



# **RENHOLD PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD**

**2025-2030**

**REFERENDUM VERSION**

## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>ABOUT RENHOLD</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>VISION AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>SETTLEMENTS AND HOUSING</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, HERITAGE &amp; LOCAL GREEN SPACE</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>COMMUNITY PROVISION</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING AND REVIEW</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	<b>POLICIES MAPS</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2</b>	<b>IMPORTANT GREEN GAPS INSET MAPS</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4</b>	<b>LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>59</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## *Introduction*

- 1.1 This section describes the purposes of a Neighbourhood Plan, explains the rationale behind the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Renhold and outlines the processes undertaken to produce one.

## **Purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan**

- 1.2 Neighbourhood Plans were introduced in 2011 under the Localism Act. Neighbourhood planning enables communities to play a much stronger role in shaping the areas in which they live and work, and in influencing new development proposals. This is because Neighbourhood Plans form part of the Development Plan and sit alongside the adopted Local Plan prepared by Bedford Borough Council. Decisions on planning applications will be made using both the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan, along with any other material planning considerations.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop in the future in ways that ensure identified local need and aspirations of the community are met. Neighbourhood Plans must comply with the broader provisions of the Local Plan but can highlight local priorities.

## **Background to the Neighbourhood Plan**

- 1.4 In 2020, Renhold Parish Council decided that a Neighbourhood Plan should be drawn up for the Parish. Its decision was influenced by a number of factors, including:
  - a) Continuing pressure for significant new housing development adjacent to the urban edge of Bedford and in possible new settlements in neighbouring parishes.
  - b) An aspiration that the Parish's unique local environment, character and heritage should be protected and enhanced.
  - c) The need to interpret the provisions of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 and the Local Plan updates in a local context.
  - d) Concerns that two proposed routes for a new railway linking Bedford and Cambridge could come through the Parish.

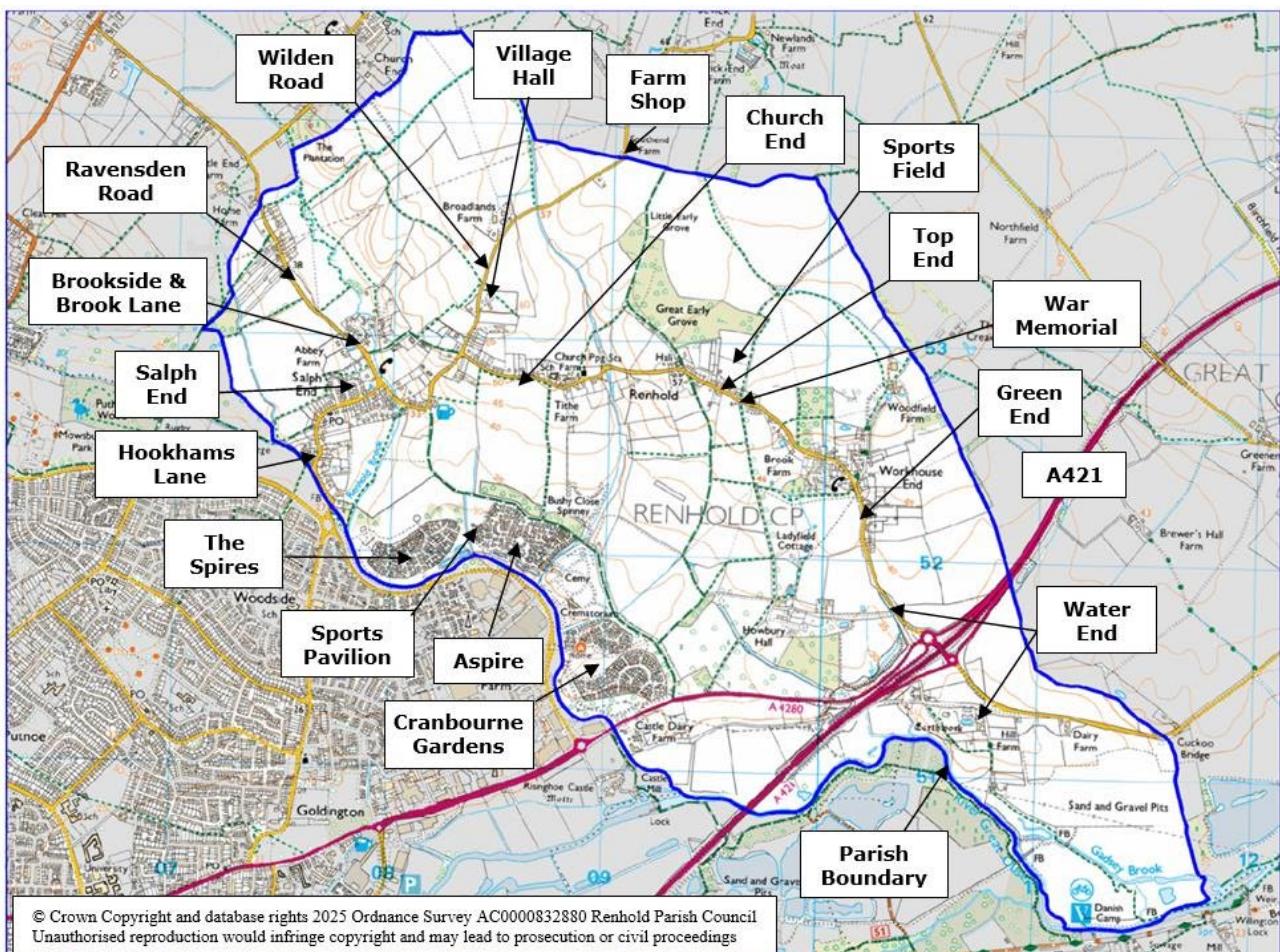
## **Neighbourhood Plan Process**

- 1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan must meet a number of basic conditions to ensure it complies with the relevant legislation:
  - a) There must be a clear process of public consultation, and the Plan has to explain how consultation responses have been taken into account.

- b) It must ensure that statutory environmental assessment and nature conservation requirements have been properly considered.
- c) An independent examiner, appointed by the Borough Council in consultation with the Parish Council, will review the submitted Plan and its supporting documents to ensure it meets the basic conditions. Following examination, the Inspector would then recommend whether or not it should proceed to a local referendum with or without any modifications.
- d) The Neighbourhood Plan only then comes into legal effect ('made') if a majority of those registered electors in the Parish, who take part in the local referendum, have voted in favour of it.

1.6 Having decided to produce a Neighbourhood Plan in August 2020, Renhold Parish Council applied for the whole Parish to be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area and this was approved by Bedford Borough Council on 7th September 2020. The map below shows the designated area.

*Map 1: Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Area*



1.7 A Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NPWG) was then set up by the Parish Council. Its membership is made up of 12 residents from different parts of the Parish, including several Parish Councillors. The Working Group's responsibility was the preparation of the Plan, including necessary research, preparing of background documents, community and stakeholder engagement, and statutory consultation.

### ***Community Consultation and Engagement***

1.8 The Working Group carried out extensive consultations to promote awareness of the Neighbourhood Plan to establish:

- a) What the community thinks about the Parish.
- b) What the community most values.
- c) What should be retained, changed or improved on in the Parish
- d) The community's views on emerging proposals for public comment.

1.9 The methods employed to secure community engagement included:

- a) Hard copy questionnaires hand-delivered to every household in the Parish, supplemented by on-line versions.
- b) Regular progress updates via the monthly Parish Council meetings, a Neighbourhood Plan page on the Parish Council's website and the Parish Council's social media channels.
- c) Articles in the monthly Renhold Parish Magazine.
- d) Drop-in sessions at the Village Hall to enable face-to-face discussions on progress and emerging findings.

1.10 The Working Group has sought to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan reflects local needs and aspirations, where feedback has helped shape the content of this Plan. The evidence gathered from public consultation is considered at appropriate sections within the Plan.

1.11 A number of needs and aspirations identified through the consultation processes cover issues that fall outside the scope of the statutory planning system (for example community events, litter or traffic issues). These have therefore been referenced in a separate section of the Neighbourhood Plan, to ensure that they are properly recorded and provide a source of reference for the Parish Council to produce a separate action plan.

### ***External Consultees***

1.12 In addition to local community consultation, 107 statutory, voluntary and commercial external organisations were consulted on the draft vision, objectives and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## ***Additional Research and Analysis***

1.13 The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group identified areas which would need additional professional assistance. To supplement the skills and expertise of its members, a number of external consultants or support groups were identified and approached to undertake bespoke studies in order to inform the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan. These bespoke studies included:

- a) A Green Infrastructure Plan.
- b) Housing Needs Surveys in 2021 and 2025.
- c) A Parish Design Guidance and Code.

## ***Neighbourhood Plan Format***

1.14 The structure of the Neighbourhood Plan is as follows:

- a) Introduction.
- b) About Renhold.
- c) Consultation and community engagement.
- d) Vision and objectives.
- e) Settlements and housing.
- f) Green infrastructure, heritage and local greenspace.
- g) Community provision.
- h) Transport and travel.
- i) Implementation, monitoring and review.

## 2 ABOUT RENHOLD

### *Introduction*

2.1 This section describes the special characteristics of the Parish of Renhold, including its history, the nature of its communities and the unique spatial context within which it is located, together with some of the challenges it faces in preserving the features that matter most to its residents.

### *History*

2.2 The name Renhold derives from two Old English elements; rana (meaning Roe Deer) and halh (meaning a corner of land in a hollow or river bend) implying land where deer are found. Interestingly, Roe Deer are still found in the ancient woodland in the parish today.

2.3 The first documentary mention of Ranhal was in 1166 when Newnham Priory refers to ownership of a church in Ranhal. The first Vicar, Geoffrey de Ranhal was resident from 1229 until his death in 1233. All Saints' Church is the oldest building remaining in the village today. Largely constructed between about 1290 and 1450, it has a beautifully preserved Norman font.

2.4 Most of Renhold and the surrounding villages were then owned by Newnham Priory with certain families, for example the Beauchamp family of Bedford, having interests in Renhold in the early Middle Ages and on into the 1600s. With the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII, the Newnham Priory Lands largely fell into the hands of Sir John Gostwick, Gentleman Usher to Henry VII and Master of Horse to Cardinal Wolsey. After Wolsey's death Gostwick worked for his successor Thomas Cromwell in a number of important and lucrative roles.

2.5 In 1602 Howbury Hall, the Manor House of the Parish of Renhold and parts of Goldington were sold by the Gostwick family to William Becher of Fotherinhay and London. William was Sheriff of Bedfordshire from 1612 to 1613. The Becher family remained lords of the manor until the Estate was sold to Nathaniel Polhill, prominent banker and tobacco merchant of Southwark, in 1781.

2.6 In 1847, Howbury Hall was destroyed by fire but was rebuilt. In 1919, much of the Estate was sold to its tenant farmers and residents. However, the Polhill family kept Howbury Hall and the surrounding farmland, with the current generation of family members still residing at the Hall.

2.7 Subsequent development in the Parish has involved a number of new housing developments, most recently three new estates adjacent to the urban boundary with Bedford, that have expanded the population and contributed to its vibrant community.

### *Settlement Pattern*

2.8 Renhold covers 885ha (2,187 acres) and is a Parish with linear built-up areas, in common with a historic tradition in many other rural settlements in Bedfordshire, which is defined by discrete settlement clusters separated by intervening green gaps - 'Ends'.

2.9 ‘Ends’ feature prominently in place names in Bedfordshire and whilst other counties use the term, its concentration in Bedfordshire’s towns and villages appears unique to the county. The term ‘End’ was first used in the thirteenth Century to denote small outlying settlements in a parish. The use of ‘End’ continued into the modern period and various ‘Ends’ came into being as late as the nineteenth century.

2.10 Both medieval and modern Ends appear to have developed for a variety of reasons, although in the case of Renhold they are based upon the dispersed nature of settlement in the parish. Although Bedfordshire’s ‘Ends’ are frequently viewed in the context of a parent settlement or Parish this does not necessarily capture the way in which they developed and many ought to be seen as settlements in their own right.

2.11 Bedfordshire’s remaining Ends provide an important link to the county’s past not just in terms of the development of its historic geography but also because it provides an important insight into the economic, social and cultural factors which underpinned the movement of the county’s inhabitants and determined the ways in which various settlements developed.

2.12 The named Ends in the older part of Renhold are Ralph End, Church End, Top End, Green End and Water End. In keeping with this tradition, the newer housing additions (Cranbourne Gardens, Aspire, The Spires) along the south-western boundary of the Parish have also been designed with their own distinct identities and they too are separated by important spatial green gaps.

2.13 Finally, the Parish as a whole maintains its individual character and rural identity by preserving a clearly demarcated Green Gap on each side of the Renhold Brook boundary and the adjoining urban edge of Bedford. The Green Gaps comprise a mix of rural land uses, including woodland, amenity greenspace, sports pitches and agricultural farmland, but all are a fundamental part of the character and identity of Renhold.

## ***Demographics***

2.14 Details on the demographics of the population of Renhold, taken from the most recently available source (the 2021 census) are as follows:

a) Renhold’s population has expanded rapidly in the past two decades, primarily due to three substantial housing developments on the east side of Norse Road. The figures below are based upon the 2001, 2011 and 2021 census data:

<i>Census Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Households</i>	<i>% Growth Census Period</i>	<i>% Growth 2001-2021</i>
2001	1,448	570	-	-
2011	2,451	963	+69.3%	-
2021	3,400	1,300	+38.7%	134.8%

b) Renhold has a young age profile compared with Bedford Borough as a whole, with 22.1% of residents aged 0-15 (compared with 18.8% in the Borough) and 13.2% aged 65 or over (compared with 16.8% in the Borough).

- c) Renhold is a relatively affluent area, with 63.4% of households classified as ‘not deprived in any dimension’ (51.6% in the Borough as a whole), but there are pockets of deprivation, with almost one in ten households (9.9%) ‘deprived in two or more dimensions’ (15.7% in the Borough as a whole).
- d) Household size in Renhold is generally larger than for the rest of Bedford Borough, with 26.9% of households comprising four or more people (21.9% for the Borough) and 20.1% comprising only one person (28.6% in the borough).
- e) The housing stock in Renhold reflects household composition, with 35.4% of properties having four or more bedrooms (25.7% in the Borough) 44.3% having three bedrooms (40.5% in the Borough), 17.7% having two bedrooms (21.8% in the Borough) and 2.7% having one bedroom (12.0% in the Borough).
- f) Renhold has high home ownership (83%), with 8% of households renting from social landlords and 9% renting privately. Housing is predominantly detached (57%) and semi-detached (28%) and heated by gas (77%).
- g) 77% of properties in Renhold are heated by gas, 11% by oil 3% by electricity 1% by solid fuel, 7% by other sources (including renewable energy) and 1% have no central heating. These figures are significant given the ban on new gas boilers from 2030 and whilst it is not strictly a land use planning issue, making local provision to address the Government’s commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050 is still an important consideration in existing and any new residential properties in Renhold.
- h) Fuel poverty is defined as ‘when households spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with a residual income below the official poverty line’. Whilst there are no parish-level figures for fuel poverty, in 2020 13.8% of households in Bedford Borough as a whole are classified as being in fuel poverty, which is higher than the national and regional averages. Given higher energy costs in 2022, it is likely that fuel poverty affects a significant number of households in Renhold.
- i) The overall economic activity rate among residents aged 16-74 is high (67.8%). Employment as managers, directors and in professional occupations (42.7%) exceeds the borough average (35.1%).
- j) 37.5% of Renhold residents who work do so from home.
- k) 8% of households do not have a car, 42% have 2 cars, and 14% have 3 or more cars. Most people travel to work by car (80%), 5% commute by train and 4% cycle or walk to work. It is worth noting that post-pandemic work and travel patterns have yet to stabilise.

## ***Heritage***

2.15 As befits a village with a rich history, Renhold has an extensive array of heritage assets:

- a) All Saints’ Church is Grade I listed and with its brown cobbled walls, its blend of decorated and perpendicular styles of architecture, the building has served the Parish of Renhold for more than 800 years.

- b) 46 other buildings in the village are Grade II listed, including the half-timbered Abbey Farm building in Salph End, which is the likely site of Salphobury mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.
- c) Howbury Ringway and Medieval Trackway at Water End comprises a ringwork castle and part of a later medieval droveway which ran through it. It is situated adjacent to Hill Farm and south of the St. Neots Road. The ringwork, once known as Addingreves Castle, comprises an earthen bank 8m wide by up to 3m high enclosing a circular area 40m in diameter. The bank is breached by two entrances, one at the west and the other at the north-east. Surrounding the ringwork is a ditch which is up to 24m wide.
- d) Other Scheduled Monuments include:
  - Two bowl barrows 330m south of Dairy Farm.
  - Henge, henge type monument and bowl barrow 500m south-east of Dairy Farm.
  - Bowl barrow 550m south-east of Dairy Farm.
  - Henge-form monument 480m south of Dairy Farm.

## **Landscape**

- 2.16 Renhold has a complex topography, with most of the original 'Ends' of the Parish located on a boulder clay ridge overlooking the River Great Ouse and the Renhold Brook, which flows south from nearby Thurleigh to join the main river at the edge of the Parish. Salph End and the new estates are all located at a lower altitude in the valley of Renhold Brook.
- 2.17 The *'Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment'* (2020) classifies the local landscape as 'Renhold Clay Farmland' which covers the whole Parish as well as Ravensden, Wilden and part of Thurleigh and Clapham. It defines the landscape as:
  - a) 'A low-lying landscape ranging from 30m to 80m above sea level, with subtly varied topography founded on Oxford Clay overlain by Boulder Clay in higher areas'.
  - b) 'It is dominated by arable farmland, but scattered woodlands (many ancient) offer some variety, often crowning the horizon in long views across level fields. The large fields are bounded by hedges and ditches, the former sometimes in poor condition or lost altogether. Hedgerow trees, usually oak or ash are present, many mature and in some cases within field, marking lost hedgerows'.
  - c) 'A number of tributaries of the Great Ouse run from west to east, crossed by modest bridges, their valleys forming a focus for settlement and tree cover. There are also a few areas of neutral unimproved grassland, managed as hay meadows, of high ecological value'.
  - d) 'This is a peaceful rural area with a dispersed but regular pattern of farmsteads and small villages, with frequent historic earthworks and tall stone churches. Settlements are connected by the network of quiet rural lanes, which along with rights of way, provide a valuable recreational resource. The A421 passes through the south-east of the area and the earthworks and trunk road features influence the rural character of the landscape locally'.

- e) 'Settlement within the Renhold Clay Farmland character area takes the form of dispersed villages and scattered farmsteads. Villages often shelter in the tributary valleys, either following the line of the tributary or rising up the contours along roads that cross the watercourse. Many consist of a number of 'Ends' each often just made up of a few farms, cottages or a church. Examples of this are Wilden, Ravensden and Renhold (although noting that these settlements also include areas of mid-20th century linear development)'.
- f) 'Linear settlement along the roads to villages just to the north of Bedford such as at Renhold threatens the individual identity of these villages'.
- g) 'Retain the individual settlements avoiding merging these through linear development particularly immediately to the north of Bedford for instance along the roads between the various 'ends' of Renhold'.

### ***Wildlife and Biodiversity***

- 2.18 Renhold is justifiably proud of its biodiversity in its ancient woodland, farmland and fluvial habitats. Its rich diverse wildlife includes mammals such as otters and water voles along the Great Ouse and Renhold Brook, roe deer, badgers and foxes in the more wooded areas and pipistrelle bats. Hares are regularly seen in the Parish and the surrounding areas.
- 2.19 Renhold is home to a wide range of resident and migratory birds, many of which are red listed as species of greatest conservation concern. Threatened farmland species, which are regularly recorded in the Parish, include Corn Buntings, Yellowhammers, Skylarks and Lapwings.
- 2.20 Many species of wildflowers occur in the parish, including an exceptional display of bluebells each spring in the ancient woodland of Great Early Grove.

### ***Amenities***

- 2.21 Renhold has a number of amenities and community assets that serve the needs of its residents and visitors:
  - a) Renhold Primary School is located in Church End and has around 200 pupils aged between 3 and 11.
  - b) Renhold Village Hall opened in 2001 and is managed by the Trustees of Renhold Village Hall Management Committee and provides meeting and function facilities principally for residents of Renhold.
  - c) Renhold Convenience Store on Hookhams Lane is a popular local shop and newsagents.
  - d) The Polhill Arms pub in Salph End attracts a local and wider clientele.
  - e) Sports pitches and changing facilities are provided at Renhold Sports Field ('The Pub Field'), in Top End and at Aspire off Norse Road.
  - f) There are five children's play areas, two adjacent to Aspires (one of which includes a multi-games court), two as part of Aspire and one at the Polhill Arms pub. There are also further play areas within Cranbourne Gardens and The Spires.

- g) An extensive Public Rights of Way network links the 'Ends' of the Parish and each of the three 'new' estates with Bedford and the wider countryside.
- h) There are two places of worship, All Saint's Church in Church End and Renhold Chapel in Green End. Both also accommodate other community functions like committee meetings. All Saint's Church has a Chapter House for this purpose.
- i) Fibreoptic broadband services are provided throughout the Parish, although download speeds vary throughout the older village which is still reliant on the obsolescent Fibre to the Cabinet system with legacy copper wire connections to the user. The 'newer estates' enjoy the option of Fibre to the Property or cable alternatives.

### ***Employment***

2.22 Given its essentially rural character, there are no major businesses or employers based in the Parish, although there are a number of small, mostly home-based businesses and a few companies based at Woodfield Farm. This position may change dramatically if proposals in the now withdrawn Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 for a large employment development allocation involving land at Water End and St Neots Road - known as Policy EMP 6 - which proposes a research campus of approximately 30 hectares in total across two adjacent sites either side of the A421. Such a development would fundamentally alter the character of that part of the Parish and its implications have caused widespread concern amongst local residents.

### ***Transport links***

2.23 Renhold has road links to Bedford, via Hookhams Lane and Ravensden, Wilden and Great Barford via other routes. Traffic flow along all roads through the older part of the Parish has increased exponentially in recent years, particularly since Renhold was connected to the A421 dual carriageway by a junction. Despite a Traffic Restriction Order during peak periods and the installation of average speed cameras, vehicle movements and speeds throughout the old village remain a cause of concern to many residents.

2.24 A further issue which has galvanised local opinion is the East-West Rail initiative (EWR). Following a non-statutory consultation in 2019 on alternative routes for a new railway link between Bedford and Cambridge, a decision was announced in early 2020 that the preferred route would run north from Bedford, turning east to the north of Renhold Parish as it heads towards the East Coast Mainline near St Neots/Tempsford and thence on towards Cambridge. A second non-statutory consultation in 2021 identified two alignment options, one which passed through Renhold Parish and the other further to the north. In May 2023 EWR Co published its Route Update Announcement which confirmed that the more northerly alignment had been selected which will pass at least 1km north of the parish boundary. At the turn of 2024/25, EWR Co mounted a third non-statutory consultation in preparation for the first formal Statutory Consultation now due in 2026. EWR Co will then seek a Development Consent Order from the Government for approval to build this Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), notwithstanding the existence of Local or Neighbourhood Plans.

## **Summary**

2.25 Renhold is facing a number of challenges to its valued and distinctive character that will need to be reflected in and addressed by the Neighbourhood Plan:

- a) Rapid population growth in the past two decades has seen both the population and the number of households in the Parish more than double in that period. This has placed a huge strain on local infrastructure and in particular has encouraged further development pressures on the Green Gaps that separate Renhold from Bedford.
- b) Landscape degradation, through man-made alterations, environmental and climate change impacts, all threaten the distinctive character of the green infrastructure in the Parish. This in turn threatens wildlife and biodiversity, so protecting the green spaces and features that are most important through the planning system is a vital priority.
- c) Affordability of housing in Renhold, particularly for younger people, is a particular problem so addressing the need for appropriately priced houses in the Parish at the right scale and in the right places, will be key to ensuring that the next generation of residents can find a place to live in the Parish. Additionally, ensuring that there are sufficient smaller properties for older people in the parish who may need to downsize to smaller properties must also be considered.
- d) Whilst acknowledging the need for employment opportunities, locating a major employment site in the Parish would be out-of-keeping with the rural nature of Renhold and for that reason is being actively opposed by the Parish Council.
- e) Whilst transport issues are, for the most part, beyond the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan, mitigating the impact of increased road traffic and the proposed EWR scheme are key to maintaining quality of life and preserving the attributes of the Parish that residents value the most.

### **3 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

#### ***Introduction***

- 3.1 This section sets out the measures taken by the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to engage with Parish residents to seek their views on the issues that matter most to them, to inform the compilation of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.2 A number of initial activities were undertaken to promote local awareness of the Plan, to find out what Parish residents think about their local area, including what they most value, what should be changed, what could be improved and what they consider to be the main priorities.
- 3.3 Residents were kept informed throughout the process through newsletters and flyers delivered to all dwellings in the Parish, posters on noticeboards, consultation events and a dedicated Neighbourhood Planning page on the Parish Council's website. A Parish email network and social media were also used, along with inserts in the monthly Renhold Parish Magazine.
- 3.4 In addition to resident consultation, the views of a wide range of statutory, commercial and voluntary organisations have been sought, including landowners and potential developers.

#### ***Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group***

- 3.5 Following the Parish Council's decision to initiate the production of a Neighbourhood Plan, a Working Group was formed in August 2020 to progress the work involved. Membership of the Group comprises a mix of Parish Councillors and local residents with relevant experience and expertise to offer.

#### ***Initial Consultation: August-October 2020***

- 3.6 An initial questionnaire survey was devised and disseminated in hard copy to all 1,375 households in Renhold, to gather residents' opinions on what is good about Renhold now, what could be better and their aspirations for the future of Renhold. It also invited any residents with an interest in the Neighbourhood Plan process to join the Working Group.
- 3.7 136 completed forms were returned from the 1,375 households in Renhold, with responses received from all five 'Ends' of the village and each of the three 'new' estates. The key findings were as follows:
  - a) Good things about living in Renhold:
    - There is a strong sense of commonality in people's views on the merits of living in Renhold.
    - The natural environment was mentioned most frequently, highlighting the need for the Neighbourhood Plan to include measures to protect and enhance the countryside within and around the Parish.
    - It is heartening that community spirit and good neighbours were cited so frequently.

- Maintaining a village identity by protecting against coalescence with Bedford was another identified priority, although the proximity of facilities and services in Bedford is also valued by many respondents.
- Protecting local amenities like the shop and the pub is supported.

b) Things that could be improved in Renhold:

- Traffic featured highly, both volume, speed and noise and is integral to other concerns relating to vehicle parking.
- The threat of inappropriate housing development was the second-most frequently cited issue.
- Perceptions of travel time catchments were informative. Several people identified the need for an additional shop/pub/bus stop/post box, despite the fact that all of these are already available somewhere in the Parish. If you are elderly, disabled or without a car, accessibility to facilities and services has different implications.
- Some of the more ‘minority’ opinions related only to specific parts of the village rather than the whole Parish. This emphasises the fact that ‘one size fits all’ solutions in the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be sensitive to more localised needs.

c) The future evolution of Renhold:

- More than double the number of respondents supported allowing small-scale housing developments in appropriate locations in the Parish, than those who want no development at all.
- Maintaining the village identity is another identified priority.
- Traffic calming was supported, as was encouraging non-vehicular travel with improved footpaths and pedestrian safety measures.
- Preserving and enhancing the natural environment featured in a number of responses.

***Green Infrastructure Plan consultation: February-July 2021***

3.8 Given the importance placed upon the local countryside and access to it in the responses to the initial community survey, the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) was commissioned to produce a Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan, to inform policies and priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan. As part of the GI Plan, two further community consultations were undertaken:

- a) An online presentation was organised for local stakeholders and residents through the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. The presentation on 4th February 2021, provided an overview of GI Planning and its use in helping to shape and prioritise actions for future enhancements to Renhold’s network of public access, biodiversity and landscapes assets.

- b) The meeting also introduced an online survey, which was open to all stakeholders and residents to provide their views on what they valued about the local area and what their future aspirations were for Renhold. In addition to the survey questions, maps and guidance were available on a dedicated web page and consultees were asked to view the information and answer the questions over the following four weeks. This Stage 1 online survey was completed by 89 residents. The Stage 1 survey was then reviewed to draw out the main priorities of respondents and to produce a draft Renhold GI Map and table of aspirations.
- c) In June/July 2021 the second phase of the online consultation was undertaken. Stakeholders and residents were invited to view (online) the draft GI map and its associated aspirations table. Respondents were asked to consider the aspirations and complete a short survey by listing the aspirations that they most supported and any that they disagreed with. This Stage 2 survey was completed by 76 residents.

3.9 The collation and analysis of the survey responses led to the production of the final Green Infrastructure Plan, which has informed the policies and priorities for Green Infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### ***Housing Needs Survey: November-December 2021***

3.10 Given the importance placed upon the availability of affordable housing through the responses in the initial community survey, the BRCC as commissioned to undertake an initial Housing Needs Assessment for the Parish, to inform policies and priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.11 The survey results indicated a need for affordable housing within Renhold from households' resident in (or with strong links to) the Parish, that is unlikely to be met by market housing provision and as a result this has been reflected in the policies and priorities of the Neighbourhood Plan. With the subsequent passage of time a follow-on Housing Needs Survey was carried out at the turn of 2024/25 and is reported on at paragraph 3.25.

#### ***Vision and Objectives Survey: March-May 2022***

3.12 Following the initial community survey and additional subject-specific consultations, the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group produced a draft Vision Statement that was shared with the community to invite further views and ideas. The statement was based upon the responses to the initial consultation when local residents shared their aspirations and priorities for Renhold. The draft Vision Statement was as follows:

## COUNTRYSIDE - COMMUNITY - CONNECTIVITY

**Countryside:** 'To preserve the distinctive character of our Parish, in particular the agricultural and parkland landscape that comprises the green gaps between the historic Ends and our newer developments, whilst also maintaining our separation from the Bedford urban area'.

**Community:** 'To ensure that the needs and aspirations of residents of the Parish are reflected in the provision of appropriate community facilities and infrastructure that promote, sustain and enhance social cohesion'.

**Connectivity:** 'To enhance the natural environment and biodiversity of the Parish and to amplify the benefits of this by connecting more people to nature through the creation of better, safer and more sustainable access to it'.

3.13 The following objectives to support this vision were formulated:

### *Countryside*

- To protect and enhance the distinctive character and historic environment of the Parish.
- To preserve the Important Green Gaps between Renhold and the Bedford urban area and between each of the Renhold Ends to avoid physical and visual coalescence and to conserve character and identity.
- To protect important views into, out of and within the Parish.
- To protect and improve the countryside setting, biodiversity and wildlife habitats, including opportunities for enhanced public access where appropriate.

### *Community*

- To support well-integrated small-scale housing in appropriate locations to meet identified local needs.
- To preserve the existing community facilities and support the provision of appropriate new facilities and infrastructure to meet identified local needs.

### *Connectivity*

- To preserve and enhance the existing Green Infrastructure network and promote active travel.
- To reduce the impact of through traffic and improve non-vehicular transport.

3.14 A questionnaire was disseminated in hard copy form as an insert in the Renhold Village Magazine to all 1,375 households in Renhold, in the week commencing 28th March 2022, with a response date of 3rd May 2022. In total, 45 completed forms were returned.

3.15 Community views on the draft Vision were as follows:

- a) 93.3% of respondents supported the draft Vision, reflecting the fact that it was based upon the responses to the earlier community survey by representing community sentiment accurately.

- b) Maintaining physical separation between Renhold and Bedford was supported but also preserving the gaps between the ‘Ends’ and an additional perspective which is maintaining separation from neighbouring villages. The latter has particular relevance given the proposed expansion of Great Barford adjacent to the Parish at Cuckoo Brook.
- c) Some interesting dilemmas were posed by the responses to the ‘community’ theme, in particular the risk of duplicating provision of facilities and services that are already relatively accessible in neighbouring parts of Bedford.
- d) The connectivity theme highlighted a number of traffic and parking issues that are not directly within the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan. The issue of including digital connectivity might sit better under the community theme, as one of the elements of community infrastructure.

3.16 Community views on the draft Objectives were as follows:

- a) 91.1% of respondents supported the draft Objectives.
- b) The potential impact of EWR and the proposed employment land allocation at Water End were not addressed overtly in the Objectives and should be.
- c) Maintaining the distinction between the ‘new estates’ and urban edge of Bedford is an important issue given their relative proximity than some of the more established parts of the village.
- d) Clarifying the extent of ‘small-scale’ housing should allay many or all of the expressed concerns.

3.17 A ‘drop-in’ session for Renhold residents was held at the Village Hall on 3rd May 2022, to provide an additional mechanism for community feedback on the draft Vision and Objectives. 40 people attended and their views and comments were recorded.

3.18 The survey and ‘drop-in’ session responses have been applied to finesse the draft Vision and Objectives in light of the suggested additions and amendments. The Neighbourhood Plan policies were then developed to reflect the Vision and Objectives.

### ***Regulation 14 Consultation***

3.19 Based on all the feedback received during the various stages of public consultation, the draft Neighbourhood Plan was produced for formal consultation (Regulation 14).

3.20 A leaflet summarising the Vision, Objectives and draft policies with a feedback form was disseminated in hard copy to all 1,375 households in Renhold, in the week commencing 11th November 2024. The consultation period was 18th November 2024 until 13th January 2025. The following options were available for returning the survey:

- a) Returning the completed form via collecting boxes located at eight locations in the village.
- b) Completing an on-line version of the survey on the dedicated Neighbourhood Plan page of the Renhold Parish Council website.

- c) Attendance at a Neighbourhood Plan ‘drop-in’ session at Renhold Village Hall on 7th December 2024.

3.21 The full version of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan, along with the previous community consultation responses, evidence base and other influences of the formation of the draft policies, was available to view in the following ways:

- a) Online on the dedicated Neighbourhood Plan page of the Renhold Parish Council website.
- b) At the ‘drop-in’ session at Renhold Village Hall.
- c) At The Chapter House within/rear of Renhold All Saints Church (9am-5pm daily) and the Village Shop during opening hours.

3.22 The following supporting documents were also available to view between 18th November 2024 and 13th January 2025 by the same means:

- a) Renhold Green Infrastructure Plan 2023 (Beds Rural Communities Charity).
- b) Renhold Housing Needs Survey Report November/December 2021 (Beds Rural Communities Charity).
- c) Renhold Design Guidance and Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan (AECOM, 2024).
- d) Renhold Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report (2024).
- e) Habitat Regulations Screening for the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan (2024).

3.23 In total, 236 completed forms were returned. The key responses were as follows:

- a) 97% of respondents support the draft Vision.
- b) 97.5% of respondents support the draft Objectives.
- c) Support for the draft policies was between 75% and 98.7%. The individual details are noted alongside each of the policies in the main text of the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.24 In addition to the community consultees, a list of 107 statutory, commercial and voluntary organisations was supplied by Bedford Borough Council and each was consulted. They were asked to respond within the period 18th November 2024 until 13th January 2025. The consultees were provided with an electronic link to all relevant Renhold Parish Neighbourhood Plan documents. Only 15 responses were received. The only actions arising from the responses are to:

- a) Amend the text relating to Policy RNP2 to mention ‘Secured By Design’ principles.
- b) Review the Flood Risk Standing Advice and consider showing flood risk areas on a map in the NP.

## ***Housing Needs Survey: January-March 2025***

3.25 Given the importance placed upon the availability of affordable housing through the responses to the consultation processes, the BRCC was commissioned to undertake an updated Housing Needs Assessment for the Parish, to confirm the proposed policies and priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan. As part of this assessment, further community consultation was undertaken:

- a) To investigate the need for affordable housing in Renhold, a survey form was delivered to all households, together with a Freepost envelope. The survey was also available to complete online via a dedicated web link. The survey form was in two parts. Section 1 was for completion by all residents and aimed to gain their views on overall housing needs in Renhold. Section 2 was for completion by or on behalf of any household member currently looking for different accommodation, or who would be looking within the next 10 years. 187 completed responses were received.
- b) 67.4% of respondents support the provision of some affordable homes specifically for people with a local connection to the Parish. 10.4% of respondents stated that they have had family members move away from the Parish due to not being able to find a suitable home locally.

3.26 The survey results (detailed in section 5.6 below) indicated a need for affordable housing within Renhold from households' resident in (or with strong links to) the Parish, that is unlikely to be met by market housing provision and as a result this has been reflected in the policies and priorities of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## ***Summary***

3.27 The Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group on behalf of Renhold Parish Council has prepared the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the consultation requirements as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

3.28 The Working Group and Parish Council have made genuine and committed efforts to engage with interested parties, particularly those who live, work, own land, or have a business interest in the Parish and have provided them with every opportunity to influence the content of the Plan throughout its preparation.

## 4 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

### ***Introduction***

4.1 This section sets out the Vision and Objectives of the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan.

### ***Neighbourhood Plan Vision***

4.2 Neighbourhood Planning gives communities the opportunity to develop a shared Vision for their area. The Neighbourhood Plan sets a Vision for what the Parish could be like in 2030. Based on the issues identified at the various stages of public consultation, additional research undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, and local and national planning policies, the following Vision was presented to and endorsed by the community. In the Regulation 14 consultation, 97% of respondents supported the draft Vision.

**The vision for Renhold Parish in 2030 is:**

#### **COUNTRYSIDE - COMMUNITY - CONNECTIVITY**

**Countryside:** ‘To preserve the distinctive character of our Parish, in particular the agricultural and parkland landscape that comprises the green gaps between the historic Ends and our newer developments, whilst also maintaining our structural separation from the Bedford urban area’.

**Community:** ‘To ensure that the needs and aspirations of residents of the Parish are reflected in the provision of appropriate community facilities and infrastructure that promote, sustain and enhance social cohesion’.

**Connectivity:** ‘To enhance the natural environment and biodiversity of the Parish and to amplify the benefits of this by connecting more people to nature through the creation of better, safer and more sustainable access to it’.

### ***Neighbourhood Plan Objectives***

4.3 The Neighbourhood Plan also sets Objectives for achieving the vision and which in turn frame the policies and proposals in the Plan. Like the Vision, the Objectives have been drawn up directly through the feedback received following consultation with residents at key stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process. With general community support for the Objectives as worded and to the aspirations underlying them, there is confidence that the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan will underpin the Objectives as well as the overall Vision for the Parish. The Objectives are organised under the three main headings of the Vision. In the Regulation 14 consultation, 97.5% of respondents supported the draft objectives.

#### ***Countryside***

- ***Objective 1:*** ‘To protect and enhance the distinctive character and historic environment of the Parish’.

- *Objective 2:* 'To preserve the Important Green Gaps between Renhold and the Bedford urban area and between each of the Renhold Ends to avoid physical and visual coalescence and to conserve character and identity'.
- *Objective 3:* 'To protect important views into, out of and within the Parish'.
- *Objective 4:* 'To protect and improve the countryside setting, biodiversity and wildlife habitats, including opportunities for enhanced public access where appropriate'.

*Community:*

- *Objective 5:* 'To support well-integrated small-scale housing in appropriate locations to meet identified local needs'.
- *Objective 6:* 'To preserve the existing community facilities and support the provision of appropriate new facilities and infrastructure to meet identified local needs'.

*Connectivity:*

- *Objective 7:* 'To preserve and enhance the existing Green Infrastructure network and promote active travel'.
- *Objective 8:* 'To reduce the impact of through traffic and improve non-vehicular transport'.

## **Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

4.4 The Neighbourhood Plan policies that support and reflect the Vision and Objectives are set out in succeeding sections of the Neighbourhood Plan. Each policy includes an assessment of:

- a) Context and background.
- b) Link to Objectives.
- c) Technical evidence.
- d) Benefits.

## 5 SETTLEMENTS AND HOUSING

### ***Introduction***

5.1 This section sets out the Neighbourhood Plan policies for settlements and housing in Renhold Parish.

### ***Context and Background***

5.2 Renhold is a Parish with linear built-up areas and in common with an historic tradition in many other rural settlements in Bedfordshire, which is defined by discrete settlement clusters separated by intervening green gaps as 'Ends'.

5.3 The settlement clusters in the older part of the parish are Ravensden Road End, Salph End, Church End, Top End, Green End and Water End. In keeping with this tradition, the newer housing estates (Cranbourne Gardens, Aspire and The Spires) at the south-western end of the Parish have also been designed with their own distinct identities and they too are separated by Important Green Gaps.

5.4 Finally, the Parish as a whole maintains its individual character and rural identity by preserving a clearly demarcated Green Gap along the boundary between Renhold and the adjoining urban area of Bedford.

### ***Link to Neighbourhood Plan Objectives***

5.5 The following objectives inform Neighbourhood Plan policies on settlement and housing in Renhold:

- a) ***Objective 1:*** 'To protect and enhance the distinctive character and historic environment of the Parish'.
- b) ***Objective 2:*** 'To preserve the green gaps between Renhold and the Bedford urban area and between each of the Renhold Ends to avoid physical and visual coalescence and to conserve character and identity'.
- c) ***Objective 3:*** 'To protect important views into, out of and within the Parish'.
- d) ***Objective 4:*** 'To protect and improve the countryside setting, biodiversity and wildlife habitats, including opportunities for enhanced public access where appropriate'.
- e) ***Objective 5:*** 'To support well-integrated small-scale housing in appropriate locations to meet identified local needs'.

### ***Technical Evidence - Housing Needs Survey 2025***

5.6 Given the importance placed upon the availability of affordable housing in the responses to community consultation, the BRCC was commissioned to undertake Housing Needs Surveys for the Parish in 2021 and 2025, to inform the policies and priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan. The 2025 survey found that compared with Bedford Borough as a whole, Renhold has:

- a) Lower levels of single occupant households and similar levels of couples and single parents with dependent children at home.
- b) Higher levels of home ownership, both owned outright and owned with a mortgage. 75.4% of residents in Renhold own their own home, compared with 64.6% across Bedford Borough.
- c) Significantly more detached properties, with correspondingly fewer semi-detached and terraced houses. Other dwelling types such as flats, caravans and other temporary accommodation are also significantly lower.
- d) Fewer households classified as being overcrowded.
- e) Slightly fewer people (12.4%) classified as 'experiencing income deprivation' than the Borough average of 13.0%.
- f) A lower proportion of Council Tax Band A and B properties (18.7%) compared with borough wide levels (38.5%) which indicates a relative shortage of affordable housing for purchase in Renhold.

5.7 The 2025 survey concluded that:

- a) **Affordable housing:** There is a need for affordable housing within Renhold from households' resident in (or with strong links to) the Parish, that is unlikely to be met by market housing provision. This need is predominantly from families and couples/individuals who are currently in rented accommodation who are looking for something more affordable or who would like to get on the property ladder and also from older children living in the family home with their parents, who would like to move into their own property.
- b) Based on data supplied by respondents, up to eight households with a local connection would be suitable for housing within a rural exception site development, whether for rent, shared ownership or under a starter homes initiative. In order to have reasonable confidence that any new housing provided through a rural exception site will be taken up by people with a local connection to Renhold, our recommendation is to meet 50% of the need identified over the next 5 years, which would be four units broken down as follows:
  - Two 2-bed houses (shared ownership)
  - Two 3-bed houses (rent).
- c) **Market housing:** There is a small need for market housing, if Renhold is to meet the identified current and future needs of existing owner occupier residents wishing to stay in the Parish. The need identified is predominately from couples and families who are looking to downsize into smaller properties, with a particular emphasis on bungalows or accessible accommodation. If suitable accessible properties were more widely available, this would be likely to address under-occupation and free up houses for growing families to purchase as they work their way up the housing ladder. It is reasonable to suggest that the provision of up to five suitable units would meet a reasonable proportion of the need. These could be delivered separately or alongside

affordable housing as part of a rural exception site, with the market housing cross-subsidising the affordable housing.

### **Meeting Small-scale Housing Needs**

5.8 The benefits of meeting small-scale housing needs at (an) appropriate location(s) in Renhold are as follows:

- a) An objective, independent assessment has identified a level of need using an evidence-based process.
- b) The case for small-scale housing developments to address local needs was supported by the majority of respondents in the community consultation initiated by the Neighbourhood Plan process.
- c) Defining the scale and location of appropriate levels of housing development in Renhold will create greater clarity for potential developers and should deter any speculative, larger-scale proposals that have been attempted to be brought forward in recent years.
- d) The existing 'Ends' in Renhold are almost entirely linear in form and the Renhold Design Guidance and Codes emphasises the importance of maintaining this characteristic settlement pattern. Development that encroaches into the important green gaps between the 'Ends' will therefore not be appropriate, nor will 'backland' development on land that sits behind an established building line of existing housing be permissible.
- e) Such an approach is consistent with the policy provisions of the Bedford Local Plan 2030.

### **Community Support for the Policy**

5.9 75% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

#### ***POLICY RNP1: SMALL-SCALE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT***

*Housing development up to 10 units will be supported, provided*

- a) It meets the specific needs identified in the current Housing Needs Survey.*
- b) It positively contributes to the established character of the locality in which the development is located, promotes local distinctiveness and complements the built and natural environment in the immediate vicinity.*

### **Design Code**

5.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 states that 'neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning

authorities and developers' (paragraph 132). There are two main purposes for the Design Codes:

- a) To provide clarity to the Neighbourhood Plan's policies for design and sustainability and offer practical guidance on the physical appearance and impact of new development. The design code is appropriate for all forms and scales of development, particularly but not limited to proposals for which planning permission is required.
- b) To reflect and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of each of the 'Ends' and newer settlement areas in Renhold.

5.11 In line with Local Plan Policy 29 and paragraph 134 of the NPPF, a Design Code has therefore been devised by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, in consultation with the local community, to provide a degree of influence over the appearance and impact of new housing in Renhold. The benefits of providing a Design Code for Renhold are as follows:

- a) The production and application of a Design Code will give greater certainty that any new development in Renhold will comply with wider policy considerations on design, impact and sustainability.
- b) The character of the existing local area will be safeguarded.

### ***Community Support for the Policy***

5.12 94.9% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

#### ***POLICY RNP2: RENHOLD DESIGN CODE***

*Any development in Renhold should comply with the design principles, guidance and codes of the Renhold Design Guidance and Codes.*

### ***Dark Skies***

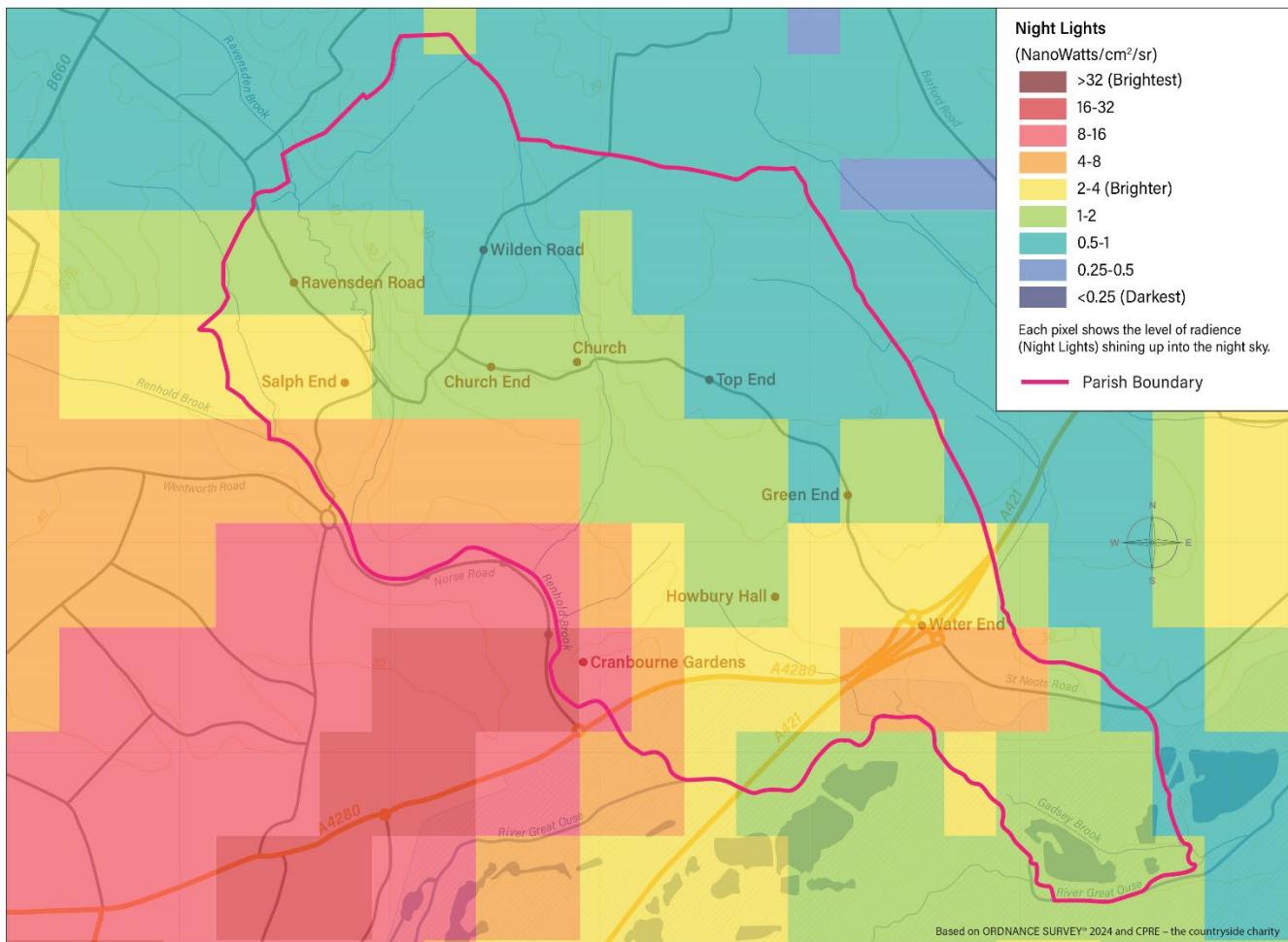
5.13 Light pollution has become one the most intrusive threats to our enjoyment of the countryside and its tranquillity at night. Whilst artificial light offers valuable benefits to residents in terms, principally safety and crime prevention, inappropriate lighting can contribute to a range of problems. It gives the parish an urban feel and detracts from the enjoyment of the night sky. It can cause health problems and can impact the normal behaviour of wildlife.

5.14 CPRE, the countryside charity, has published maps on England's light pollution and highlighted the detrimental effects that it has upon:

- a) Wildlife and biodiversity, by disorientating migrating birds, disrupting night-time pollinating insects and nocturnal mammals.
- b) Obscuring views of the night sky and disrupting human sleep patterns.

5.15 CPRE Bedfordshire has identified that the best places to watch stars in the county are to the north and west of Bedford. The map for Renhold and its immediate surrounds generated by the CPRE shows that there is already substantial light pollution from neighbouring areas:

*Map 2: Light Pollution and Dark Skies in Renhold*



5.16 Paragraph 198(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) requires planning policies and decisions to *'limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation'*.

5.17 Dark skies areas are an important element of landscape character and tranquillity in Renhold, and as a result they are particularly vulnerable to light pollution. In order to protect the dark skies areas and their special tranquil character, it is important to control and minimise the pollutive impact of external lighting. Best practice is defined by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) *'Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light'* (2021).

5.18 The benefits of a Dark Skies Policy for Renhold are as follows:

- The impact of nocturnal light on local biodiversity will be minimised (Renhold's biodiversity assets are defined in Renhold GI Plan (pages 11-12)).

- b) 'The character of the existing local area will be safeguarded.'

5.19 For all proposed developments, therefore, factors to be considered when deciding the appropriateness of artificial lighting will include the location, the hours of operation, the quantity of lights proposed, brightness and control and direction of the beam.

### ***Community Support for the Policy***

5.20 95.8% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

#### ***POLICY RNP3: DARK SKIES***

*Any development proposals that include new outdoor lighting installations will be expected to demonstrate that:*

- a) *Best practice\* is applied and lighting is designed to minimise or control the occurrence of light spillage and glare.*
- b) *The proposed lighting is the minimum appropriate for its purpose.*
- c) *There is no detrimental impact on residential amenity, highway safety or the Parish's recognised biodiversity assets.*
- d) *It complies with current guidelines for rural areas specified by the Institute of Lighting Professionals\*.*

*\* Institute of Lighting Professionals: 'Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light' (2021).*

## 6 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, HERITAGE AND LOCAL GREEN SPACE

### ***Introduction***

6.1 This section sets out the Neighbourhood Plan policies for Green Infrastructure, heritage and Local Green Space in Renhold Parish.

### ***Context and background***

6.2 Community consultation in connection with the Neighbourhood Plan established that the environment in Renhold is greatly valued by residents for its rolling open countryside and wide-ranging views, the tranquillity of local green spaces, the extensive local Rights of Way network and the biodiversity nurtured by the varied habitats.

6.3 Preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan provided an opportunity for key features of the local environment to be identified and prioritised for potential protection and enhancement and for new features/facilities potentially to be introduced. To that end, a Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan and Local Greenspace Assessment were undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group by the BRCC and its findings and recommendations provide part of the evidence base and shape some of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.4 The *'Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030'* (2020) and *'The Allocations and Designations Local Plan'* (2013) provide the current policy framework with which the Neighbourhood Plan GI and local greenspace policies must conform.

6.5 The *'Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment'* (2020) forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and 'provides a comprehensive landscape evidence base to help underpin planning and management decisions in the Borough'. It includes a section on the 'Renhold Clay Farmland' which covers Renhold parish as well as Ravensden, Wilden and part of Thurleigh and Clapham. The headline findings are as follows:

- a) ***Landscape Strategy:*** 'To enhance the elements of the landscape which are in declining condition or detract from the rural character, in particular the hedgerows and hedgerow and field trees and the north-east edge of Bedford. At the same time conserving and enhancing the open rural landscape with its scattered small-scale settlements and farmsteads, and historic earthworks, ancient woodlands and grasslands of high biodiversity value. Seek to create landscape connections into adjacent GI opportunity areas and significant GI proposals such as the Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) associated with the adjacent Ouse Valley.'
- b) ***Landscape Management:*** Measures include:
  - 'Conserve the character of the rural roads and limit urbanising influences - widening/kerbing and ensure that traffic management measures are sympathetic to the rural character'.
  - 'Enhance the hedgerows consistent management and resist development that will result in further loss/fragmentation of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Encourage

- the growth of new hedgerow trees to maintain landscape structure and connectivity’.
- ‘Conserve tree-lined brooks and associated riparian features’.

c) ***Development Guidelines:*** These are:

- ‘Conserve the scattered farmsteads and historic villages with their pattern of dispersed ‘Ends’ and the views to the stone churches’.
- ‘Retain the individual settlements, avoiding merging these through linear development particularly immediately to the north of Bedford for instance along the roads between the various ‘Ends’ of Renhold’.
- ‘Consider planting new woodlands to screen the urban boundary of north-east Bedford in views from the open countryside to the north. Where possible this should also create landscape links into adjacent green infrastructure initiatives and mitigation projects such as the Bedford River Valley Park’.

6.6 The ‘*Bedford Green Infrastructure Plan*’ (2009) was completed for ‘*The Allocations and Designations Local Plan*’ (2013) and identifies a ‘green infrastructure network that will provide the foundation for sustainable communities across Bedford Borough through the protection and enhancement of the key existing natural, historic, cultural and landscape green infrastructure assets; accessible greenspace; and rights of way; and the identification of new features that will provide a connected multi-functional green infrastructure network for the benefit of both existing and new communities’.

a) ***Green Infrastructure Network:*** The ‘*Bedford Green Infrastructure Plan*’ shows the Green Infrastructure Network in the Parish and adjacent areas. The Plan notes that: ‘there is an opportunity to create a green wooded edge to the town, and to create a ‘linear park’, providing informal recreation, a buffer between the urban and rural areas, and protect the visual quality of the rising land to the north of the town. The area also provides an important opportunity to establish new habitats and routes for wildlife. This ‘linear park’ concept would provide a green infrastructure corridor around the northern fringes of Bedford and has been identified as an ambition for the town since the 2002 Local Plan for Bedford Borough’.

- ***Actions:*** Specific actions proposed include:
- ‘Creating new accessible woodland linking Clapham Park Wood, Mowsbury Park, Putnoe Wood and Renhold Brook’.
- ‘Conserving existing historic parkland and earthworks (including ridge and furrow) and improving interpretation, particularly around Renhold, Clapham Park Wood and Howbury Park’.
- ‘Creating walking, cycling and horse riding routes linking villages to the north of Bedford with the northern section of the Bedford Green Wheel’.

b) ***Priority landscape projects:*** These are noted as:

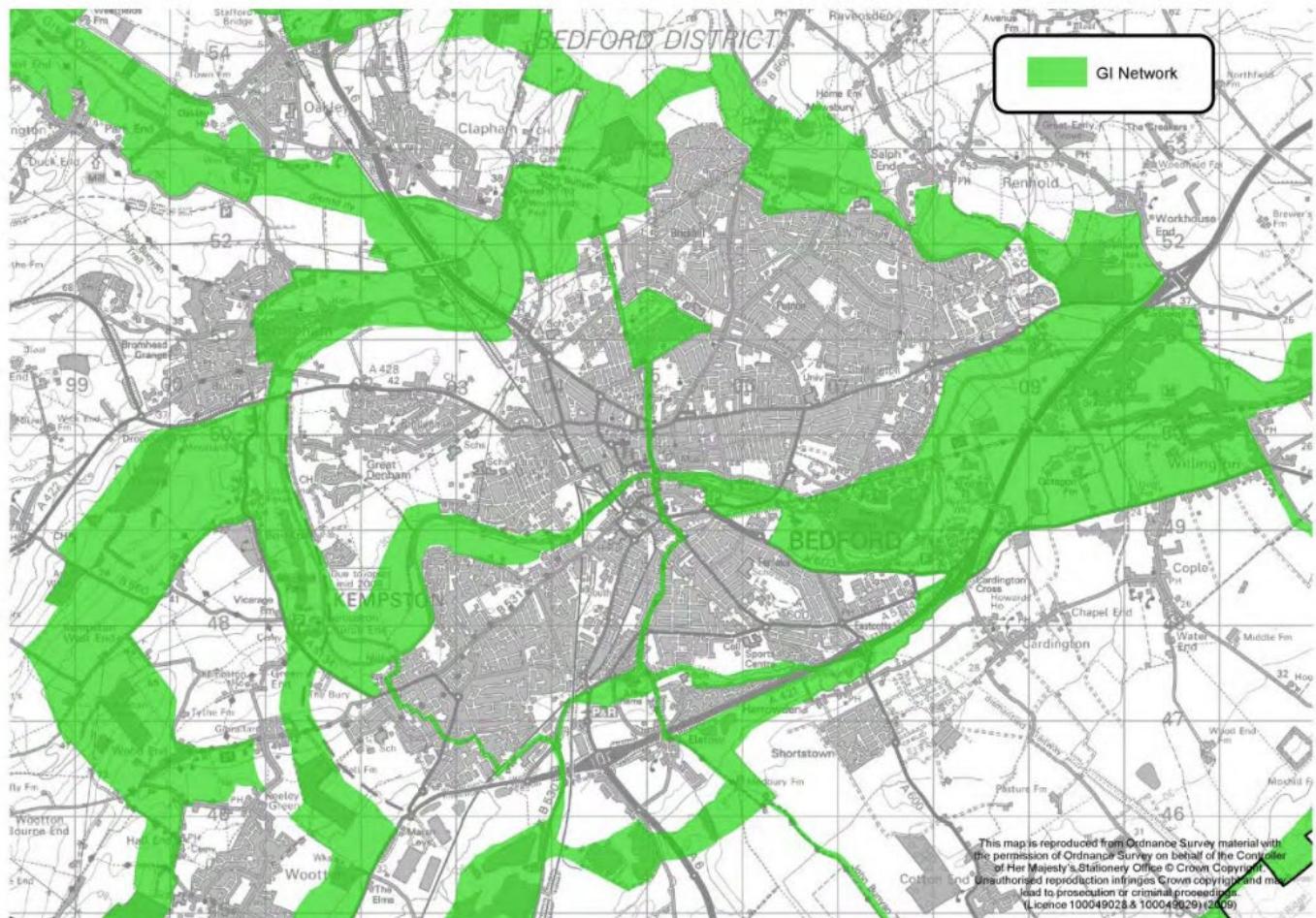
- 'Woodland creation - spinneys, larger woods, linking hedgerows'.
- 'Wildflower grassland recreation, e.g. to enhance watercourses, field margins and amenity of rights of way'.
- 'Farmland habitats: field margins, ponds, hedgerows and feature trees'.

c) **Biodiversity:** The Study notes that Great Early Grove is designated as a 'County Wildlife Site' and that the verges of all the main roads through Renhold are designated as 'Roadside Nature Reserves'. There are several records in Renhold of 'Species of European Importance' (most notably otter).

d) The Study identifies a number of 'Biodiversity Opportunity Areas' including 'North Bedford' (which includes Renhold Parish), where it states that 'the northern fringe of the town contains the valley of the Renhold Brook, a typical clay stream valley as well as important woods and hedgerows. The 89 key habitats are already partially linked via other green spaces associated with schools and sporting facilities. This important green halo can be further strengthened and linked across to the Ouse valley both east and west of the town'.

6.7 The map below has been reproduced from the *'Bedford Green Infrastructure Study'* to illustrate how the greenspace in Renhold contributes to the wider network in and around Bedford. The map predates the construction of the Aspire and The Spires developments.

*Map 3: Green Infrastructure Network detail for Bedford*



## ***Link to Neighbourhood Plan Objectives***

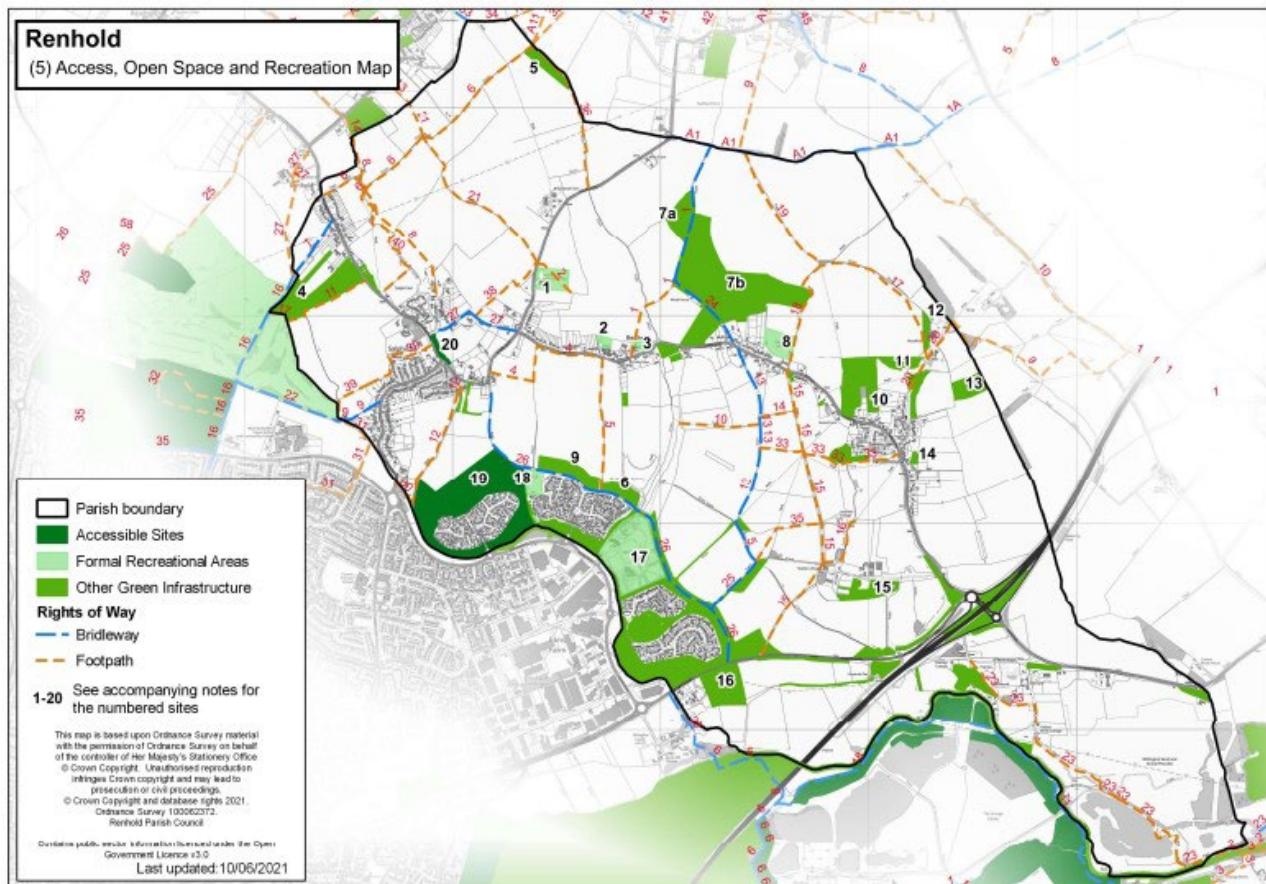
6.8 The following Objectives inform the Neighbourhood Plan policies on Green Infrastructure and Local Green Spaces in Renhold:

- a) ***Objective 1:*** ‘To protect and enhance the distinctive character and historic environment of the Parish’.
- b) ***Objective 2:*** ‘To preserve the green gaps between Renhold and the Bedford urban area and between each of the Renhold Ends to avoid physical and visual coalescence and to conserve character and identity’.
- c) ***Objective 3:*** ‘To protect important views into, out of and within the Parish’.
- d) ***Objective 4:*** ‘To protect and improve the countryside setting, biodiversity and wildlife habitats, including opportunities for enhanced public access where appropriate’.
- e) ***Objective 7:*** ‘To preserve and enhance the existing Green Infrastructure network and promote active travel’.

## ***Technical Evidence - Green Infrastructure Plan***

6.9 Given the importance placed upon the local countryside and access to it in the responses to the initial community survey, the BedsRCC was commissioned to produce a Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan, to inform policies and priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan. The map below shows open space and the access to it in Renhold:

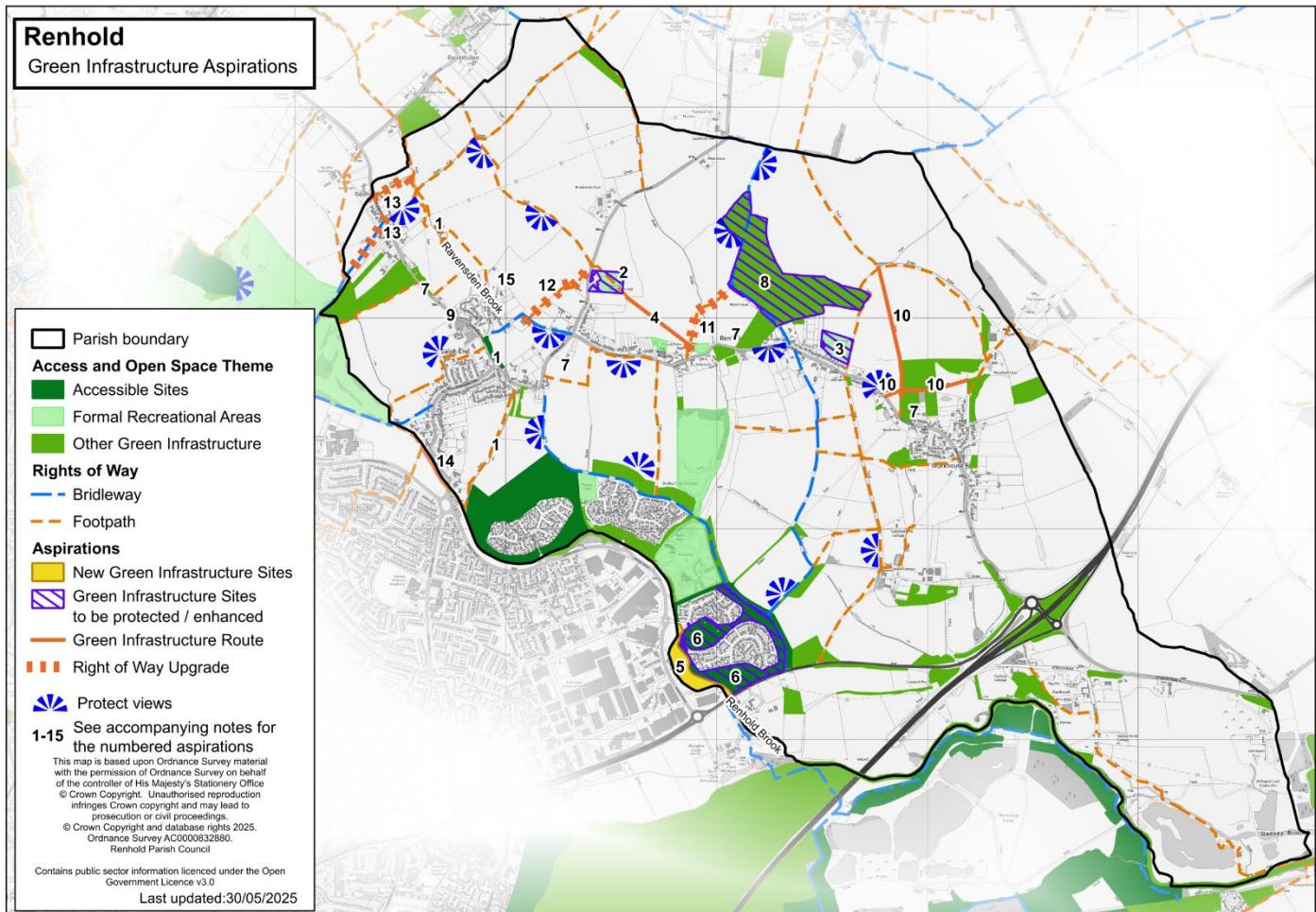
Map 4: Public access, greenspace and recreation sites in Renhold



Map ref	Name	Publicly accessible?	Area (Hectares)
1	Village Hall	No	1.30
2	School Playing Field	No	0.29
3	All Saints Church, Renhold	Yes	0.31
4	Marsh Wood	No	4.62
5	Woodland	No	0.95
6	Bushy Close Spinney	No	1.01
7a	Little Early Grove (CWS)	No	1.92
7b	Great Early Grove (CWS)	No	13.78
8	Sports field	No	1.51
9	Jubilee Spinney	No	1.77
10	Woodland and open space	No	0.61
11	Greenspace	No	1.03
12	Tree belt	No	0.45
13	Woodland	No	1.33
14	Horse paddock	No	0.16
15	Howbury Hall, Polhill grounds	No	35.0
16	Castle Dairy Farm Meadows CWS	No	3.19
17	Bedford Crematorium	Yes	7.86
18	Playing Field – formerly Low Field	Yes	1.01
19	Pedleys Field (Norse Road Greenspace)	Yes	12.69
20	Tree belt	Yes	0.29

Community consultation identified the following green infrastructure priorities for Renhold:

Map 5: Green infrastructure aspirations in Renhold



Renhold GI Plan – Aspirations	
<b>Aspirations with map numbering</b>	
<b>1</b>	Improve maintenance of Renhold and Ravensden Brooks and surroundings for wildlife and people – and as a flood protection measure. To include planting, restoration of hedgerows and improved access/ visibility.
<b>2</b>	Create publicly accessible greenspace at village hall e.g. play area, community woodland
<b>3</b>	Improve public access to current sports field. If this is not possible, create a new sports / playing field.
<b>4</b>	Reinstate south-east section of FP2 to Church End.
<b>5</b>	Create a managed wetland area at Cranbourne Gardens, close to Renhold Brook, for wildlife and to alleviate flooding of pathways and gardens; and/or a similar area on land close to Marsh Wood.
<b>6</b>	Protect natural areas on Cranbourne Gardens estate.
<b>7</b>	Preserve the separation between the Ends; protect against infill.
<b>8</b>	Protect Great Early Grove and Little Early Grove for wildlife
<b>9</b>	Plant, protect and enhance hedgerows and trees, including along Ravensden Road
<b>10</b>	Reinstate the current gaps in routes of FP19 and FP20.
<b>11</b>	Surface FP1 from rear of church towards Great Early Grove to prevent flooding, and widen the kissing gate to allow access for buggies.
<b>12</b>	Improve and sign FP 38, opposite village hall.
<b>13</b>	Provide RoW signage for FP6 and BW7 at Ravensden Road.
<b>14</b>	Create new footpath from southern end of Hookhams Lane heading north west along brook to FP31.
<b>15</b>	Resolve access issues regarding the southern end of FP8 (Brook Lane) – overgrown and blocked.
<b>General aspirations – non-specific locations, thus not shown on map</b>	
<b>16</b>	Replace all stiles with gates or gaps as appropriate (especially on Polhill estate).
<b>17</b>	Improve surfacing on public footpaths and bridleways – especially those that undergo regular flooding – and manage encroaching natural vegetation.
<b>18</b>	Protect wildlife habitats for animals (e.g. badgers) and birds.
<b>19</b>	Create community woodland – location to be determined.
<b>20</b>	Create allotments – location to be determined.
<b>21</b>	Create a wildflower meadow – location to be determined – and plant wildflowers on roadside verges.
<b>22</b>	Designate old / mature trees in the 'old village' with TPO orders (if not already designated)
<b>23</b>	Provide map and information on rights of way – leaflet / interpretation panel.
<b>24</b>	Provide seating at viewpoints and along rights of way for elderly and frail walkers.

6.10 **Community support for the policy:** 97.5% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

#### ***POLICY RNP4: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE***

*'Any development in Renhold must:*

- a) Respect the rural character and historic environment.*
- b) Preserve separation between the Bedford urban area and the parts of Renhold that are closest to it to avoid physical and visual coalescence.*
- c) Respect and enhance the significant views identified in the Renhold Green Infrastructure Study.*
- d) Conserve and enhance the open countryside, biodiversity and wildlife habitats including Local Green Space designation and green space improvements.*
- e) Upgrade and extend public footpaths and bridleways where possible to provide a multi-functional Green Infrastructure network which encourages non-vehicular travel'.*

#### ***Local Green Spaces***

6.11 The Renhold GI Plan also identified a number of sites for Local Green Space designation. Local Green Space designation is provided for in the National Planning Policy Framework and allows communities to identify and protect areas that are of value to the community through Local and Neighbourhood Plans. The designation should only be used where:

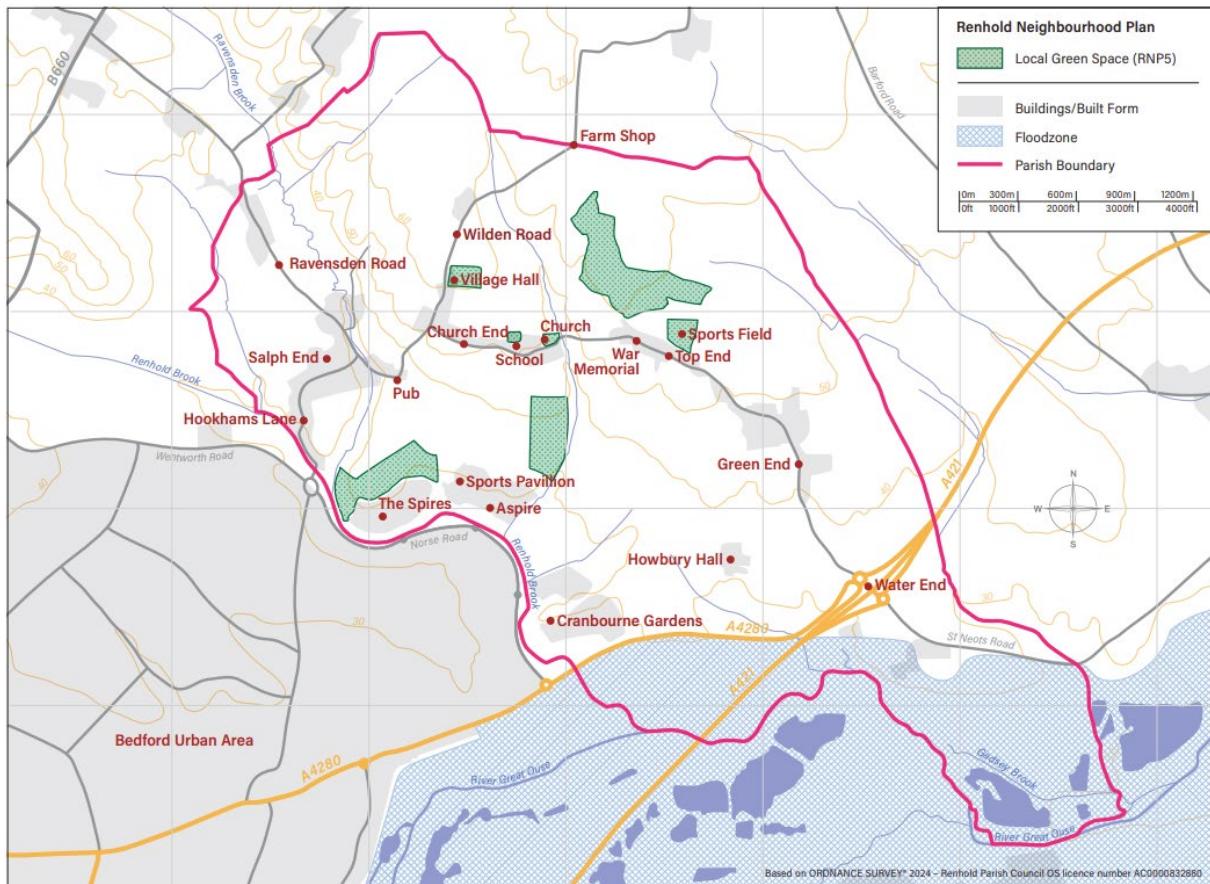
- a) The green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.
- b) Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife.
- c) The green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

6.12 The following seven sites in Renhold were assessed in the GI Plan as complying with the designation criteria for Local Green Spaces and are therefore proposed for designation in the Neighbourhood Plan:

- a) Village Hall grounds.
- b) Renhold Primary School playing field.
- c) All Saints Churchyard.
- d) Little Early Grove and Great Early Grove.
- e) Renhold Sports Field (including rough grassland area to north).
- f) The northern extension of Bedford Cemetery.
- g) Pedleys Field (Norse Road Green Space).

6.13 The Local Green Spaces are shown on the map overleaf:

Map 6: Local Green Space designations in Renhold



6.14 **Community support for the policy:** 97.5% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

**POLICY RNP5: LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

*Decisions on managing development within the Local Green Spaces should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts.*

- a) Village Hall grounds.
- b) Renhold Primary School playing field.
- c) All Saints Churchyard.
- d) Little Early Grove and Great Early Grove.
- e) Renhold Sports Field
- f) The northern extension of Bedford Cemetery.
- g) Pedleys Field (Norse Road Green Space).

## **Important Green Gaps**

6.15 Renhold is a Parish with linear built-up areas and in common with an historic tradition in many other rural settlements in Bedfordshire, which is defined by discrete settlement clusters separated by intervening green gaps as 'Ends'. In addition, the Parish as a whole maintains its individual character and rural identity by preserving a clearly demarcated green gap along the boundary between Renhold and the adjoining urban area of Bedford. The green gaps themselves comprise a mix of rural land uses, including woodland, amenity greenspace, sports pitches and agricultural farmland, but all are fundamental to the character and identity of Renhold.

6.16 The '*Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment*' (2020), which form part of the evidence base for the '*Bedford Local Plan 2030*', acknowledges the significance of the 'Ends' in Renhold and the threat to their identity from linear development in the Green Gaps between them.

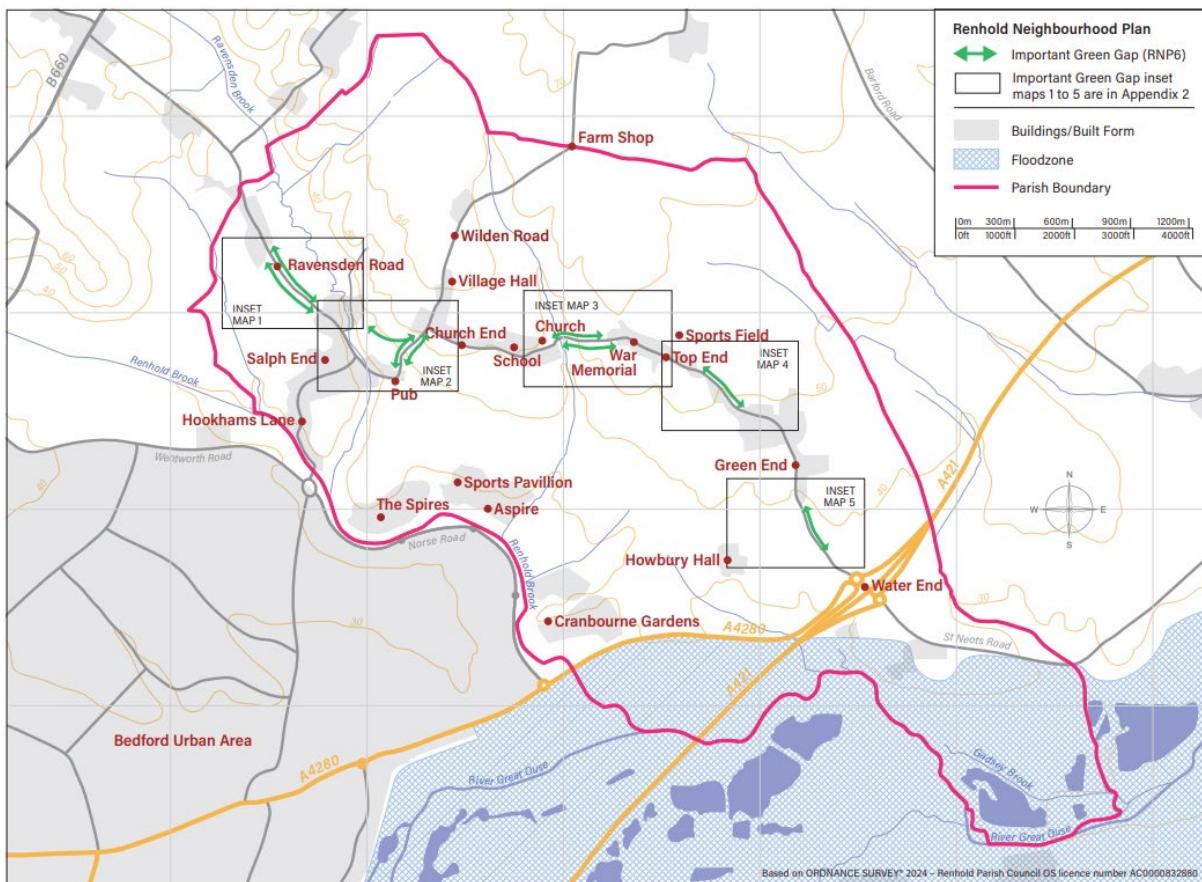
- 'Settlement within the Renhold Clay Farmland character area takes the form of dispersed villages and scattered farmsteads. Many consist of a number of 'Ends' each often just made up of a few farms, cottages or a church. Examples of this are Wilden, Ravensden and Renhold (although noting that these settlements also include areas of mid-20th century linear development').
- 'Linear settlement along the roads to villages just to the north of Bedford such as at Renhold threatens the individual identity of these villages'.
- 'Conserve the scattered farmsteads and historic villages with their pattern of dispersed 'Ends' and the views to the stone churches'.
- 'Retain the individual settlements, avoiding merging these through linear development particularly immediately to the north of Bedford for instance along the roads between the various 'ends' of Renhold'.

6.17 The '*Renhold Design Guidance and Codes*' (2024) also explains that:

- 'Renhold is made up of six small settlements (Ends) in the northern part of the parish, as well as an urban extension from the north-eastern edge of Bedford along Norse Road comprising three modern housing developments'.
- 'A key characteristic is that the settlements are divided by 'green gaps' which are open and undeveloped, provide clear views into the surrounding countryside, maintaining a rural feel context to the Ends'.
- 'Except for a few small cul-de-sac developments, the Ends are predominantly linear settlements following the routes that run from Norse Road, Ravensden and Wilden to the St Neots Road junction. The single main route through each area means they have a relatively 'shallow' depth - limited alternative routes and back lanes (except for pedestrians). The typically low building density, irregular layout, variety of low-rise buildings and gaps between buildings and settlements all contribute to the sense of place'.
- 'The Green Gaps help to maintain a distinct sense of place when moving between each of the Ends, and their identity is an important feature to the local community'.

6.18 Based upon the priorities and aspirations identified by the community survey, preserving the existing Green Gaps reflects the value placed upon them by residents. With the aims to preserve the distinct character and rural nature of Renhold, areas of undeveloped countryside have been identified where it is considered important to maintain their open nature in order to retain separation between settlement 'Ends' and therefore protect their individual identities and character. These strategic gaps are recognised as Important Green Gaps and are shown on the Policies Map in Appendix 1 and on the map below. The location and extent of each Important Green Gap are shown in Inset Maps 1-5 which are contained in Appendix 2.

*Map 7: Important Green Gaps in Renhold*



6.19 **Community support for the policy:** 96.2% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

**POLICY RNP6: IMPORTANT GREEN GAPS**

*Other than development provided for in Policy 7S of the BBLP, any proposals, including change of use of existing buildings or land, must not compromise the openness, lead to coalescence or affect the undeveloped character of the designated Important Green Gaps identified in the Policies Map (Appendix 1).*

## **Heritage Assets**

6.20 The Renhold GI Plan identifies a number of important heritage assets/buildings of local interest in the Parish and states that ‘integrating these sites into green infrastructure plans can help to preserve parish history’:

- a) All Saints’ Church is Grade I listed and with its brown cobbled walls and its blend of decorated and perpendicular styles of architecture, the building has served the Parish of Renhold for more than 800 years.
- b) 46 other buildings in the Parish are Grade II listed, including the half-timbered Abbey Farm building in Salph End, which is the likely site of Salphobury mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.
- c) A further 61 landscape features such as medieval ‘ridge and furrow’ plough marks, moats and signs of ancient settlement are also documented in Renhold.
- d) Howbury Ringworks and Medieval Trackway at Water End comprises a ringwork castle and part of a later medieval droveway which ran through it. It is situated adjacent to Hill Farm and south of the St. Neots Road. The ringwork, once known as Addingreves Castle, comprises an earthen bank 8m wide by up to 3m high enclosing a circular area 40m in diameter. The bank is breached by two entrances, one at the west and the other at the north-east. Surrounding the ringwork is a ditch which is up to 24m wide.
- e) Other Scheduled Monuments include:
  - Two bowl barrows 330m south of Dairy Farm.
  - Henge, henge type monument and bowl barrow 500m south-east of Dairy Farm.
  - Bowl barrow 550m south-east of Dairy Farm.
  - Henge-form monument 480m south of Dairy Farm.

6.21 Renhold also contains a number of the non-designated heritage assets. These are identified and mapped in the Renhold GI Plan (pages 13-15). All designated and non-designated historic sites, remains and buildings should be protected and enhanced, where appropriate, in line with national and local planning policies.

6.22 ***Community support for the policy:*** 97% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

## **POLICY RNP7: HERITAGE ASSETS**

*Any proposals for development that result in the loss of or cause unacceptable harm to the significance of designated assets or their settings will be resisted, unless it can be demonstrated that the loss or harm is clearly and convincingly justified by the public benefits associated with the scheme. In weighing applications for development that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

### **Benefits**

6.23 The benefits of identifying Green Infrastructure, heritage assets, Local Green Spaces and Important Green Gaps that are valued by the local community in the Parish and giving them policy protection are as follows:

- a) It has provided an opportunity for the key features of the local environment to be identified and prioritised for potential protection and enhancement, and for new features/facilities potentially to be introduced.
- b) The existing Rights of Way network comprises a greatly valued community asset, however there are a number of access issues which can be highlighted through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- c) Such an approach is consistent with the policy provisions of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 and other relevant parts of the Local Plan evidence base.

6.24 Protecting the spatial Important Green Gaps between the individual historically older and newer 'Ends' in the Parish and prohibiting 'backland' development on land that sits behind an established building line of existing development/built form will also have the following benefits:

- a) Where the Important Green Gaps are accessible via Public Rights of Way, residents have the opportunity for recreation and physical activity in the areas closest to where they live, thus avoiding the need to travel via private vehicle in order to access the countryside.
- b) Renhold is rich in biodiversity and the Important Green Gaps provide a vital resource for habitats and wildlife, allowing corridors of undeveloped land, across which species can travel and spread, to thrive and be enhanced. The Parish currently sustains important populations of nine of the most critically endangered 'Red List' bird species of conservation concern, all of which are dependent on the range of habitats in these Important Green Gaps.
- c) Enabling preservation of the Parish' tranquillity, rural nature and dark skies enjoyed by both wildlife and residents.
- d) Preventing physical and visual coalescence in order to retain Renhold's characteristic identity.

## 7 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### ***Introduction***

7.1 This section sets out the Neighbourhood Plan policy for the provision and retention of community facilities in Renhold Parish.

### ***Context and Background***

7.2 Renhold has a number of community assets meeting the needs of residents and visitors:

- a) Renhold Primary School is located in Church End and has around 200 pupils aged between 3 and 11.
- b) Renhold Village Hall opened in 2001, is managed by the Renhold Village Hall Charity and provides meeting and function facilities for a wide range of users.
- c) Oakwood Stores on Hookhams Lane is the only shop and newsagent in the Parish which also houses a parcel collection/drop-off point.
- d) The Polhill Arms public house in Salph End attracts a local and wider clientele.
- e) Sports pitches and changing facilities are provided at Renhold Sports Field, in Green End and at Aspire off Norse Road.
- f) There are five children's play areas, two adjacent to Aspires (one of which includes a multi-games court), two as part of Aspire and one at the Polhill Arms.
- g) There are two places of worship, All Saint's Church in Church End and Renhold Chapel in Green End. Both also accommodate other community functions such as committee meetings. All Saint's Church has a Chapter House for this purpose.

### ***Link to Neighbourhood Plan Objectives***

7.3 The following Objective informs the Neighbourhood Plan policy on community facilities in Renhold:

***Objective 6:*** 'To preserve the existing community facilities and support the provision of appropriate new facilities and infrastructure to meet identified local needs'.

### ***Technical evidence - Community Surveys***

7.4 In the initial community survey undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group respondents identified a number of issues in relation to community facilities:

7.5 ***Valued existing provision:*** The following existing provision was detailed amongst the factors that make Renhold a positive place to live:

- a) The local shop.
- b) Renhold Primary School.

- c) 'The 'Polhill Arms' public house.
- d) All Saints' Church.

7.6 The following aspirations for additional provision were expressed by respondents:

- a) A more effective, locally-inclusive social hub/community centre.
- b) More recycling facilities.
- c) Additional play areas and multi-use games.
- d) Upgraded Public Rights of Way.
- e) Allotments.

### **Benefits**

7.7 The benefits of retaining and enhancing community facilities at appropriate locations in Renhold are as follows:

- a) Community facilities promote and enhance community cohesion, providing places where local people can meet and socialise.
- b) The proximity of Renhold to Bedford means that larger scale community facilities like GP surgeries, specialist shops and larger-scale sports facilities are within easy reach for most parish residents, so it is not appropriate for them to be replicated at a local level. However, enhancing the quantity and quality of local-scale community provision within Renhold will maximise accessibility for local people and promote sustainable living.

### **Community Support for the Policy**

7.8 98.7% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

### **Policy**

#### ***POLICY RNP8: PROTECTION AND RETENTION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES***

*Development in Renhold which would involve the direct loss of identified community facilities (in paragraph 7.2 above) will only be supported if the following can be demonstrated:*

- a) *The proposal includes replacement provision of equivalent or better quantity and quality on a site within or immediately adjacent to an existing settlement in the Parish. Such facilities should be accessible by public transport, walking and cycling and have adequate on-site car parking; or*
- b) *There is no longer an economic justification to protect the facility (through the provision of satisfactory evidence of marketing over preceding 12 months); or*
- c) *The alternative proposal would be of sufficient benefit to the local community to outweigh the loss of the existing facility/use.*

## 8 TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL

### ***Introduction***

8.1 This section sets out the Neighbourhood Plan policy relating to transport and travel in Renhold Parish.

### ***Context and background***

8.2 Renhold experiences a wide range of issues relating to travel and transportation, in particular:

- a) The volume and speed of vehicular traffic, despite Transport Regulation Orders to restrict access to and from the A421 junction at peak times and weight restrictions in other parts of the village.
- b) Heavy goods vehicle movements.
- c) The absence and narrow width of some roadside footpaths due to the rural character of the Parish
- d) Poor maintenance of some roadside footpaths.
- e) Infrequent public transport, which typically involves four buses a day to and from central Bedford.
- f) A Public Rights of Way network that has some access, discontinuities and maintenance issues.
- g) The absence of any formally designated cycle paths within the Parish, despite the proximity of the 'Bedford Green Wheel' cycle route along Norse Road, just south of the Parish boundary.

8.3 As a land use plan, the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan is unable to address many of these concerns directly, although when planning applications are submitted, traffic, travel and associated effects (such as noise and pollution) can be considered and measures potentially required to mitigate any unacceptable impacts (or refused if those impacts cannot be satisfactorily mitigated). However, the Neighbourhood Plan can set out its proposals for the use of developer contributions from new development which potentially could address some of the concerns which are of most importance to the local community, including traffic mitigation measures and public rights of way improvements.

### ***Link to Neighbourhood Plan Objectives***

8.4 The following Objectives inform Neighbourhood Plan policy on transport and travel in Renhold:

- a) ***Objective 4:*** 'To protect and improve the countryside setting, biodiversity and wildlife habitats, including opportunities for enhanced public access where appropriate'.

- b) **Objective 7:** ‘To preserve and enhance the existing Green Infrastructure network and promote active travel’.
- c) **Objective 8:** ‘To reduce the impact of through traffic and improve non-vehicular transport’.

### **Technical Evidence**

8.5 **Community surveys:** In the initial community survey undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group respondents identified a number of issues in relation to travel and transport. The following were cited by respondents as problematic:

- a) Too much traffic/traffic noise.
- b) Speeding traffic.
- c) School parking.
- d) Verge parking.
- e) Narrow/poorly maintained footpaths.
- f) Threat of the East-West Rail project.
- g) Obstructed footpaths/access to walks.

8.6 **Green Infrastructure Plan:** The Renhold Green Infrastructure Plan identified the following community aspirations relating to the Public Rights of Way network in the Parish:

- a) Reinstate Footpath 2 between the Village Hall and Church End.
- b) Reinstate the current gaps in routes of Footpath 19 and Footpath 20 near Woodfield Farm.
- c) Surface Footpath 1 from the rear of All Saints’ Church towards Great Early Grove to prevent flooding and widen the kissing gate to allow access for buggies.
- d) Improve and sign Footpath 38, opposite the Village Hall.
- e) Provide Rights of Way signage for Footpath 6 and Bridleway 7 at Ravensden Road.
- f) Create a new footpath from the southern end of Hookham’s Lane heading north-west along brook to Footpath 31.
- g) Resolve access issues regarding the southern end of Footpath 8 (Brook Lane), which is overgrown and blocked.
- h) Replace all stiles with gates or gaps as appropriate.
- i) Improve surfacing on public footpaths and bridleways, especially those that undergo regular flooding and manage encroaching natural vegetation.

- j) Provide seating at viewpoints and along rights of way for elderly and frail walkers.
- 8.7 All the proposed improvements to the Public Rights of Way network are aspirational and are dependent upon cooperation from landowners, but all would contribute towards delivering the Neighbourhood Plan Objectives.

### **Benefits**

- 8.8 The benefits of addressing those transport and travel issues in Renhold that are permissible and appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan to consider are as follows:
  - a) Existing traffic and parking issues can be highlighted and taken into account by the local planning authority in relation to all proposed future developments and their potential impact on current transport issues in Renhold.
  - b) Improving the Public Rights of Way network will provide opportunities for residents and visitors to Renhold to access the green spaces that make the Parish so special. It will also support sustainable non-vehicular travel within Renhold, which will address some of the wider transport problems.
  - c) Linking with Rights of Way improvements proposed in the Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan that connect with routes in Renhold.
  - d) The East-West Rail project has the potential to fundamentally change the landscape and character of Renhold, so a policy on mitigation will highlight ways of minimising any impact.

### **Community Support for the Policy**

- 8.9 97.5% of community respondents to the Regulation 14 consultation support the following policy:

### **Policy**

#### ***POLICY RNP9: MITIGATING TRANSPORT ISSUES***

*In considering any development that will generate additional vehicular traffic, the local planning authority should take account of the potential impact on existing transport issues in Renhold and ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are included as a condition of any planning consent.*

## 9 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

### *Introduction*

9.1 This section examines the implementation, monitoring and review of the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan.

### *Implementation*

9.2 The decisions and actions of everyone involved in proposals and initiatives which could affect the character of the Parish will determine how successful the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan will be in realising its Vision the Objectives and the ability to deliver on its policies. The decisions about what to conserve and enhance, what and where to build, ranging from small house extensions to new housing developments, to the conversion of old buildings for new uses, or relating to new employment or community facilities - and even the East-West Rail (if implemented) - will all contribute to the bigger picture.

9.3 Implementation depends on how landowners, residents, statutory bodies, infrastructure providers, the Parish Council and Bedford Borough Council interpret and support the Neighbourhood Plan and its policies during the Plan period.

9.4 By participating in the consultative processes that underpinned the production of the Neighbourhood Plan, residents have identified a range of aspirations and initiatives they wish to see progressed in the Parish. A number of the identified initiatives are non-land-use planning matters which cannot be an integral element of the formal part of the Neighbourhood Plan but nevertheless remain important to local people. These are therefore recorded in an appendix to the Neighbourhood Plan, to prompt further action by the Parish Council and other local landowners and stakeholders.

### *Monitoring and Review*

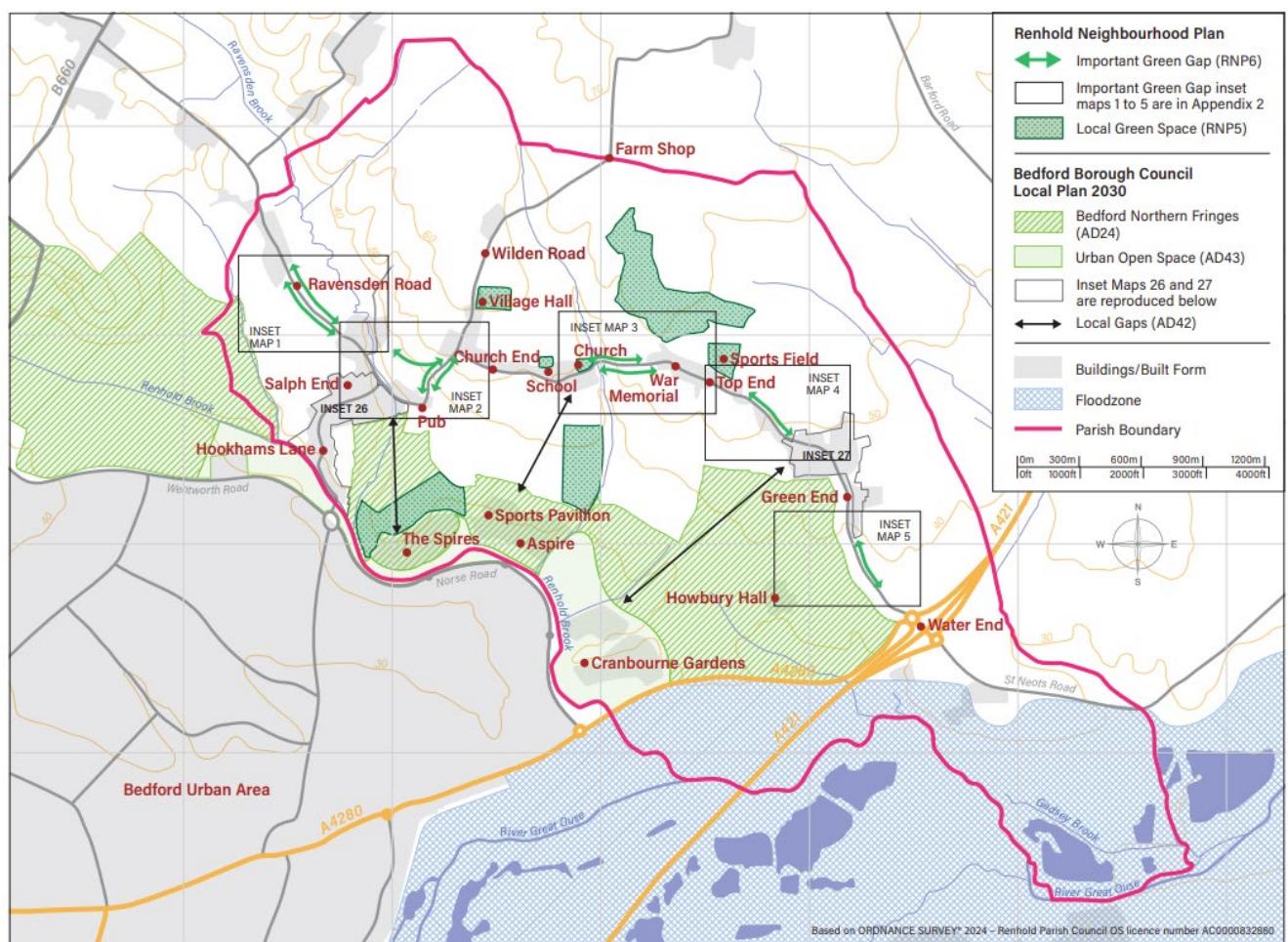
9.5 The Renhold Neighbourhood Plan has been compiled in the context of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030. The draft Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 was withdrawn by the Borough Council in October 2025, with a view to commencing work on a new version. For the time being, therefore, the provisions of the Local Plan 2030 will continue to apply, but the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group will review the Neighbourhood Plan as the Local Plan is developed to ensure it continues to reflect relevant local planning policy.

9.6 The Neighbourhood Plan has also been drawn up during a period in which the East-West Rail scheme has been evolving. The chosen route alignment will pass close to Renhold, with considerable environmental and traffic repercussions for the Parish and its residents, particularly during the construction period. As the project evolves, it may raise unforeseen issues relating to local land-use and environment. In those circumstances it would be appropriate to review the Neighbourhood Plan accordingly.

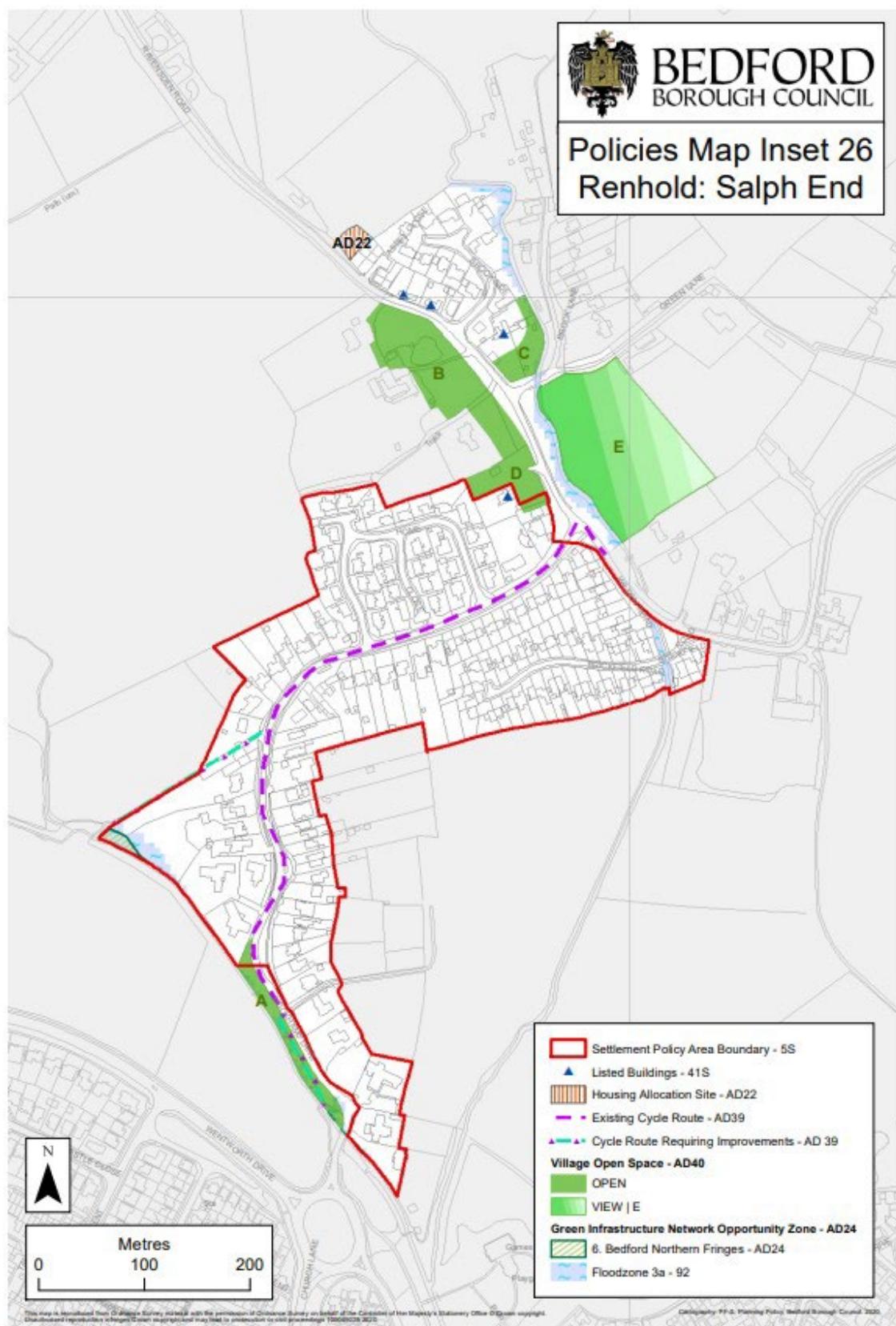
## APPENDIX 1: POLICIES MAPS

The map below shows the spatial implications of the policies in the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan. Insets 26 and 27 refer to the Settlement Policy Area (SPA) designations on the Bedford Borough Council 'Bedford Local Plan 2030' Policies Map, relating to Ralph End and Green End respectively. The SPA boundaries and the designations within the insets will not be changed as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. These maps are reproduced on pages 47 and 48 below.

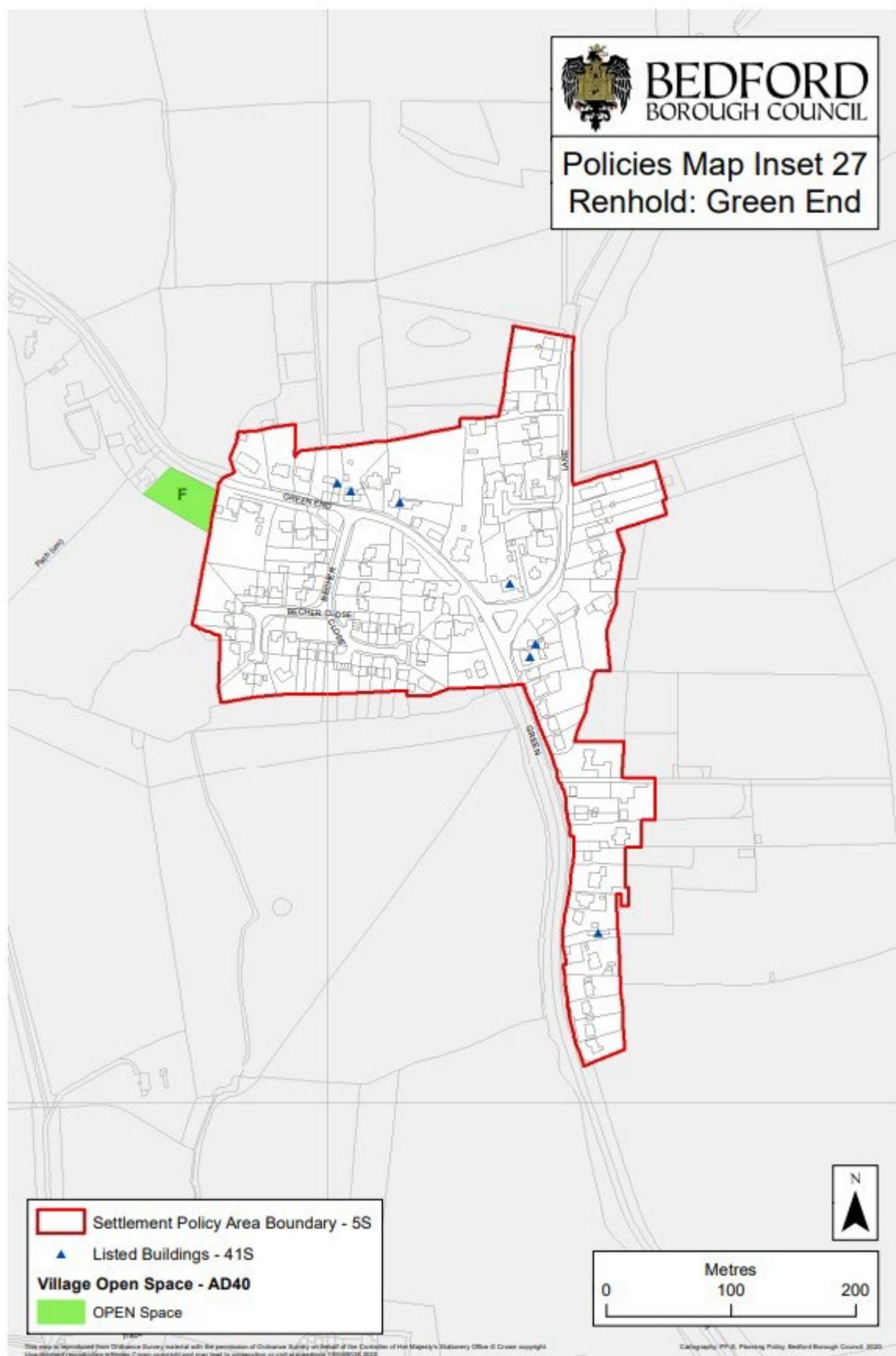
Map 8: Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map



Map 9: Bedford Local Plan 2030 Inset 26



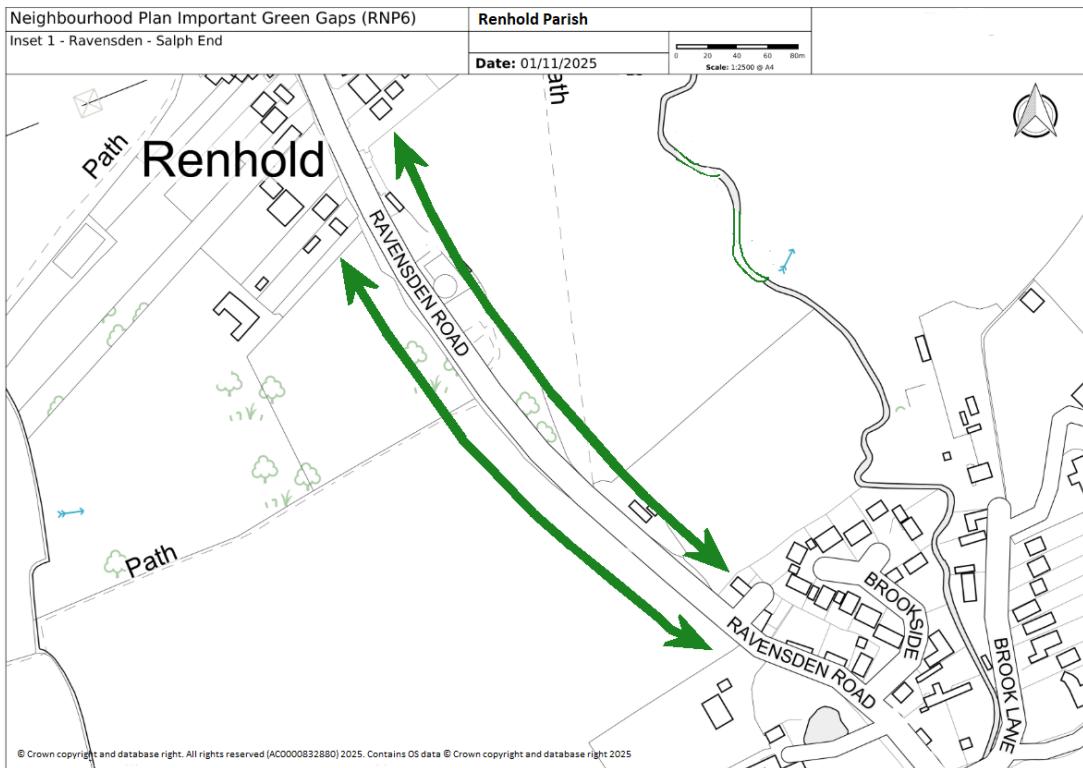
Map 10: Bedford Local Plan 2030 Inset 27



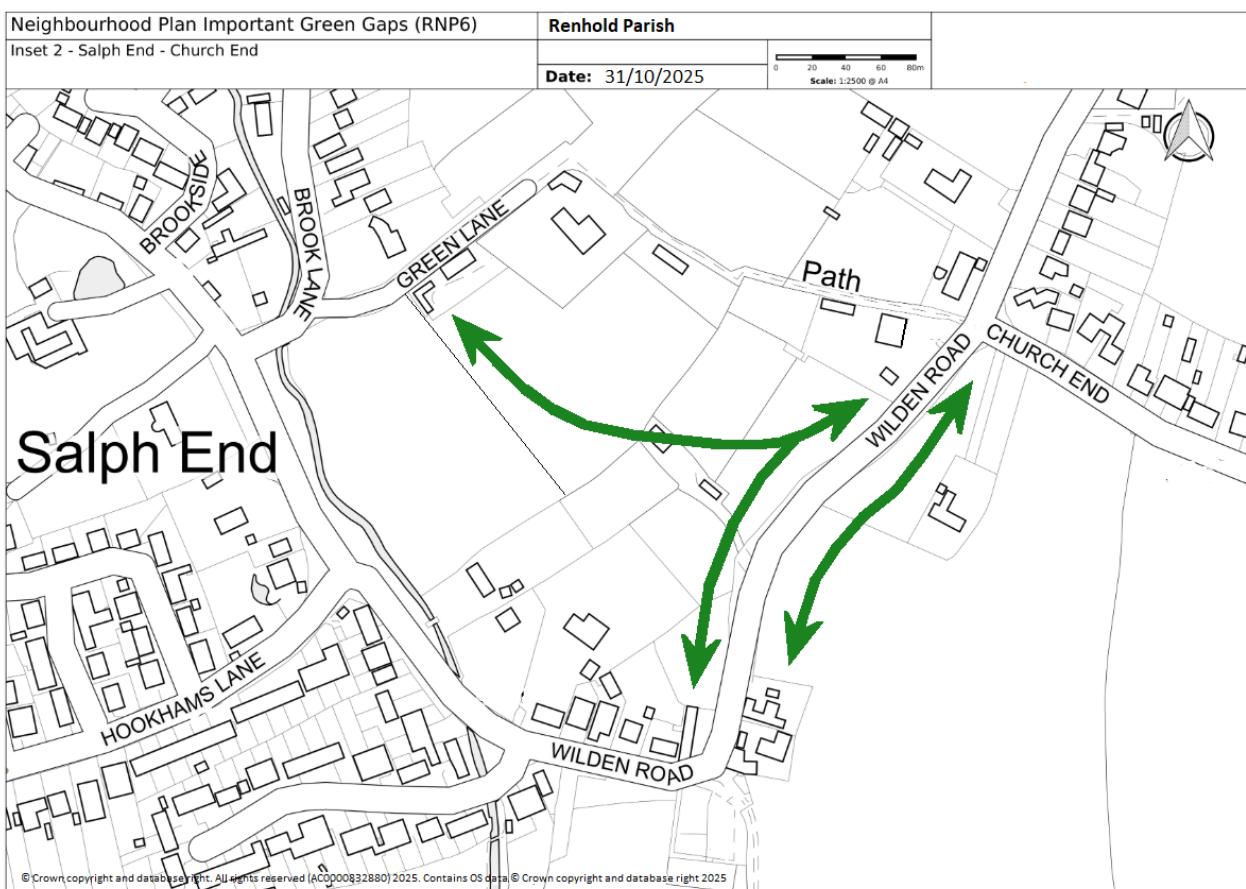
## APPENDIX 2: IMPORTANT GREEN GAPS INSET MAPS

The green arrows on these inset maps indicate the extent of the Important Green Gaps defined in policy RNP6. [

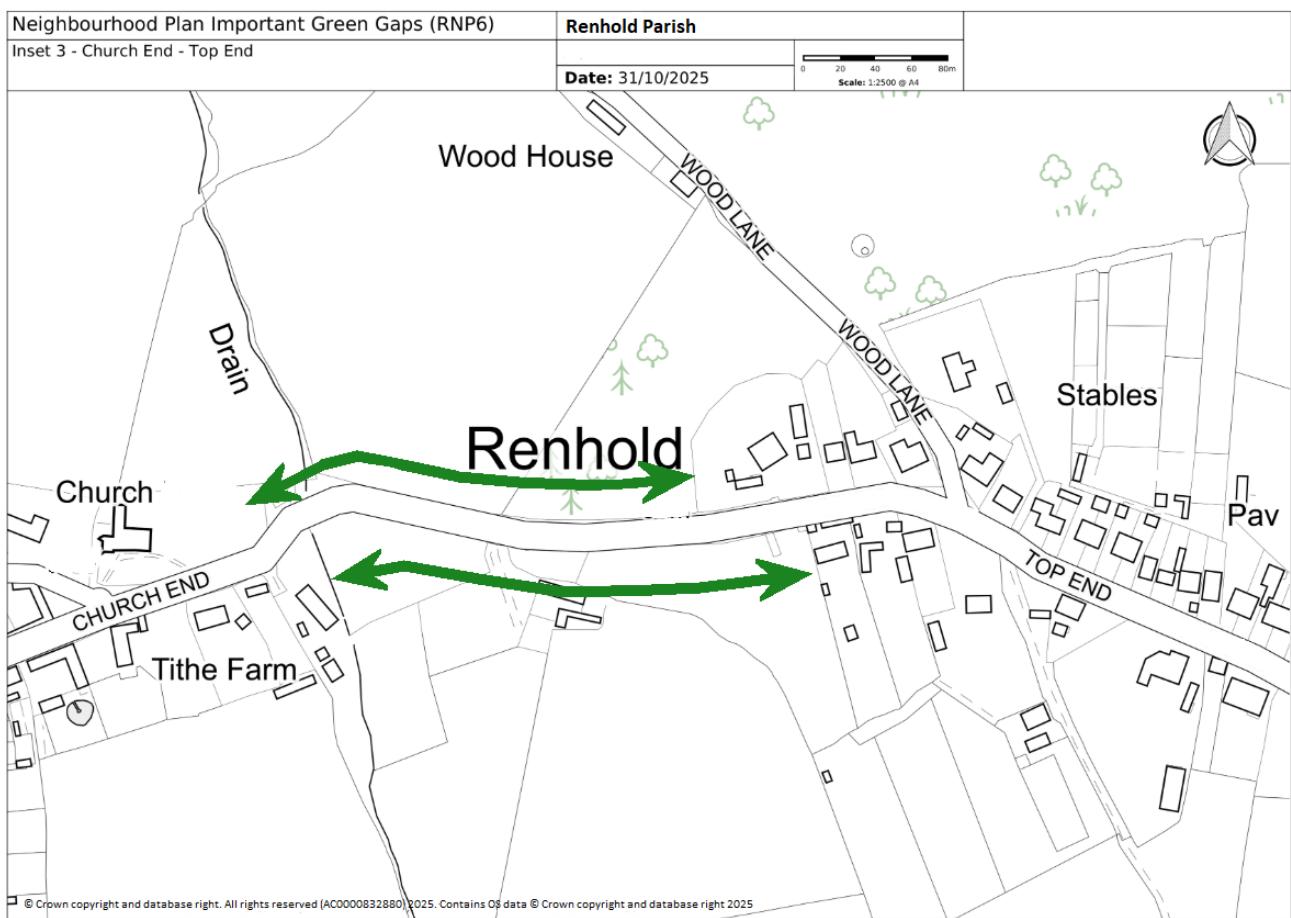
*Map 11: Inset Map 1: Ravensden-Salph End Important Green Gap*



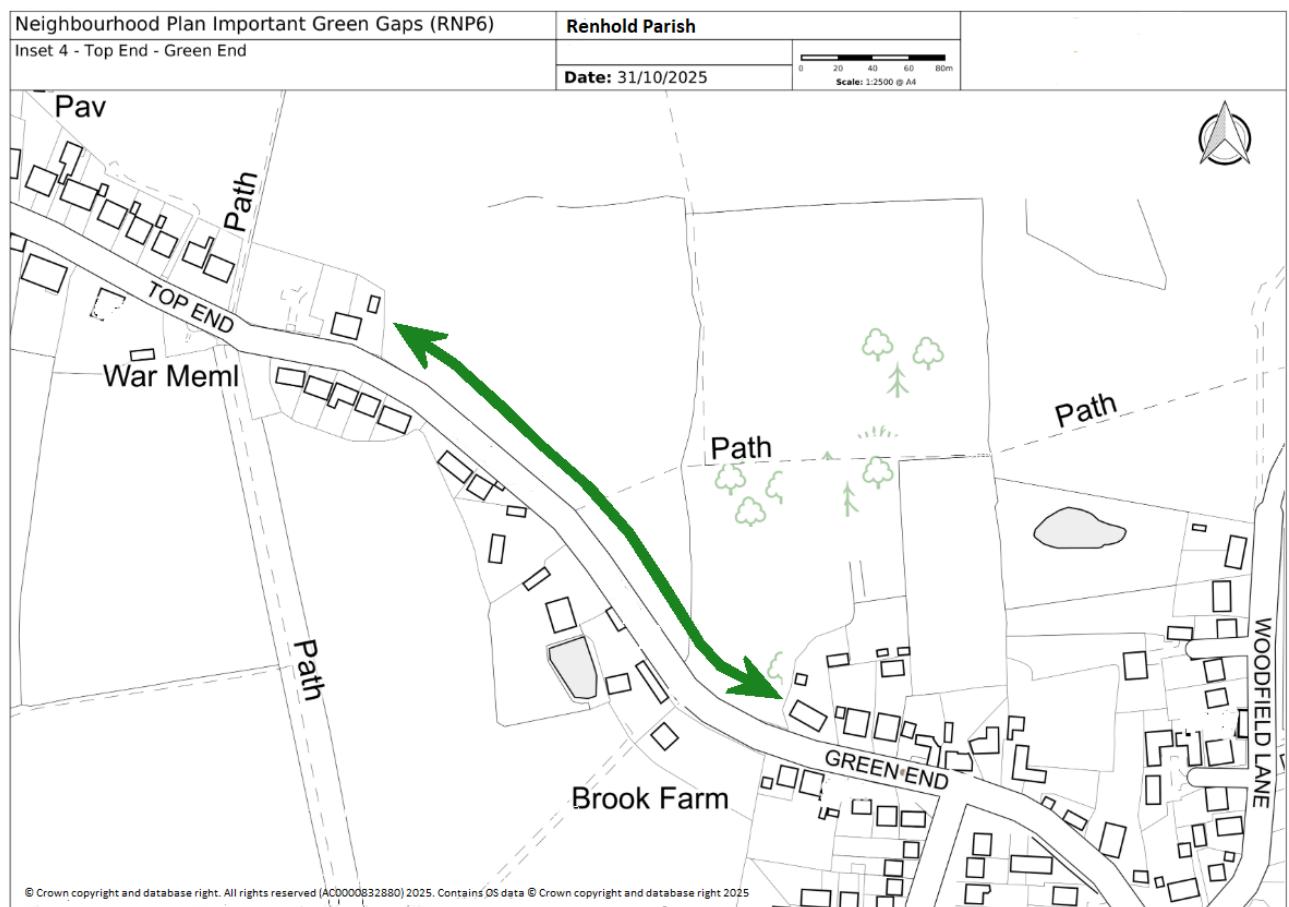
Map 12: Inset Map 2: Salph End-Church End Important Green Gap



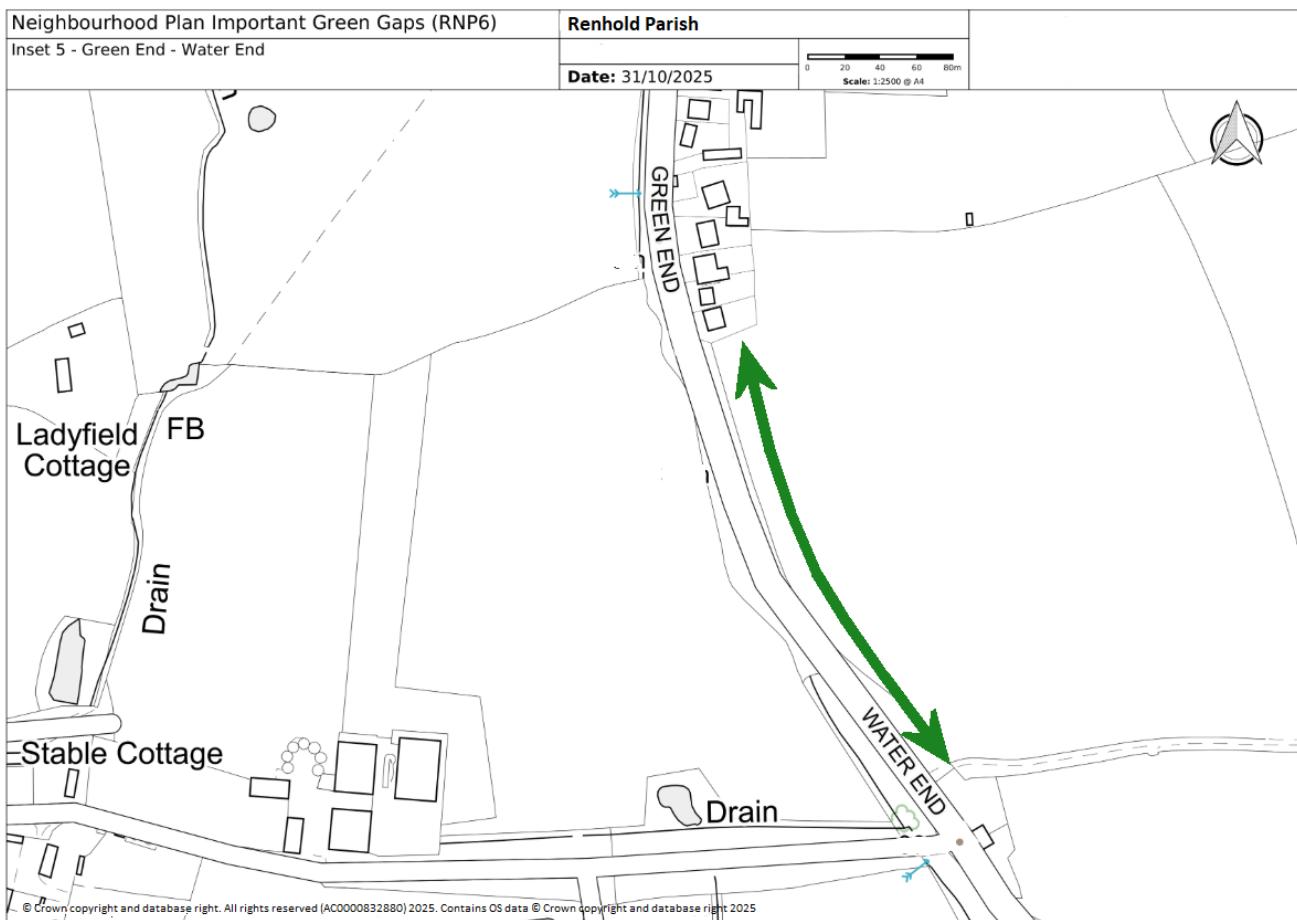
Map 13: Inset Map 3: Church End-Top End Important Green Gap



Map 14: Inset Map 4: Top End-Green End Important Green Gap



Map 15: Inset Map 5: Green End-Water End Important Green Gap



## APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Affordable Housing:** Affordable housing for sale or rent, starter homes, discounted market sales housing and other affordable routes to home ownership, such as shared ownership and rent to buy, which is provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the current market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provision to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

**Allocations:** Sites specifically identified on the Policies Map for development (e.g. housing sites).

**Amenities:** Desirable or useful features or facilities of a building or place.

**Ancient Woodland:** An area which has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD.

**Archaeological Interest:** There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

**Backland Development:** The development of land that sits behind an established building line of existing housing or other development, detracting from the linear settlement form of the 'Ends' in Renhold.

**Basic Conditions:** The basic conditions for Neighbourhood Plans are that they must: have regard to national policy; contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area.

**Biodiversity:** The variety of animal and plant life found within a particular area.

**Coalescence:** The process or result of uniting or coming together in one body or mass.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** The charge required to be paid by developers to the local planning authority on new housing and commercial development to provide for infrastructure. The Parish Council is entitled to 15% of the proceeds where no Neighbourhood Plan is formally in place at the time the levy is calculated, or 25% if the Neighbourhood Plan has already been made.

**Consultation Statement:** Consultation statements explain and demonstrate how engagement took place with the community and others to shape the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The consultation statement will include and summarise all the statutory (i.e. the pre-submission consultation) and non-statutory consultation that has taken place with the community, organisations and other relevant bodies to develop the Plan.

**Dark Skies:** Areas with little or no light pollution.

**Deprivation:** The consequence of a lack of income and other resources, which cumulatively can be seen as living in poverty.

**Design Codes:** A set of specific rules or requirements to guide the physical development of a site or place. Their aim is to provide clarity as to what constitutes acceptable design quality and thereby

provides a level of certainty for developers and the local community alike that can help deliver good quality new development.

**Designated Area:** The area in which the ‘qualifying body’ (the Parish Council) is authorised by the planning authority to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.

**Designated Heritage Assets:** Buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

**Designations:** Areas shown on the Policies Map to which specific policies apply (not allocations) e.g. Local Greenspace.

**Development Plans:** This includes adopted Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans as defined in Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**Distinctiveness:** Something that has a special quality or feature which makes it easily recognisable and different from other things of the same type.

**Dwelling:** A self-contained unit of accommodation used by one or more households as a home.

**Ends:** The term ‘End’ was first used in the thirteenth century to denote small outlying settlements in a parish.

**Equivalent Replacement Provision:** Referred to in Policy RNP8 Protection and Retention of Community Facilities, the proposal must include correlative replacement on a site within or immediately adjacent to an existing settlement in the Parish. Such facilities should be easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling and have adequate on-site car parking.

**Fuel Poverty:** When a household needs to spend at least 10% of its income on maintaining a satisfactory heating regime.

**Green Infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

**Habitat Regulations Assessment:** A process required by Regulations to determine if a plan may have significant effects on the protected features of certain types of habitats as defined in the NPPF.

**Heritage Asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing). Non-designated assets are also important.

**Highway Authority:** Highways authorities are responsible for producing the local transport plan and for managing existing or proposed new local roads in the area. Bedford Borough Council is the local highway authority.

**Historic Environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

**Housing Needs Survey:** A short survey that gathers information on housing in a parish or area. It includes details on the current need for affordable housing and opinions on how to deliver it in the future. The information gathered from a housing needs survey can help communities and parish councils make decisions about future housing plans.

**Important Green Gaps:** The open areas around and between parts of settlements, which maintain the distinction between the countryside and built-up areas, prevent the coalescence (merging) of adjacent places and also provide recreational opportunities.

**Infrastructure:** Basic services necessary for development to take place: for example roads, electricity, sewerage, water, education and health facilities.

**Local Green Space:** Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.

**Listed Building:** A building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II\* or II with Grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well the exterior of the building and any buildings or permanent structures within the curtilage of that listed building.

**Local Planning Authority:** The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for an area. In this case, the Local Planning Authority is Bedford Borough Council.

**Local Plan:** A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. A local plan can consist of both strategic and non-strategic policies.

**Localism Act:** The Localism Act devolved greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and gave local communities more control over housing and planning decisions.

**Market Housing:** Housing that is constructed or made available for purchase or rent on the open market but does not include social housing.

**Material Consideration:** A matter that should be taken into account in deciding a planning application or an appeal against a planning decision.

**Mitigation:** Reducing risk of loss from the occurrence of any undesirable development or event.

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people can produce their own Neighbourhood Development Plans

**Natural Environment:** The non-human-made surroundings and conditions that exist on Earth, including living and non-living things.

**Net-zero Carbon:** The amount of carbon emissions released by human activity is balanced by the amount of carbon removed from the atmosphere.

**Non-designated Heritage Assets:** Buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of their heritage interest but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

**Non-vehicular Transport:** Non-vehicular transport, also known as non-motorized transport, human-powered transportation, or active transportation, is a way of getting around that doesn't use a motor.

**Public Open Space:** Urban space, designated by a council, where public access may or may not be formally established, but which fulfils or can fulfil a recreational or non-recreational role (for example amenity, ecological, educational, social or cultural images).

**Public Rights of Way:** A right by which the public can pass along linear routes over land at all times.

**Saved Policies/Saved Plan:** Saved policies are planning policies from previous Local Plans that remain part of the statutory development plan.

**Scheduled Monument:** A building, structure or works (or remains thereof) above or below the surface of the land which is by definition considered to be of national importance. Any works to a scheduled monument require the consent of the Secretary of State.

**Settlement:** A built area and the surrounding countryside. A settlement boundary is a line that indicates the extent of that area.

**Stakeholders:** Individuals or organisations with an interest in a process or area.

**Sufficient Benefit:** Referred to in Policy RNP8 Protection and Retention of Community Facilities, the alternative proposal would be of acceptable benefit to the local community to outweigh the loss of the existing facility.

**Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):** Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the Development plan.

**Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):** Supplementary Planning Guidance may cover a range of issues, both thematic and site specific and provide further detail of policies and proposals in a development plan.

**Sustainability:** Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Sustainability Appraisal:** An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan, from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

**Traffic Regulation Order:** Legal designations that restrict or prohibit the use of the highway network, in line with The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

**Tranquillity:** A state of calm or quietude.

**Wildlife Corridor:** Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

## APPENDIX 4: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The following documents are referred to in the text of the Neighbourhood Plan and were prepared as part of the evidence base. All are available to view in full on the following website:

<https://renhold-pc.gov.uk/parish-sub-committees/np>

Renhold Parish Green Infrastructure Plan 2023 (Beds Rural Communities Charity)

Proposed Local Green Space Designations for Renhold (Beds Rural Communities Charity, 2022)

Housing Needs Survey Report Renhold November/December 2021 (Beds Rural Communities Charity)

Renhold Design Guidance & Codes For the Neighbourhood Plan (AECOM, 2024)

Renhold Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report (Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, 2024)

Habitat Regulations Screening for the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan (Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, 2024)

Housing Needs Survey Report Renhold February/March 2025 (Beds Rural Communities Charity).