

Minutes of Third Meeting of Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Wednesday 7th October at 6.45pm

Present: -

Foundation members: Amanda Quince (Chair), Ian McIver (I.T), Keith Herkes (Treasurer), Claudia Dietz, Nicky Gribble, Peter Norris, Tony Ploszajski, Jooles Roberts (Minutes Sec)

New members: Sandra Einon, Denise Hill, Denis Ivins, Paul Sawford, Alan Watson

Apologies received: Paddy Burns

Those who expressed an interest in joining the group Adam Davenport , Jim Dearman, Alan & Susan Horn, Joanna Livingstone, Jenny McAteer

Guest speakers: Cliff Andrews – Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
Kirstin Rayner – Resident of Renhold, Clerk to Gamlingay P.C.
with experience of Neighbourhood Planning

N.B. – To save space Action to be taken **highlighted in Turquoise**

1&2. Welcome & apologies for absence (AQ) AQ welcomed everyone to the meeting, and asked the members to briefly introduce themselves. It was clear that there were representatives from most areas of the village, apart from Aspire and The Spires. There is some very relevant experience amongst the members of RNPWG

3. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial interest for the meeting None

4. Guest speaker, BRCC, Cliff Andrews – Green Infrastructure Plan CA introduced himself and said that working within the Neighbourhood Plan is a way to get some good evidence to inform policies for the Green Infrastructure Plan, giving added value & stronger teeth to it. There are generally 3 phases to the community engagement process, however with the current Covid situation these now need to be amended to suit:-

1. The community would usually be invited to the Village Hall – the turnout is usually around 30 for a village of Renhold's size. The residents would sit in groups of 5/6 & BRCC would take them through the GIP. Coloured pens are handed out for people to mark up a map showing their preferences. These maps are then taken away & collated and a master map & a draft GIP created.

2. These documents are then brought back to the community – normally at a function which is already taking place which will attract a good number of residents, i.e. village fete. People are asked to look & identify what they agree & disagree with. The Plan is then taken away & modified to identify the most valued green spaces.

3. Workshop. Instead of a workshop Ravensden trialled an on-line consultation, which was a presentation with a question & answer section – a slimmed down version of what would have been done in a workshop. A designated webpage was created (CA showed the meeting the BRCC webpage). There was an on-line map pack put together by Records & Monitoring Centre, one showing green spaces, rights of way, etc., another showing historic environmental features (which could be as little as where ancient coins & artefacts have been found) where there was a moat, etc. , together with general information on green infrastructure. People were asked to study these documents, then go to a Survey Monkey link with 11 questions, i.e. most valued walks, rides, where enhancements could be made, new routes, possibility for wildlife designation. A final draft GIP is then created.

CA then invited QUESTIONS:-

KR – Within the newsletter which went to everyone in (Ravensden) Parish there was an invitation to visit the web page & go to the survey link & they were encouraged to attend a meeting. Only 35 residents completed the survey. CA said this is disappointing on one level, i.e., very low number against the number of residents in the Parish, but on another level the perfect number for a village hall workshop is 36. CA said they found that an on-line questionnaire has some challenges – by clicking on it there are questions asked where it may be appropriate

to go back & look at the maps again & this can be a bit clumsy. CA has asked their I.T. experts if it can be made more user friendly.

SE – CA was asked, given how the activity has needed to be changed, what sort of number he would have expected normally. CA - has done about 40 GIPs over the last decade, one was 80 people, one was only 3. 24 makes for a good feeling with lots of ideas.

TP – Results of the Renhold Initial Survey on access to the countryside show 61 people and identified 57 for countryside & open spaces, which might give us an idea as to how many people would participate. AQ suggested that a good strap line might attract more people. NG asked that Renhold Brook be included, where there are otters and voles. **TP will action this.**

AW – Can the GIP stand whether 10 or 100 people buy into it? CA – NP needs to have 50% of the vote in support of the plan, and has never found one to have a 50/50 vote. 50% gives as much input as possible from the community giving the best Plan & challenge.

AW – raised concern about those against the Plan. CA – A straight forward vote makes the final decision. BRCC never input their own ideas, it will be Renhold's Plan, but just because it is in the plan does not mean that it will be deliverable.

PN – Doesn't believe that the GIP will cause any difficulties, but it must be ensured that the 3 new estates are included and not upset.

CD – What are the timescales? At the point Renhold is ready to instruct BRCC, CA would need to look at their commitment at that time, but they would probably be ready within a month or two, and then probably a month/6 weeks between each event, and a month or two at the end to prepare the write up.

CA was thanked for his advice & time and he then left the meeting. Unfortunately the connection for Zoom was lost and when we reconnected, Denise did not re-join us.

PN – The survey findings which are put into the Magazine ~~and~~ will need to be hard hitting with bullet points, and these also need to be put on website, where more space is available. **TP to feed to IM.**

SE – How many hits does the P.C. website receive? IM – 20-30 per month, with the Renhold Village Website receiving about 60 per week. Permission has been given for a Neighbourhood Plan flyer to be delivered with the November or later edition of the Magazine.

PN agreed to work on the flyer, making it eye-catching and punchy, with a map clearly showing the impact of the recent "call for sites". JR had suggested that with only 4 residents mentioning the proposed route of the East West Railway in their survey reply, that local people are not aware of exactly how close to Renhold the route will be, and the impact on wildlife, walks and the rural aspect & some believing it will be 10-15 years before the railway is completed. NG informed the meeting that the time scale for completion *could* be as soon as 5 years, but at the moment the Government is very short of money for large scale projects so this may not now be accurate. The reverse of the flyer will bear details of the proposed East West Railway, including a basic plan which can be clearly understood and with added data.

KR – suggested to TP he might try to use the percentage of actual responses to the number of properties in the Parish, which will give about a 10% return

5. Should a full Green Infrastructure Analysis from BRCC be commissioned at a cost of £3,500+ VAT, with an additional cost for a Local Greenspace Designation exercise in the region of an extra £500? AQ suggested it might be too early to claim for all the money. Locality can cover the whole cost, but funding has to be approved prior to any works being instructed. KR confirmed this saying from her experience no commitment to expenditure can be made until funding has been agreed. It could be a good idea to try to get quotes, if not just use the preferred supplier and submit this to Locality. Locality will then inform us whether they are in support and the grant will be issued. KR has not done a G.I. for Gamlingay, but she has contacted other Groups who have used BRCC and they & their work is well respected. AQ requested KR ask these other Groups if they went out for quotes, and **KR agreed to do this**. KH asked whether a quote will be required initially and KR said evidence of approx cost will be required, i.e. room hire, professional fees, stationery/postage. The results of the first survey are evidence enough to prove GIP support. KH asked whether VAT can be claimed back, and AQ answered that as it is the P.C. who make the application it can be. KR said that the P.C. should ring-fence the money received on behalf of RNP.

IM expressed concern about applying for the correct amount & would like clarification as to whether the figure requested should include VAT or not? He has calculated a figure of £9970, which is higher than that calculated by AQ (they have yet to discuss this aspect) so if he adds VAT it is over the £10k threshold. KR advised them to not include VAT in the application amount. **KH, AQ & IM will complete the Funding Application.**

PN pointed out that the end of the financial year is creeping up and questioned whether funding for G.N. analysis before the end of that year is wise if it is to be spent over 2 years. KR advised second application should be completed & ready to send on 2nd April. If stage payments could be negotiated some of the grant could be spent. KH felt careful consideration needs to be given to what can actually be achieved by the end of the year. KR said the Government make decisions every year as to what money can be made available and it would be an idea to talk to Locality about part-funding. AQ, KH & IM found that Locality's offices are closed, but they are responding to emails and they do now have a contact. **SE, who has worked with BRCC in the past, offered to find out if they can part-pay & will also check with Locality.**

6. Feedback from RNPWG initial questionnaire – key findings (TP)

AQ thanked TP for the extremely good analysis of the Questionnaire, with which everyone agreed, and he in turn thanked IM, KH & everyone who helped deliver and collect them. TP had feared that the results would show very differing opinions from the old village & the new estates, but there was an enormous amount of unanimity. In general terms the results are very encouraging for improving things over the next 10 years. However, although 131 responses out of 1375 households may not be particularly representative, all residents were given the opportunity to give their opinions. We already have a Mandate from the answers given. Following a fairly rapid gallop through the answers given it needs to be decided which to focus on.

AQ asked what to feed back to the community. People need to be made aware, & given a sense of urgency, hopefully engaging more participation. **TP will prepare a condensed summary for Village Magazine, deadline 12th October.**

AQ -Re: recent BBC call for sites:- 'Every blade of grass' has been put forward for development, & she felt that the community should be shown exactly what land has been put forward by land owners.

KR suggested grouping the responses into themes, clearly identifying them & encouraging people to be included in that particular theme group. **TP will ensure all Members have a copy of the survey analysis.**

CD suggested that the Analysis should appear in the Village Magazine opposite the P.C. Planning Report. **AQ to speak with the editor.** IM reminded the meeting that the Village Magazine is stand-alone & although neither the P.C. or NPWG has any authority, we can request and the editor is usually very helpful.

PN asked whether it was known what Ravensden did with their nearly 30% response, and was informed that there was no initial first questionnaire for Ravensden, a full BRCC survey was the first produced. It was agreed that the next Questionnaire would ask more specific, targeted questions.

Just under 25% of the Initial Renhold responses came from the new estates and identify issues which relate to those estates, i.e, parking issues, fear of crime, etc., but these were only mentioned by 2-3 people so are not prominent.

NG stressed that the article in the Village Magazine needs to be prominent, using the logo – it is another method of communication and showing that the Group are trying to involve the community. **AQ/IM to speak with the Editor & let TP know the available space and positioning.**

KH had added up the housing allocation request put forward by land owners and it amounts to 1500. It is important that the community (including the people on the new estates) know this; they need to be aware that they could have houses built behind their homes. The same with the railway, residents need to know where & when.

7. Next steps – Key questions. Kirstin Rayner, who has experience of NP at Gamlingay invited to the Meeting to answer questions as the meeting proceeded.

KR's input has been extremely valuable to the Group throughout the meeting. She advised the way forward is to define the objectives of the NP, a mission statement is needed, being specific. **All agreed to think about their personal objectives ahead of next meeting when it would be an agenda item.** From the questionnaire it should be fairly easy to group it into sections to develop policies for those to be used. Some answers to the questions need to be taken out & handed to the PC to be dealt with. It is important to show the community that their views have been heard & responded to.

TP said one respondent came up with the strap line "Community, Countryside, Connectedness" which is very appropriate and catchy, and should possibly be used.

8. Should BRCC be commissioned to undertake a full housing needs survey & analysis/report at an estimated cost of £1750+VAT plus printing at £315+Vat (based on a 4-sided A4 questionnaire in black & white), including covering letter + estimated cost of Freepost return envelopes based on 25% return rate @ £0.44 per return (approx £150)

AQ, IM & KH tried to cost save & take on some work themselves, but Jemma McLean informed them that what they produced would carry less weight than something done by BRCC as they are independent. TP had spoken to Sonia Gallagher, who came back to say the 2021 census may throw light on housing needs and RNPWG may wish to wait for that update. KR said following experience with Gamlingay she would advise not to commission a survey now, do as late as possible as the documents quickly become outdated. There may be other things which could be done before a Housing Needs Survey. KR advised concentrate on GI, and SE agreed, we only know about where we live, Renhold, and there is a Census due next year. SE also advised not to create "survey fatigue".

PN agreed that it is too early to ask for a detailed housing survey. The questionnaire shows people have stated that they want houses available to family members who have left home & who want to come back to live in Renhold.

Commissioning deferred

9. If we could find someone we can work with, should be engage an experienced professional to assist us in producing our Plan (i.e. really hold our hands & show us what to do) instead of getting to our end results 'the hard way'

IM - Members are all having to learn as we go along, and there are people who have been doing this for years & know a great deal already. JR questioned how we would know who to appoint who would be best for the job. IM Maybe a part-time or consultancy basis could be considered. This could be funded. It was agreed that CD, SE & KR are our in-house experts & we are very lucky to have them. KR said she has been doing the Gamlingay NP very slowly, and if we are going to involve the community it will be slower. Involving a professional does not necessarily mean it will be any quicker. Using Locality money we should use a professional when one is really needed – consider how the money can be best used. KH reminded everyone that we set a target of 18 months to 2 years, which is ambitious. AW feels that a professional could quite significantly help, but accepts the points put forward. SE informed the meeting that it is her intention to cease going to work in April '21 to gain some free time and pursue other interests and will have more time available to RNPWG if needed, but would suggest that BRCC be appointed. Consultants are expensive, but the 2 from BRCC were both impressive.

10. Funding – taking into account points above, how much should be applied for (KH)

It was agreed to apply for funding for G.I. Analysis, but wait for the information from Sandra first. IM repeated his estimate of costs at £9970 including the Housing Needs Analysis. The way forward would be to talk to suppliers re their charges. KR suggested that the P.C. could consider funding from their precept.

11. What should we do next? N.B. New Ward Boundary proposal puts Renhold with Ravensden in a new ward (Renhold & Ravensden) with one Ward Councillor – any comments? Is there therefore any mileage at this juncture in linking up with Ravensden to ask for their help & guidance (all)

AQ It is very much hoped that the one Ward Councillor would be either Stephen Moon or Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant. Ravensden have done their housing needs & are embarking on their G.I.Plan.

PN - Ravensden is very different from Renhold, they have no big housing estates. They had a good response, but cannot see a joint solution for both Parishes. KR - Once the area has been designated you cannot do anything outside of this area. AW reminded meeting that Renhold's Plan cannot conflict with other Parishes, and KR suggested it is important to involve surrounding Parishes in what is being done. Ask their views, does it affect them? etc. There could be a divergence with regard to matters such as new cycle ways, rights of way, the choice for development, etc. It is best to get objections from other Parishes early on. TP stated all NPs have to conform to the Borough N.P. and IM stated he wasn't advocating a joint NP, just a closer working relationship.

12. Should we prepare a formal Action Plan with assigned work packages & timescales (all)

Write report for Village Magazine TP

Create & circulate Call for Sites Flyer PN

NG was absent for a few minutes but on her return, NG agreed to help with East/West Railway information for flyer AQ

SE to check funding situation & report to AQ & IM

Upon receipt of above information from SE apply for funding AQ/IM/KH

AW suggested asking Parishes which are close to Renhold if they are aware of what we are doing?

AQ suggested asking the P.C. to fund the Flyer. This to be put on next P.C. meeting Agenda IM

KH suggested creating objectives asap, & all members were asked to think about this. To be put on next Agenda IM

TP – Possibility of a brain-storm, who, when? A Project Plan, steps, time-scales. KR said she found that this was useful to some, not to others. IM felt it would help keep everyone focused. AW, who has done many Project Plans, agreed to look at this for the NP for Renhold. SE also offered to help

13. Expression of interest completion & completion of funding application process (AQ,KH&IM)

Application for funding form to be completed tomorrow (08.10.20) AQ/IM/KH

Are Ward Funds available? (KR has not come across these for Cambridgeshire, so it is possibly unique to Bedfordshire). Ask Stephen Moon & Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant AQ/IM/KH

14. Dangers re: committing to spending before funding agreed

Covered earlier in the meeting

15. Possibility of funding from Parish Council and/or Ward Funds (AQ, KH, IM)

Covered earlier in the meeting

16. Ensure regular & comprehensive progress & financial reports to the Parish Council (volunteer)

Financial Report falls to the Treasurer KH

KR would be pleased to assist, but Renhold & Gamlingay P.C. meetings fall on the same day, so could only do on an as and when basis, she was thanked and this was agreed.

17. Closure of meeting & date of next meeting

PN was reminded to circulate content for Flyer asap, bearing in mind that the deadline for the printing of the flyer for the Village Magazine is 21st October

Minutes to be circulated to all, including those who had expressed an interest but not attended this Zoom meeting

Updated Contacts List to be circulated IM

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

Next meeting arranged for Thursday 5th November at 7pm (IM to arrange Zoom, email invitation & minutes, etc).