

## Minutes of Fourth Meeting of Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November at 6.45pm

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

**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)

**Members:** Sandra Einon, Denis Ivins, Kirsten Rayner, Paul Sawford

### Guest speakers:

**Sally Chapman,** Chapman Planning. Independent Planning Consultant, specialising in neighbourhood planning

**Nina Chivers**

**Cllr Alison Field-Foster** Representative for Harrold Ward, serving the villages of; Wymington; Little Wymington; Podington; Hinwick; Farndish; Odell; Harrold; Carlton & Chellington. Sits on the Licensing and Planning Committees. Alison has fought against unsuitable development in our countryside and is keen to preserve rural way of life in the North Beds villages

**Dame Barbara Young** (Baroness Young of Old Scone) Member of the House of Lords with special interests in the environment, agriculture, natural resources and climate change. Former Chancellor of Cranfield University. Voluntary positions include President of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust

**Welcome & apologies for absence (AQ)** AQ welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies received: Joanna Livingstone, Jenny McAteer. Steve Livesley & Anne Marie Jones (new members)

Denis Ivins to join later in the meeting

**Review of Minutes of last Meeting and Matters Arising (AQ)** AQ thanked the team, all actions having been completed & no matters outstanding

**Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial interest for the meeting (AQ/All)** None

### **Guest Speakers Cllr Alison Field-Foster, Nina Chivers & Dame Barbara Young**

#### **'Keep North Beds Green Campaign'**

AF informed the meeting that she, NC & BY are key founder members of Keep North Beds Green Campaign, which was formed at the end of December 2017 when they became aware that Bedford Borough Council were planning 3 significant new developments in their area – Colworth, Twinwoods & Thurleigh – each site exceeding 4500 houses. The group was formed to fight against any development in their area not suitable for the country routes & rural nature of the area. Nina Chivers has been very active in spreading the message, particularly by way of social media

BY believes that North Bedfordshire is amazing, a jewel in the crown of Bedfordshire with a combination of open countryside & rural villages. Large developments in this area are totally unsuitable, there is very little infrastructure, particularly transport, but also schools & other facilities. The routes to Bedford & Northampton are already very congested at peak times. Nina has been very active, producing a website, organizing public meetings and initiating a presence on social media, making sure that local people are fully aware of what is being planned for their area. The number of houses stated in the 2014 Policy has now been radically changed by the Office of National Statistics, and the upper numbers in the Policy are no longer valid. The countryside charity CPRE have been doing some very useful work on this.

With regard to the East/West railway & the Oxford/Cambridge arc the people of North Bedfordshire are not being given a voice, & despite what is being stated (by a local organization made of businesses) it is unlikely that there will be benefits to Bedford. The route North of Bedford does not make sense, being the most expensive & technically very challenging.

AF stated that, in her opinion, the East West rail link should run South of Bedford where the routes were significantly cheaper than the £2.9bn cost of the northern route chosen. The South of Bedford route was recommended to the Planners by the former Head of Planning. It would have benefitted from the already existing road network: M1, A1, A421 and A428. There are plenty of brown field sites for large scale housing development, such as the former brickwork site and the other sites that were put forward with it during the last local plan period. These could accommodate the sorts of numbers of houses, i.e., 12,000, which is being suggested. Unfortunately, It seems that the decision regarding the East/West rail route has already been made, despite the route North of Bedford costing in excess of £2.9bn, and the route South of Bedford only £1.4-1.7bn. The route to the North will cut through & impact on villages as the trains exit Bedford somewhere North of Brickhill, Keysoe, Renhold, Wilden & Ravensden with the precise route still yet to be decided. Not only will this result in the destruction of hundreds of acre of top quality agricultural land but will destroy many of the parishes on its routes. However, there are lots of imponderables & it is a very uncertain situation

AQ/IM and NG have had meetings with Ravensden, Wilden, Great Barford, Colmworth & Clapham P.C.'s, with Jon Shortland (the Council's Chief Officer for Highways, Transport, Planning & Infrastructure) and the Mayor.

KNBG is meeting with residents, will engage them through Facebook and would be happy to meet parishes.

SE suggested the need to unite all the villages, with Facebook pages pumping information out, letting people know deadlines and which points should go into their objections.

AF said that Planners will try to tell people that letters all in the same form carry less weight, but she doesn't believe that to be correct. It is the number of objection letters received which count.

BY said that the average person trying to comment might struggle to know what to put into their objection, & it is very important to give people content for their letters.

IM has only recently commenced using Facebook, and has started a Renhold P.C. Facebook page, but it needs more work. IM This is not an area in which he has expertise and it was agreed he might ask Nina for help IM.

NG said that she was unhappy that talks with the Borough, Mayor, other professionals etc with regard to the Call for Sites and the East/West railway did not seem to be honest & open and it was difficult to know what is happening. The P.C. are only told what those people want them to hear. AF agreed that most discussions are happening behind closed doors. How can we get such meetings minuted? IM said that the P.C. keeps being told that they cannot be party to information as it is "commercially sensitive". A

Viability Study 106 was started but can no longer be afforded, and the Committee are asked to approve plans without such information.

BY said that, without that Viability Assessment, matters are not made public. Paul Jenkins of the local Planning Action Group found that a Committee of members from all 3 political parties and planners met & issued a report dated 19/7/17, but no minutes have been seen and the discussions were confidential. PN asked whether that Committee approved the East/West railway route and was told that was not the case, their report is only in relation to the Local Plan 2020. Is the North route a done deal? AF said that she personally thinks that it is. The Mayor and executives, incl Mohammad Yasin ( Labour Party politician elected in 2017 as Member of Parliament for Bedford) thought it would be of benefit to Bedford, but if trains don't stop along the route there is no benefit to any other area apart from Bedford. The views of other Parties, mainly Conservative, were not taken into consideration. The economic benefit of connecting Oxford to Cambridge would be to Bedford with people wishing to live there, but if the development is in the North Bedfordshire area it would purely disadvantage that area, with the destruction of huge swathes of agricultural land & villages. AF personally feels that the rural areas of North Bedfordshire are not as respected as other areas of Bedford.

BY said that the Mayor is very excited by the railway arc and the benefits to Bedford, but there is no point if all that is achieved is development along the rail link. There is no transport infrastructure plan.

AF will talk to the Keep North Beds Green committee at their meeting on Saturday with regard to including Renhold and the other local parishes as it would be nice to broaden their reach. Bletsoe P.C. organized a communal response to the last consultation with regard to the Local Plan and got 14-16. All North Beds villages need to show a united front.

AF, NC & BY left the meeting, and AQ requested that picking their brains be highlighted as an action in these Minutes [AQ/IM](#)

### **Guest speaker Sally Chapman – the way forward and Q&A**

IM introduced Sally, informing the meeting that they met at a seminar in Wilstead where Renhold P.C. were beginning to realize the enormity of the task of creating a Neighbourhood Plan. SC was helping other Parishes & IM came away with her telephone no. & she has been invited to this meeting to talk about how she can help in the production of Renhold's Neighbourhood Plan.

SC introduced herself saying she had worked for Central Bedfordshire Council Local Planning Department, & Mid-Beds before that. She has done work with Wilstead, Riseley & Great Barford (who had a 500 house allocation). She has lots of experience and very good relationships with the Officers at Bedford Borough. SC offers a bespoke service, working with the Group to develop the Plan, with workshops, templates etc to help through the daunting process ahead. It is a good idea to allocate sites if possible, although it does lengthen the process. SC advised the Group to keep the Plan as simple & as effective as possible. Try to decide the scope of the Plan, work out the vision, objectives and policies. Encourage feedback, make it a natural process, find out what villagers want to achieve. Unfortunately with the current Covid situation meetings will need to be done via Zoom.

The structure of a plan is a good starting point. If appointed SC would come to Renhold, talk to people & get a feel for the village. The Plan would be based on evidence gathered by the Group.

At this point Denis joined the meeting.

AQ informed SC that the flyer the Group produced has galvanized opinion from all 4 parts of the village, and aims & objectives is next on our Agenda.

KH asked SC whether the Group's timescale of 2 years is realistic and was told yes, if the Plan is kept simple, & if there are the people who can give up their time to work on it. SC was informed that Cliff Andrews & Jemma McClean had spoken with the Group & Beds RCC are working on a GIP for Renhold, which they want to tie in with the Keep North Beds Green campaign. SC is known to both Cliff & Jemma. IM reminded the meeting that SC is not the only one doing this type of work, but we have met SC & are aware of work she has done on other NPs.

PN, who feels SC has a lot to offer the Group, said that Renhold is unique. Its close proximity to Bedford & 3 sizeable housing estates all having a boundary with Bedford, raises a few difficulties.

KR said that the crux of any NP is housing, & the assistance of SC, with her local experience, would be a great advantage.

SC receives regular updates from Simon Gallagher, Director of Planning at Bedford Borough. A NP is flexible, it can be changed at a later date. Allocating sites for housing would add an extra year to the timescale for the NP, with lots of process & consultation to go through.

SE informed the meeting that she has worked alongside SC for a long time and highly recommends her.

JR asked what the likely costs of employing SC would be, and was informed that KH had this in hand.

AQ asked the Group whether they wished to appoint SC, and requested a show of hands. The vote was unanimous and SC was appointed.

Every piece of information which the Group has to be passed to SC including survey results, copy of flyer, minutes of meetings. This information also to be given to Barbara, Nina & Alison **AQ/IM**

### **What are our objectives in preparing this Neighbourhood Plan IM/KR/All**

IM introduced KR, saying the Group very much valued her input.

A copy of the Gamlingay Neighbourhood Plan:Executive Summary had previously been hand delivered to all members of the Group.

KR asked the meeting to look at pages 4&5 of the Summary which identifies the vision & looks at particular objectives. Priorities for Renhold will be different. Gamlingay engaged residents to find out what they wanted to get out of the Plan, and they formed 3 main groups. 1) Employment, Industry & Business. 2) Housing. 3) Community facilities, environment & transport. People who wanted to lead these groups were appointed & brainstorming took place to work out how they were going to form their views.

KR asked members of the Group to give their reasons for joining the group, and all 12 gave a very brief account. These included future housing being in keeping with the village, small developments rather than large & in the best location, housing aimed at both first time buyers & those looking for retirement properties, fewer very big houses on large plots, sensible infilling, traffic calming, protecting the village atmosphere, the peace & quiet of the natural environment, protecting green spaces, preserving the local community, community spirit, preserving the identity of the village of Renhold and not allowing it to become a part of Bedford. There are some beautiful views & scenery in Renhold which should be protected. Ensuring that opinions in Renhold are heard so that the village is 'driving the train rather than being a passenger on it'.

KR was asked how she obtained the aerial photo of Gamlingay, and she offered to put RNPWG in touch with her friend who has his own plane who took the photo. **IM/AQ**

AQ informed the meeting that the P.C. are currently successfully turning down applications for individual housing developments, this is important because if one were to be passed it would set a precedent for

the others. With regard to the forthcoming Public Enquiry, using highways as a reason for 400 houses not to be built has been abandoned by the Borough Highway Officers, and very careful thought is needed to be put to counter this and any future large-scale housing application. Everyone in the village needs to be part of the engagement in consultations whenever the opportunity arises.

KR went on to say that asking for no development is unrealistic, housing needs have to be considered & then how Renhold wishes to deal with those needs in their Plan, it cannot be stopped but it can be directed. Gamlingay put business & industrial development & support of existing businesses in their plan. Renhold's GIP will be very high priority. Large developments will have a huge detrimental nature to our environment. KR suggested trying to map what Renhold has already and to start mapping the GI. Pin down what the character of Renhold is, i.e., hedges (hedgerows are key in Renhold), walls, settlement gaps. What is missing? What is important & where it is? Where people want to walk. Record the character of the village & what special physical characteristics the village wants to preserve. IM thanked KR for her very helpful input

### **Update on funding from 'Locality'**

#### **Update on funding from Parish Council & spend so far IM/KH**

IM/KH/AQ completed the eligibility form followed by an enormous form which was initially rejected as being not quite correct. With the help of SC this was resubmitted & the application approved in principle, but there is still another stage to go through. KH said that the P.C. has so far covered the costs of this application, the two fliers & ongoing items such as stationery & printing by way of a **Locality Grant** of £1k. The cost of the first lot of printing was £196 and a small discount was negotiated bringing the cost of the second lot of printing down to £189. AQ asked **JR** to write to JCB printers to thank them for such high quality work. **AQ** to furnish JR with details. IM clarified that the PC have not actually handed over money, but have ring-fenced £1k to the NP, to be released upon the presentation of invoices. When it is received by the P.C, the money from Locality will also be held by the P.C. as a ring-fenced amount, due to the RNPWG not being constituted to hold funds. KH will be the treasurer, keeping records, but will not actually handle any money. RNPWG can apply for a Ward Fund & this is on the list to be done as soon as a specific project has been identified so that any money is received before the Election in May 2021

**AQ/IM/KH**

#### **Feedback from flier (Call for Sites) & next steps IM/PN**

PN produced the mapping for the Call for Sites on the flyer, and NG produced the plan & statements relating to the East/West railway on the reverse. Bedford Borough have suggested that if information, maps & plans are required that they should be requested officially as some which are available to view are subject to copyright. The Borough are using a new mapping programme which allows people to access an unprecedented amount of information, although some documents will not be disclosed as they will be covered by GDPR. Cranbourne Gardens has its own Facebook page which received a lot of reaction which included 'why didn't someone tell me?' for which there should be little sympathy as the information has been readily available. Unfortunately comments on that Facebook page related only to Cranbourne Gardens itself, not the whole of the village & all comments were about the potential 300 houses behind the estate and the detrimental impact to the pigs.

KH said this proved his previous comments that a large number of residents take no notice unless something directly affects them. The flyer has galvanised people into a reaction with both the Call for

Sites & the East/West railway, & there will hopefully now be more support. AQ thanked PN for his very successful work

### **Feedback from flier (East/West Rail) and next steps IM/NG**

NG reported that the shock value of the flyer had achieved the right effect. Communication with East West Rail and the Borough officers has not been transparent or open, but a gentleman, Jordi Beascochea, from East/West Railway has been helpful. Jordi realizes that there is a lack of transparency & full disclosure of the issues -particularly around benefits and disbenefits to the North Beds villages . Talks were taking place with other Parish Councils: Ravensden, Wilden, Clapham, Great Barford and Colmworth, as a united approach is the best and strongest way forward.

AQ reported that at a recent Town & Parish Council meeting it was stated that two potential routes would be announced in January along route E North of Bedford, and public consultation would follow. The RNPWG must do what they can to persuade residents to fully engage with this process. A single route will be announced in October 2021, construction will begin in 2025 and trains will run from 2030. There is an East/West presentation on 11<sup>th</sup> February for members of the Town and Parish Council network. This being a democracy we need to make sure that Renhold is taken into consideration and NG, IM and AQ plan to be at that meeting.

KR said NP Regulation 14 shows that there will be 20k-30k houses at Tempsford & another new settlement closer to Cambridge – these will help to pay for the Railway. Considering the response it is expected that people will want to access Tempsford Station not just for housing, but for business too. AQ thanked NG for her good work

### **Feedback from Initial Questionnaire & next steps IM/KH/TP**

IM thanked TP for the fantastic analysis of the results, and KH for making it easy for people to respond by putting mini post boxes with a laminated poster on the front at the Polhill Arms, the Church, the Post Office, the notice board at The Spires and outside the Pavillion at Aspires. The one at the school, which was expected to be popular, only received one response. 150 people have now responded (some responses are still coming in & are being added to the analysis). The post boxes have been saved for future use. TP was pleased that the Questionnaire engaged the community from all parts of the village, and a summary was sent to IM for inclusion in the NP page of the P.C. website, with a shorter summary for the Village Magazine which highlighted many things and showed people where the process is going. AQ took relevant parts of the feedback to the P.C. and these are being acted upon. The P.C. already had 200 tulip bulbs and following the feedback purchased 2000 daffodil bulbs. NG was thanked for organizing the planting of these in the verges of Renhold. Letters were hand delivered to appropriate residents by the Borough Council informing that they had 14 days to cut their front hedges back from the footpath, and this has had a good result, particularly in Green End and Top End. A community litter pick is being organized for 9<sup>th</sup> January from 10-12 in 5 village locations, with the Head Mistress of Renhold School asking for support from parents and pupils. It is hoped that members of RNPWG will also volunteer. AQ also thanked TP & KH

### **Project Plan IM**

AW, who for personal reasons has since resigned from RNPWG, had agreed to write the Plan. Alan did produce a Plan which had the makings of what was required, but was felt to be a little too inflexible, so a new Plan needs to be developed. IM offered to draw up a Plan within the next couple of weeks for discussion by the Group. However, SE, who has experience & knowledge of Project Plans said she would be happy to do this for the Group, & her kind offer was immediately accepted. SE will need to know

exactly what the Group wish to have in the Plan and she will then include this in the design AQ/IM/KH. Quite of lot of the work done by AW already will be very useful, and this is to be passed to SE AQ/IM/KH, and a Zoom meeting with her arranged which all are welcome to join AQ/IM/KH/ALL

#### **GDPR considerations & sharing contact details IM**

IM has produced a table of all information given by the members of the group so far, i.e., names, telephone numbers, email addresses, specialism/skills, and feels it would be useful if this information could be shared within the Group. In order to do this IM needs to be given specific, written, permission by each individual. Anyone who agrees access to this list must never share any of the information with anyone or any organization outside RNPWG. The previous request for such written authority went to nearly 30 people, and only 6 responses were received, so information is still being sent out by blind copy. KH said basically we are talking about 'express consent to hold information on a computer record which may be revealed to other members of RNPWG'. JR suggested that the current method of sending by way of bcc was a very dangerous way for people such as herself who busy & are not particularly good at I.T. The repercussions of revealing people's personal details to others against their wishes can be unpleasant, so she would like to see one email address which sends out to all members of the Group. The original consent request to be re-issued IM

#### **Renhold NPWG website & Facebook Page IM**

For reasons of cost BBC no longer assist PC's with producing a website, and so IM, taking information from the original, produced a very simple new website for the P.C. with a section for RNPWG. This is open to the Public and shows Agendas, Minutes, etc. IM does not feel that it is "pretty" & has come to realize that it is not terribly user friendly. IM is wondering where the Group goes with its on-line presence, particularly Facebook of which he does not have experience. Can anyone in the Group help? AQ agrees that there would be much more exposure locally with a Facebook presence. KR suggested that IM contact her colleague at [clerk@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@gamlingay-pc.gov.uk) who she feels sure will be pleased to help. SE said that the Facebook page "Don't let Dunstable Die" is a very good example of how well it can work. It is where all the press go to get information for TV & media. It is high profile, fierce & proactive. SE suggested it might be worth making contact to ask if a representative would come to one of the Group's meetings IM/AQ KH asked whether a professional should be paid to produce a website. KR said following recent legislation with regard to P.C.'s websites being fully accessible she had made enquiries & the cost is in the region of £2k. AQ & IM have previously discussed this, but felt that as the RNPWG is a reasonably temporary organization it is better just to have a section in the main P.C. website. A request for help with designing & setting up a Facebook page to be put into the Village Magazine in the hope that we have some expertise within our own village IM

#### **Volunteer needed to produce regular & comprehensive Progress & Financial Reports to the Parish Council AQ**

KH said that he would be producing a Financial Report which will include a statement of facts, income & expenditure and he will be happy to send a summary of this to the P.C. on a regular basis, although the information will not be changing regularly KH. He suggested that the Minutes of the Meetings be sent as a Progress Report. It was agreed to go through the Minutes & make a short Report based on bullet points from the Minutes, and KH agreed to do this

**AOB & general discussion on progress to date & ideas for the future** ALL

Following some mention of Future Proofing the Plan, AQ, who knows the receptionist at Mark Rutherford School, left Questionnaires there for pupils to complete. 14 responses were received. For reasons unknown these were all from the older part of the village. This outcome was very encouraging & there is possibly the makings of a Youth Forum, particularly if responses could be gained from some young people on the 3 new estates AQ

AQ reported that Gerry Sansom (Chair of) from CPRE had been very helpful with regard to the application to build 400 houses and it may be possible to persuade him to speak at the next meeting of RNPWG. AQ AQ said that one of the benefits of the RNPWG had been the introduction to CD & SE and she thanked them for their invaluable help with regard to the ongoing Salph End 400 application

NG said that with regard to what is to be done next the meeting needs to be thinking about a response to the announcement which is to be made in January with regard to the East/West railway, and this should go onto the next Agenda AQ

Also to go onto the Agenda a section for brainstorming visions, objectives etc. AQ

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

**Date of next meeting and close** AQ

AQ thanked everyone for their efforts and time

NG reported that timing the meeting seemed to work, with this meeting closing approx 3 minutes ahead of schedule, at 8.37pm

Next meeting to be arranged to suit Sally Chapman & she will be asked if either Thursdays 10<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> December are convenient AQ/IM

When date has been agreed, organize Zoom meeting, email invitations, agenda, etc). IM/AQ