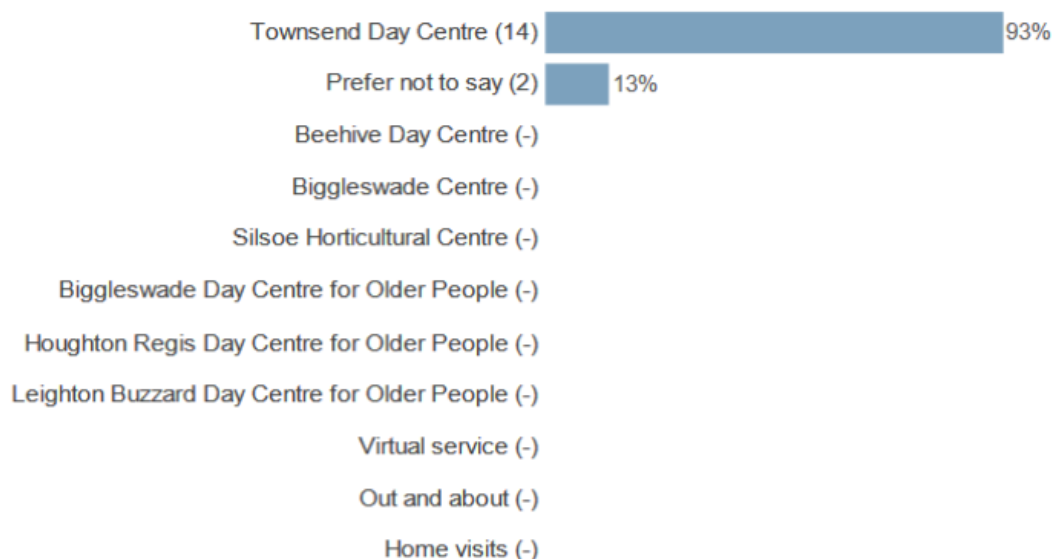
Are you responding as: (please select one)



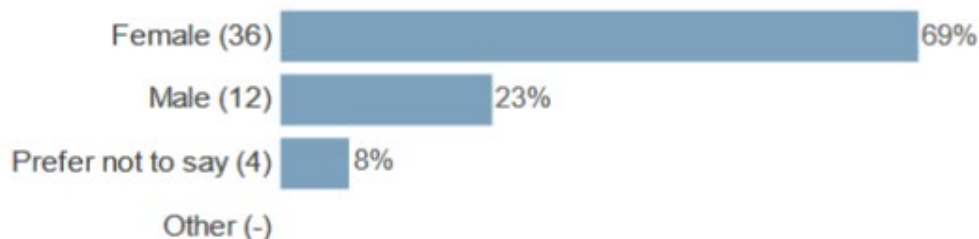
The 'other' responses can be summarised in the following way:

Theme	Number of comments
Local resident	13
Experience of people with SEND (family member, friend)	8
CBC employee	4
Carer	4
Current/past staff at Townsend	3
Other	1

If you are a customer of a Central Bedfordshire Council day centre or a relative/carer of someone who attends, please specify which:

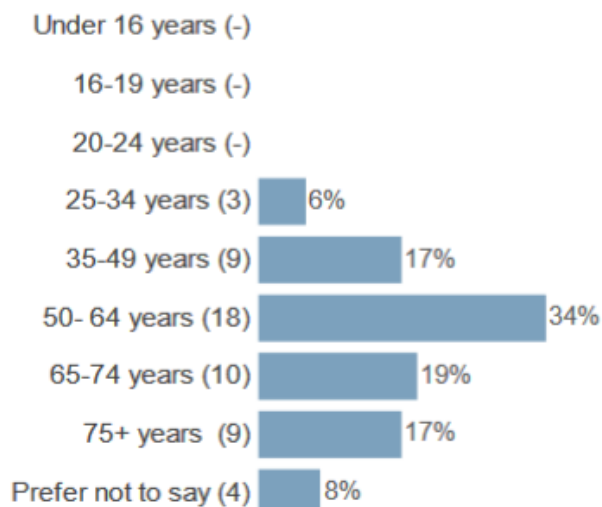


Are you: (please select one)



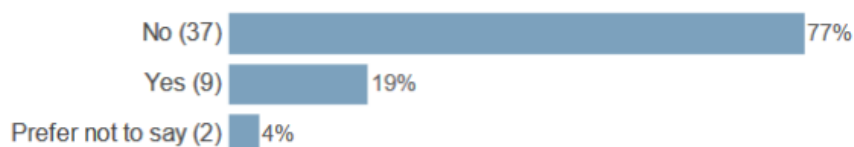
Respondents were more likely to be female (69%).

What is your age? (please select one) (Age)



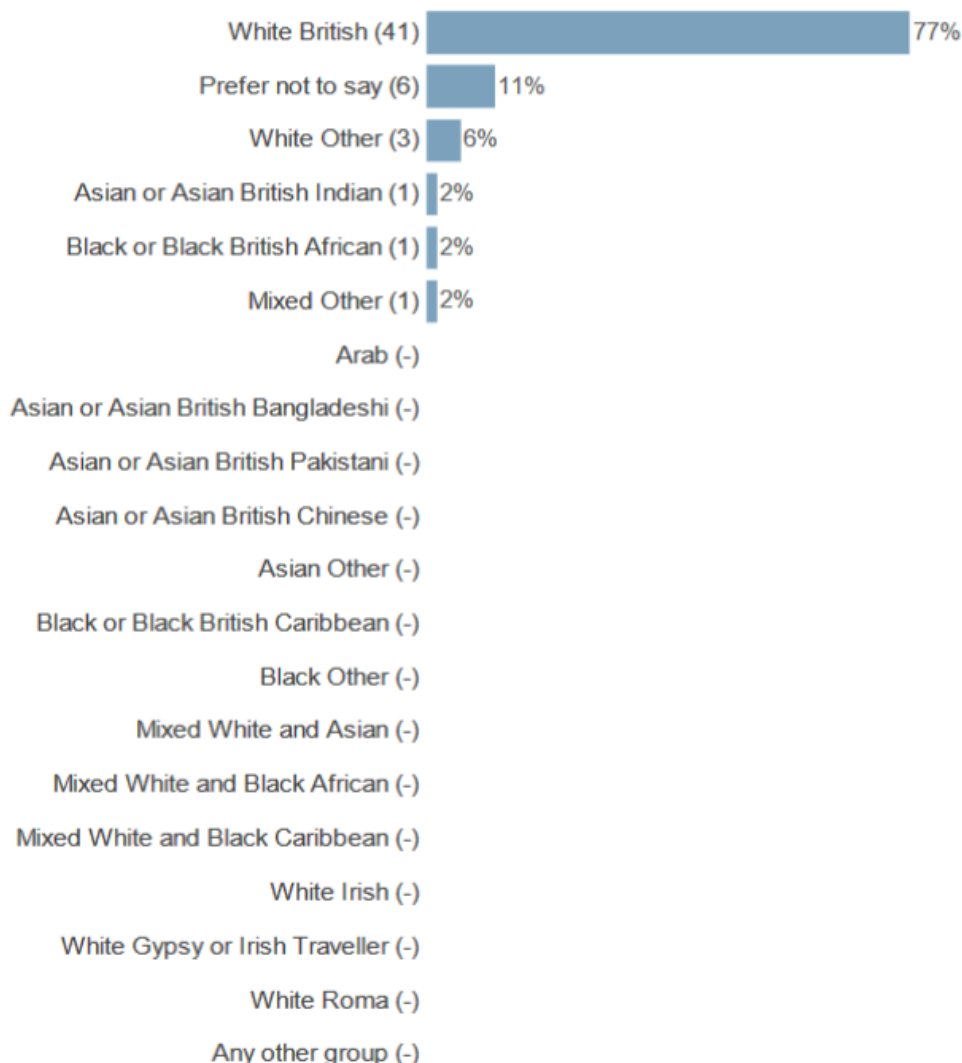
Those aged 65 or older are over-represented (36%) compared to the Census 2021 (where 18% were aged 65 or older).

Do you consider yourself disabled? (please select one)
 Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.



The majority of respondents were not disabled (77%). The percentage of those with a disability (19%) was similar to the Census 2021 figure (15%).

To which of these groups do you consider you belong? (please select one)



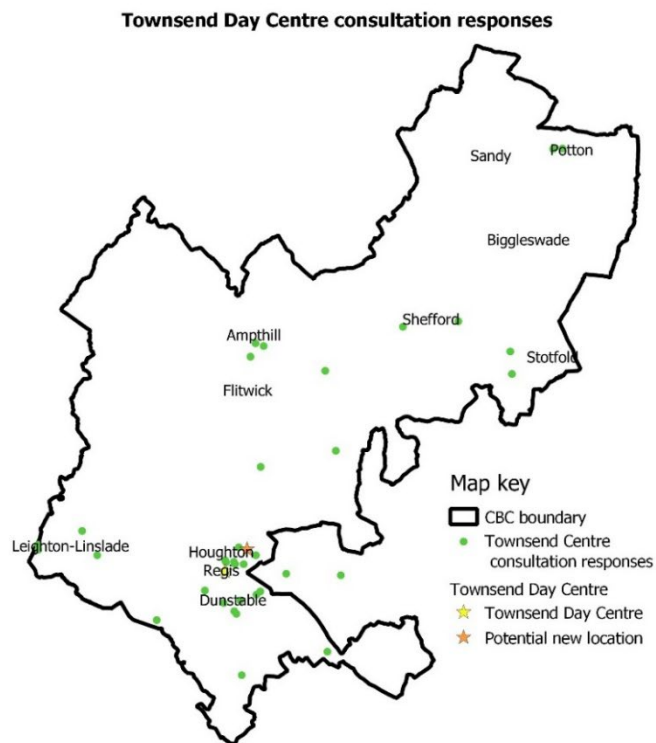
Of those that stated 'white other', 2 chose to provide more detail: "Italian" and "British Black / British Indian mixed."

Postcode and Mosaic analysis

Postcode analysis

A review of postcodes indicates that respondents were mainly from the Houghton Regis area, but with some further afield.

Wide view



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Zoomed in analysis



Mosaic analysis

Experian Mosaic band	Number of responses	% of responses (all)	% of responses (matched)	% of all CBC households
Affluent	18	32%	56%	43%
Middle	8	14%	25%	43%
Deprived	6	11%	19%	14%
Total matched to Experian	32	57%	100%	

There was a relatively small number of responses to this consultation, and a third of respondents (18/32%) did not give their postcode, so it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from this data.

Conclusion

The majority of respondents were supportive of proposals. Family members of users and those that use Townsend were more likely to note the importance of providing the right facilities and raise questions about the amount of space available at the proposed new centre.

Throughout the survey response, from all respondent groups, there were calls to refurbish Townsend and potentially offer parts of the building out to other organisations. Some felt there was enough space within the Townsend building to refurbish parts, without interrupting service provision. Respondents were clear about the need to involve current staff and users in decisions about the design, décor and services in the proposed new centre.

Central Bedfordshire in contact

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