**RENHOLD PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

**INITIAL REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES**

**Introduction**

1. This paper summarises the responses to the initial questionnaire circulated to all households in the parish for the Renhold Parish Neighbourhood Plan.
2. The questionnaire was disseminated by hand in hard copy form to all 1,375 households in Renhold, in the week commencing 14th September, with a response date of 5th October. The following options were available for returning the survey:
3. Returning the completed form via colleting boxes located at nine locations in the village.
4. Scanning the completed form and e-mailing it to the dedicated Renhold Neighbourhood Plan e-mail address.
5. Downloading a survey form from the Parish Council website and e-mailing the completed document to the dedicated Renhold Neighbourhood Plan e-mail address.
6. Posting the completed form through the mail.
7. Completing the form and then phoning a given phone number to arrange collection.

**Overview of responses**

1. In total, 133 completed forms were returned. The distribution of respondents by area of the parish were as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Area | ***No. Respondents*** | ***% Respondents*** |
| Water End | 2 | 1.5% |
| Green End | 19 | 14.5% |
| Top End | 16 | 12.3% |
| Church End | 18 | 13.7% |
| Salph End | 45 | 34.4% |
| The Spires | 5 | 3.8% |
| Aspire | 13 | 9.9% |
| Cranbourne Gardens | 13 | 9.9% |
| ***TOTALS*** | ***131*** | ***100.0%*** |

1. ***Assessment:*** Responses were received from all parts of the parish, with 23.7% of respondents from the ‘new’ estates. The relatively high response rate from Salph End reflects in part the large number of dwellings in that part of the parish but may also have been prompted by concerns over the on-going housing development proposals in the vicinity.

**Positive aspects of living in Renhold**

1. Respondents were asked to list up to three positive aspects of living in Renhold. The responses can be categorised as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect | ***No. Respondents*** |
| Friendly neighbourhood/community feel/community spirit | 61 |
| Access to the countryside/footpath network | 61 |
| Village atmosphere/identity | 57 |
| Countryside/open space | 57 |
| Peace/quiet/tranquillity | 37 |
| Close to amenities in Bedford | 36 |
| Local shop/post office | 24 |
| Dark skies policy | 15 |
| Major transport route accessibility | 15 |
| Wildlife | 14 |
| Village pub | 13 |
| A good school | 11 |
| Parish magazine | 7 |
| Clean/tidy | 6 |
| Parish Council | 6 |
| A good church | 5 |
| Attractive housing | 5 |
| Close to amenities in the village | 4 |
| Feel safe and secure | 4 |
| Availability/quality of groups in the village | 3 |
| Not over-populated | 2 |
| Individual character of the ‘Ends’ | 2 |
| Family-oriented area | 2 |
| Bus service | 2 |
| Children’s play areas | 2 |
| Neighbourhood Plan | 1 |
| Rural/urban blend | 1 |
| Hearing church bells | 1 |
| New estates face Bedford and don’t put traffic onto village roads | 1 |
| Close to work | 1 |
| Well-controlled traffic speeds | 1 |
| Working farms | 1 |
| No rowdy teenage gatherings | 1 |
| Adequate road system | 1 |
| Sports field and pavilion | 1 |
| Village Hall | 1 |

1. ***Assessment:*** There is quite a strong sense of commonality in people’s views on the merits of Renhold:
2. The natural environment and access to the countryside is mentioned frequently, highlighting the need for the Neighbourhood Plan to include measures to protect and enhance the countryside around the village.
3. It is heartening that community spirit and good neighbours are cited so frequently.
4. Maintaining a village identity by protecting against coalescent development with Bedford would meet another identified priority, although we will need to acknowledge that the proximity of facilities and services in Bedford is valued by many respondents.
5. Protecting local amenities like the post office/shop and the pub is supported.
6. One respondent came up with a very concise summary of all that’s good about Renhold - ‘Community, Countryside, Connectedness’.

**Negative aspects of living in Renhold**

1. Respondents were asked to list up to three things that they do not like about living in Renhold. The responses can be categorised as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect | ***No. Respondents*** |
| Too much traffic/traffic noise | 59 |
| Constant threat of housing developments | 55 |
| Speeding traffic | 29 |
| Inappropriate location of the village school/school parking | 24 |
| Poor condition road surfaces and footpaths | 23 |
| Verge parking (mostly Hookham’s Lane) | 16 |
| Litter/dumped waste | 13 |
| Inadequate grass cutting/tree/hedge maintenance | 10 |
| Narrow/poor footpaths | 8 |
| Boundaries between Renhold and Bedford being eroded | 8 |
| Divide between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ parts of the village | 7 |
| Dog waste | 6 |
| Limited police resources/presence to enforce traffic restrictions | 6 |
| Poor broadband speeds | 6 |
| No street lighting | 6 |
| No shop within walking distance (Green End/Aspire) | 6 |
| Threat of the East-West rail project | 4 |
| Road noise/pollution from the A421 | 4 |
| Neglected drainage (brooks and drains) | 4 |
| No decent shop/another local shop | 4 |
| Restrictive letting/activities of village hall facilities | 3 |
| Lack of local facilities/services | 3 |
| Not enough parking (Aspire) | 3 |
| No heart/no sense of community | 3 |
| Nothing disliked | 3 |
| Poor mobile phone signal | 3 |
| Lack of village/community events  | 3 |
| Lack of usable sport/play facilities | 3 |
| Drug dealing/nuisance properties/crime/anti-social behaviour | 3 |
| Streetlights spoiling the dark skies policy | 3 |
| Lack of a local pub (Cranbourne Gardens/Green End) | 3 |
| Obstructed footpaths/access to walks | 2 |
| Losing the village identity | 2 |
| Divisive TRO restrictions | 2 |
| ***Aspect*** | ***No. Respondents*** |
| No park for children | 2 |
| Too much road furniture/signage | 2 |
| The new estates | 2 |
| Not enough young people | 2 |
| Unauthorised traveller incursions | 2 |
| Aspire Estate not under Borough Council control | 2 |
| Untidy gardens | 2 |
| Speed cameras | 2 |
| Lack of gas supply availability (Ravensden Road) | 1 |
| Nowhere to socialise | 1 |
| Noise | 1 |
| Visual impact of Hookham’s Lane phone masts | 1 |
| Lack of public transport | 1 |
| No rural walks for mobility scooters | 1 |
| No continuous footpath from Post Office to Church Lane shops | 1 |
| Proximity to industrial area (Cranbourne Gardens) | 1 |
| No post box (Aspire) | 1 |
| Threat of crime | 1 |
| Loss of trees/hedges | 1 |
| Loss of amenities | 1 |
| Loss of ‘The Three Horseshoes’ pub | 1 |
| Insufficient bus stops | 1 |
| Bus route takes too long to get to Bedford | 1 |
| Lack of a bus shelter at Cranbourne Gardens | 1 |
| Lack of priority for traffic restrictions on Hookham’s Lane | 1 |
| Quarrelsome factions in some parts of the village | 1 |
| Ugly house conversions | 1 |
| Shop opening hours | 1 |
| Lack of an identifiable centre or village green | 1 |
| Unattractive fields between Church End and the ‘new’ estates | 1 |
| Opposition to change by some sections of the community  | 1 |
| Feeling more aligned to Goldington than Renhold (Aspire) | 1 |
| Noisy neighbours | 1 |

1. ***Assessment:*** There are more divergent views on negative aspects of living in Renhold than positive aspects:
2. Traffic features highly, both volume, speed and noise and is integral to other concerns relating to vehicle parking.
3. The threat of inappropriate housing development is the second-most frequently cited issue, although the East-West rail link was only specifically mentioned in four responses - there may be an awareness raising task, or perhaps people in some parts of the parish don’t think that it will affect them.
4. Some responses are directly at odds with each other (e.g. ‘divisive TRO versus ‘lack of enforcement of TRO’ and others are at odds with views on the positive aspects of living in Renhold (e.g. 61 respondents cite ‘good community spirit’, whilst 3 perceive there to be ‘no sense of community and 15 like the dark skies policy whilst 6 want more street lights).
5. Perceptions of travel time catchments are informative. Several people identify the need for an additional shop/pub/bus stop/post box, despite the fact that all of these are already available somewhere in the village. If you are elderly, disabled or without a car, accessibility to facilities and services has different implications.
6. Many of the more ‘minority’ opinions shared relate 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.

**The future evolution of Renhold**

1. Respondents were asked how they would like to see Renhold evolve over the next 10 years. The responses can be categorised as follows. Those issues that are permissible to include within the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan process are highlighted in blue below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect | ***No. Respondents*** |
| Small-scale housing development in appropriate places/small infills | 46 |
| Maintain the rural/village character | 39 |
| Preserve the parish as it is/no more housing | 19 |
| Deter through traffic/traffic calming | 15 |
| Preservation/enhancement of countryside/habitats | 14 |
| Activities to bring the village together/community facilities | 13 |
| Upgrade footpaths and bridleways to encourage non-vehicular travel | 12 |
| Keep a separation between Bedford and Renhold | 11 |
| Improved road surfaces | 9 |
| Community cohesion/spirit/‘One Renhold’ approach | 9 |
| More affordable housing | 8 |
| Relocate/enlarge the school | 7 |
| Provide an off-road school car park | 6 |
| More facilities/activities for children | 6 |
| Ban on footpath parking | 5 |
| Improve sports facilities, including a MUGA at Cranbourne Gardens | 5 |
| Preservation of the shop/post office/existing amenities | 4 |
| Explore renewable energy opportunities | 4 |
| Improved infrastructure | 4 |
| More cohesion between ‘old’ and ‘new’ parts of the village | 4 |
| Community-run/additional village shop | 3 |
| Control litter | 3 |
| Agree maximum permissible housing numbers | 3 |
| Improved pedestrian safety | 3 |
| Design standards for new housing | 3 |
| Another pub/cafe | 3 |
| Proactive approach to issues including East-West Rail | 2 |
| Provide a local GP service | 2 |
| Install high-speed internet | 2 |
| ***Aspect*** | ***No. Respondents*** |
| Social hub/community centre | 2 |
| More police patrols | 2 |
| More recycling facilities | 2 |
| Provide land for allotments | 1 |
| Neighbourhood Watch | 1 |
| Lights and a crossing on Norse Road | 1 |
| Remove traffic restrictions | 1 |
| Provide a crossing by the Post Office | 1 |
| Enforcement of dark skies policy | 1 |
| Removal of unnecessary street furniture | 1 |
| Preserve the village ‘Ends’ | 1 |
| Street lighting | 1 |
| Develop a better relationship with the Borough Council | 1 |
| Improve the village hall with play area and bar | 1 |
| Small farm holdings and art studios to attract visitors  | 1 |
| Stop travellers camping on green spaces | 1 |
| New estates have more in common with the urban area | 1 |
| Improved village entry points with wildflower planting | 1 |
| Coherent strategy re. the Water End commercial land designations | 1 |
| Better watercourse management to deter flooding | 1 |
| Less boring, more life | 1 |
| Slowly | 1 |

1. ***Assessment:*** Not surprisingly, many respondents reflected their views on the positive and negative aspects of living in Renhold in their comments on how they would like to see the parish evolve:
2. More than double the number of respondents support allowing small-scale housing developments in appropriate locations in the parish, than those who want no development at all.
3. Maintaining the village identity is another identified priority.
4. Traffic calming is supported, as is encouraging non-vehicular travel with improved footpaths and pedestrian safety measures.
5. Preserving and enhancing the natural environment features in a number of responses.

**Conclusions**

1. The survey has provided a valuable initial sift of the views of the local community and will help to inform the next, more detailed survey.
2. It is encouraging that the views of respondents in the ‘old’ and ‘new’ parts of the parish are remarkably convergent, which will make it easier to produce a Neighbourhood Plan that reflects the interest and preoccupations of most residents.
3. However, the initial response rate is disappointingly low. Assuming that the parish population is around 3,400 (2011 census figure plus 38% growth to reflect the new housing since that date), 131 questionnaire returns represents only 3.9% of the total number of residents. Hopefully reporting the findings of the initial survey in the village magazine and on the Parish Council website will encourage others to engage in the process and submit their views too.
4. The issues raised that fall within the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan process are highlighted in blue above. The non-highlighted issues raised are beyond the scope of, or only tangentially linked to, the land use planning-related scope of a Neighbourhood Plan. This will need to be managed sensitively in subsequent phases of consultation, so that the initial respondents do not feel as though their views have been disregarded. Some local plans include a section on ‘other issues of importance to the local community’, so we might want to consider doing something similar.