

## **Why a Neighbourhood Plan?**

Communities throughout the country have (under the 2011 Localism Act) been given the right to create their own Neighbourhood Plans which formally state their preferences for the way their communities change and evolve in the future.

Renhold Parish Council has decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the whole Parish (including the three new Estates) and the designated area has now been approved by the Borough Council.

There is significant pressure for new housing in the Bedford area. For example, plans for up to 414 houses new houses in Salph End, Renhold have recently gone to appeal. The Parish Council is concerned about Renhold's potential coalescence with Bedford but also about roads and safety, speeding traffic, schooling, public transport availability, health facilities, good communications, energy conservation, the environment, and so on. There are also issues regarding the route of the East West Rail and the Oxford to Cambridge arc development to be dealt with.

The Parish Council seeks to reach a compromise between having a say in how Renhold as a whole evolves over the next 10 years whilst protecting the character of the ancient Village.

There is much to deal with in the near future but without a Neighbourhood Plan, Renhold will be in a much weaker position to influence such upcoming matters and issues.

Our Neighbourhood Plan must reflect the majority view of residents and other local stakeholders, but cannot directly countermand the Borough's Local Plan. When complete, the Neighbourhood Plan will have the status of a 'material consideration' which means it must be taken into account alongside the Borough's Local Plan to determine planning applications, decide the locations for any new developments and promote measures to protect and enhance key environmental and heritage features.

A Working Group consisting of three Parish Councillors (Amanda Quince, Ian McIver and Nicky Gribble) and five local residents (Keith Herkes, Peter Norris, Julie Roberts, Claudia Dietz and Tony Ploszajski) has been set up to kick-start the preparation of our Neighbourhood Plan. We have had two very lively and successful virtual Zoom meetings so far. If you are interested in making an input to this process, please make contact with us. You will be very welcome. We particularly ask for people from the younger demographic!

The Plan will initially be developed based on responses to questionnaires received from residents, the first of which we are just about to circulate. Once Covid restrictions are lifted, there will be meetings and drop-in sessions so everyone can have their say. We will also have dialogue with local businesses, landowners, clubs and groups; indeed everyone who has a stake in the village. Technical reports and surveys will be commissioned where needed. Ultimately, a referendum will be held to approve the Plan.

It is very important that we reach a consensus and we sincerely ask the Community as a whole to engage with the Working Group.

Thank you for your time.

13/09/2020