

## Minutes of Sixth Virtual Meeting of Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 7.00pm

N.B. – To save space, Actions to be taken are highlighted in Turquoise

### **Present: -**

Amanda Quince (Chair), Ian McIver (I.T), Keith Herkes (Treasurer), Jooles Roberts (Minutes Sec). Claudia Dietz, Nicky Gribble, Dennis Ivins, Sarah Mitchell-Wood, Peter Norris, Tony Ploszajski and Kirstin Rayner.

**Specialist Planning Consultant:** Sally Chapman, Chapman Planning.

**Guest:** Gerry Sansom, Chair of Beds CPRE

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

**Apologies received:** Sandra Einon. Paul Sawford to join the meeting later.

### **2. Review of Minutes of last Meeting and Matters Arising (AQ)**

AQ thanked the team for all they have done since the last meeting.

Matters arising: All actions are underway &/or covered later on the Agenda of this meeting.

**3. Introduction of new team member** Sarah Mitchell-Wood, who attended the previous meeting but whose camera was not working, was warmly welcomed now that she could be seen by other members.

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

Brief discussion took place with regard to the draft of the second flyer which is to be distributed, to be continued at Agenda Item 7.

**5. Guest speaker Gerry Sansom**, Chair of CPRE (the countryside charity) & a Parish Councillor for Oakley. CPRE Bedfordshire is a Bedford based environmental charity the objectives of which are the protection of the Bedfordshire countryside and urban green spaces. CPRE Bedfordshire also run workshops on Neighbourhood Planning. Mr Sansom was introduced by AQ. CPRE supported Renhold in their opposition to the 400 houses at Salph End, and for that support we are very grateful.

Gerry gave a short Powerpoint presentation to explain who CPRE are and what they do, and to offer some “top tips” on Neighbourhood Planning to the Group. In brief, CPRE exists to protect, enhance, support & promote the Bedfordshire countryside. At the moment, the climate emergency and the crisis of biodiversity loss are at the forefront of everything they do. There is a branch of CPRE, which was founded in 1926, in every county, with the Bedford branch opening 35 years ago. CPRE Bedfordshire is funded purely by Bedfordshire members & local fund raising & is staffed mainly by volunteers, with the manager Louise Wright working 2 days a week and a part time social media person. CPRE Bedfordshire works together with local people & town & parish councils in an effort to protect the environment. GS was informed by AQ that Renhold P.C. are CPRE members & receive the CPRE magazine. GS will ensure that RPC are put onto the list to also receive the CPRE’s other magazine called Field Work.

More information about CPRE Bedfordshire can be found by going to their website here: [www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk)

GS advised that a Neighbourhood Plan allows a community to have more control over what happens in their area. A NP can’t object to all development and must comply with the number of houses stated in the Local Plan, but it can determine where such developments will be built, what type, i.e. social housing, shared ownership, and what design. It can also protect important open green spaces. Unlike the Village Plans, where it was entirely up to Planning Officers & the LA whether they took these into consideration, a NP becomes a Statutory Document. So far, all Appeals by developers in Bedford Borough against a NDP have been refused, and Planning Inspectors are taking Neighbourhood Plans very seriously. The LA is obliged to support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan and BBC are very helpful. Sonia Gallagher is the contact at Bedford Borough Council.

Gerry briefly spoke about funding which, as the Group know, is available from Locality with a £10k grant and more if needed to look at technical issues, i.e. for Planning Consultants. The NP ensures that 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (which is based on the sq meterage of homes built) goes to be spent on the local community, so it is a good idea to express what it is felt is needed. This can be spent over a 5 year period.

CPRE are hoping to hold a Neighbourhood Planning workshop this year possibly in August depending on COVID restrictions with a further course later in the year depending on demand.

AQ thanked GS and opened a Q&A.

KR asked whether Oakley used an independent organization to allocate sites for their NP &, if so, who did they use?

GS will email the information across. He advised using someone out of the area, making it obvious they have no bias.

The Group were ALL offered the chance to email any questions to AQ, who would forward them to GS next day.

SC introduced herself to GS as Renhold's Planning Consultant, and informed the Group that Locality are able to appoint & fund AECOM to do an "independent site assessment to enable the Neighbourhood Plan Group and PC to decide on sites

AQ informed everyone that as well as the application for 400 houses, already another 3 developers have approached RPC with regard to the Call for Sites.

AQ to send the Minutes of this meeting to GS in order that he is kept informed of the discussion with regard to GAP Policy

## **6. GAP Policy** CD AQ thanked CD for her work on this.

CD opened by saying that there appears to be a strong community view about future-proofing against development proposals similar to that recently seen to the west of Hookhams Lane/Salph End, which is closely located to the urban edge of Bedford. So coalescence is also a big issue. Some parts of the village that abut the urban edge of Bedford are protected already under Allocations and Designations Local Plan (July 2013) Policy AD42 which deals with Local Gaps - these parts include the eastern side of Salph End, Church End, Green End). This policy seeks to prevent coalescence between nearby rural settlements, particularly with the urban area. The policy details are shown in Document 1 attached. The RNPWG are therefore now looking to introduce a further local gap on the western side of Salph End. Some of the justification for this being coalescence, loss of openness, views, identity & character, which were the reasoning for designating the existing local gaps in Renhold. A Local Gap Designation can be done through a Local Plan but also through the Neighbourhood Plan process and the intention would be to work with the officers at BBC and ask them whether they would look at this issue, to introduce the ideas and aspirations of RNPWG and to ask them what support they could provide, and what evidence is required in order to support this Local Gap Policy.

KR said she thought this was an excellent idea which would definitely strengthen the NP. However, she suggested caution with regard to what sorts of evidence is required. Establish where similar developments could & would go, but keeping separate units with gaps. AQ said it would be very important to retain and not lessen the gaps between the Ends. With regard to Salph End, the PC have a meeting arranged with Jon Shortland about future proofing, safeguarding Salph End & closer liaison regarding traffic data, & AQ suggested speaking to BBC NP advisors after that meeting has taken place. Having looked at the maps on the document here attached PN questioned the indicative arrow marked in pink - whether the view might be taken that a gap between nowhere & nowhere can be protected? PN & CD to liaise on fine-tuning a draft map for further discussion.

SC told the meeting that this is a common approach, but it would be important to ensure that it is not taken too far. Gaps on Local Plans are between built up areas & urban villages. The key point is evidence & need, & SC was informed that these are separate documents which CD is currently working on, and will show background information & the process from which the evidence has been established. KR reminded everyone that the pictures from the helicopter will help, as a visual to show the gaps. If PN & CD feel that they need any help KR said she would be willing to join that sub-group. CD to send the documents she produced to be attached to the Minutes by JR. A Design Code to be created after the Housing Needs Analysis.

## **7. Update – GI Flyer (IM)**

Survey\_JR was asked to explain the concerns she had expressed by email to AQ, IM & KH with regard to Questions 4 & 5 to the meeting, and she read the relevant parts of her email out. It was agreed that in Question 4 the word "surface" be changed to "condition", & KR suggested changing the last part of the question to read "full accessibility". JR had concerns about the legality of some of Question 5 and NG supported the wish that it be removed. NG asked that the words footpaths etc. be altered to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) & JR suggested perhaps adding the question "How often do you use/intend to use the PRoW" but after some discussion, that idea was rejected. Question 3, KR was thanked for her idea to direct people to a map with the different areas clearly numbered so that they may clearly annotate where they mean, rather than trying to describe it. SMW suggested the addition of a question asking whether people know of any PRoW which should be marked which currently are not. JR queried Question 7, as some land which might be made accessible is currently private land,

& KR explained that this would be more likely to apply for consideration during future development. TP suggested truncating Question 2 & it was decided that it was irrelevant & would be removed.

**Front page** DI queried whether there could be confusion between the wording Renhold in some places and Renhold Parish in others, and was informed by AQ that the new ward boundaries would clarify this issue. NG expressed concern that the current Covid lockdown might make it difficult to use the leaflet collection boxes, particularly as the school is not being used to full capacity. KH said there were only 1 or 2 survey forms put into the box at the school, which was surprising, and AQ will ask the Head Teacher to put the Questionnaire as the strap-line on the school's rolling banner header on their website. Offering to collect questionnaires from people's home could cause a Covid risk, and it was agreed that hopefully most people will complete the form on line.

IM to circulate the amended flyer/questionnaire for feedback as this needs to be finalised by 17<sup>th</sup> to be sent to the printer on the 18<sup>th</sup>. As last time, the paper will used will be the good quality 160gsm and print will be in colour .

Paul Sawford joined the meeting at this point

**8. Update – Vision AQ** Feedback had been received from SE, who felt that SC's version was more poetic & ideal than that proposed by RNPWG, and KR said it was a good first effort but too long. When more information has been gleaned from the surveys it can be worded more tightly, & felt that the comments about housing could be phrased in a slightly more positive way. AQ agreed with PN that initially a draft version could be put on the PC website. SC said this will be refined as things proceed & things change. For now the objective was to check that nothing had been missed, and ALL were asked to look again, bearing in mind heritage, listed buildings, heritage sites, ridge & furrow (AQ to speak with Julian Polhill) – some detail can possibly be taken from the East/West Rail documents. SC suggested the importance of listing not just those buildings/sites which are already preserved, but others which are valuable in terms of local importance, features on the ground as well. The plaque commemorating Cecil Polhill bringing water into the village is a good example of a non-designated heritage asset.

#### **9. Preparation for next meeting with Beds RCC re GI Plan & survey, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

Cliff Andrews will need approx 1-1.5 hours, depending how many people join in the meeting. AQ asked whether there might be time to look at the Housing Needs Assessment during this meeting, as funding, which expires in March, has already been applied for. This is not a problem as the money can be returned & reapplied for in next year's allocation, but IM reminded everyone that this is needed as soon as possible in relation to the application for 400 houses and the approaches from 3 more developers, all of whom have referred to the NP and want to work with it. KR said the presentation earlier suggested that getting an assessment for Call for Sites is very important to be in control, & getting an independent view as to which sites are more sensible & more feasible is the best way forward. AECOM would carry out the assessment foc through Locality. Data will be needed to state how many houses, all agreed small scale is more appropriate, & Housing Needs Survey will define this. Housing Needs Assessment to be deferred while an assessment of the allocated additional sites is carried out. SC said grant application closes 29<sup>th</sup> Jan, opening again in April. If it is going to be done, it is possible that the technical package for allocation of sites is available now. Appointing AECOM to prepare this for RNP involves a lot of work. Summary: The plan, flyer and questionnaire will all have been delivered to every household well before 4<sup>th</sup> February, & if there is time at the end of the meeting on the 4th it will be used to look at identifying sites determining whether or not the RNPWG wish to accept new housing as part of the NP.

**10. Update – Website** (IM/KH) KH was disappointed that he did not have better news to pass on. The objective had been to have the website up & running asap to engage with the community. The timescale has now changed. The grant office was closed before Christmas, opening in January, but somehow the application submitted on-line by IM was never picked up at their end. The only way to progress the matter now that a grant is not available is with the PC progressing the matter to obtain a brand new website with RNP having a page or section. Lots of research was carried out & quotes/specs obtained from 5 companies, which were produced to the PC at their last meeting. General set up costs ranged from £999 to £3895. One of the quotes was for the set up, but all updates - would need to be done by the PC clerk or a volunteer, and this was not at all ideal. The basic set up costs of three of the providers were in the £700 to £900 range to which for two of them would be added all the various maintenance costs and add-ons to provide a fully managed website. The third of these offered a basic set-up only without management of social media. The remaining two quotes were between £2995 and £3895 for a fully managed site. The website will not now be produced for a couple of months as it is now for the PC to decide, and their next meeting is not until 11<sup>th</sup> February. KH still favours Bays Media, who designed the websites for

Ravensden NP and Oakley PC. **IM** to circulate the list of websites produced from those who have offered quotations & comments, **ALL** are requested by cop on Monday January 25<sup>th</sup>. NG enquired whether a Ward Fund could be applied for to pay for a website & was told that the Ward Fund applications would not reopen until April.

**11.Update – East/West rail NG** NG thanked PN for his mapping skills and his engagement with E/W Rail in the face of adversity – answers can never be obtained. NG continued that the PC Clerk, Lizzie, has been proactive & has had a preliminary phone call with Jon Shortland prior to a PC meeting with him next week, after which the feedback will be discussed. E/W Rail are due to publish the preferred route alignment shortly and there will be a 12 week Public Consultation in March. All Parishes will receive a leaflet.

No feedback has yet been received from the Secretary of State via our Member of Parliament. Bernie (PC Chair for Ravensden) has chased that up. It seems that E/W Rail are just stringing us along & will continue with their timeline regardless of what anyone says. Lizzie has given NG/PN the contact details for the people at E/W Rail. NG apologized that unfortunately there is nothing major to report. If anyone is interested a link is available to 5/6 Peleton presentations spread over 4-5 days which is just engagement.

See: [SPOTLIGHT - East West Main Line - 1403498 \(webcasts.com\)](#)

N.B. Please **ALL** read the very insightful article on page 7 of the CPRE Newsletter (attached to the email)

**A.O.B.** None

**Dates of next RNPWG meetings: Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February and 11<sup>th</sup> March at 7pm**

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.