**RENHOLD PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

**INITIAL REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES**

**Introduction**

1. This paper summarises the responses to the survey circulated to all households in the parish seeking views on the draft vision and objectives for the Renhold Parish Neighbourhood Plan.
2. The questionnaire was disseminated in hard copy form as an insert in the Renhold Village Magazine to all 1,375 households in Renhold, in the week commencing 28th March 2022, with a response date of 3rd May 2022. The following options were available for returning the survey:
3. Returning the completed form via collecting boxes located at eight locations in the village.
4. Completing an on-line version of the survey on the dedicated Neighbourhood Plan page of the Renhold Parish Council website.

**Overview of responses**

1. In total, 45 completed forms were returned, 24 in hard copy and 21 on-line.

**Views on the draft vision**

1. The draft vision is as follows:

**COUNTRYSIDE - COMMUNITY - CONNECTIVITY**

**Countryside:** ‘To preserve the distinctive character of our Parish, in particular the agricultural and parkland landscape that comprises the green gaps between the historic Ends and our newer developments, whilst also maintaining our separation from the Bedford urban area’.

**Community:** ‘To ensure that the needs and aspirations of residents of the Parish are reflected in the provision of appropriate community facilities and infrastructure that promote, sustain and enhance social cohesion’.

**Connectivity:** ‘To enhance the natural environment and biodiversity of the Parish and to amplify the benefits of this by connecting more people to nature through the creation of better, safer and more sustainable access to it’.

1. Respondents were asked whether they support the draft vision and responded as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Response*** | ***No. Respondents*** | ***% Respondents*** |
| Yes | 42 | 93.3% |
| No | 1 | 2.2% |
| Unsure | 2 | 4.5% |

1. Respondents were asked for views and suggestions on the vision and the following comments were received.
2. ***Countryside:*** Comments included:
3. ‘More wildflower planting along roadsides where possible’.
4. ‘Maintaining our separation from surrounding villages such as Ravensden should also be mentioned’.
5. ‘Agreed. It is important to distinguish rural Renhold from the Bedford urban area’.
6. ‘Important to maintain the gap between urban Bedford and rural Renhold’.
7. ‘This is extremely important’.
8. ‘I am very much in favour of policies to maintain the village and countryside feel of Renhold. I ask that all attempts to build over our parish are resisted in order to maintain the countryside feel’.
9. ‘100% support. We would hate to see the beautiful countryside and wildlife areas destroyed. We believe there should be a separation from the Bedford urban area’.
10. ‘To keep habitats for wildlife and not to destroy the countryside that we enjoy’.
11. ‘Conserve the individual ends, reinstate hedgerows, preserve trees and dark skies’.
12. ‘Keep the gap between the A4280 and Green End and keep any development small’
13. ‘Dark skies policy to be maintained throughout’.
14. ‘Suggest highlight green gaps between and green space WITHIN the parish’.
15. ‘I fully support the vision statement for the countryside. It is very important that the separation between Renhold and Bedford is maintained. We have seen Renhold being encroached upon by the Norse Road developments’.
16. ‘I am wholly in support of protecting the green gaps between all the Ends of the village and the newer and possible future developments and to preserve the green gap between the A4280 and Green End’.
17. ‘It's important to recognise and protect the integrity of Renhold village rather than allow it to become swallowed up in the ever expanding conurbation that is Bedford. People move to villages for a reason and if they wanted to live in urban areas, they would do so. Renhold is a historic and charming village and we maintain the current separation between the new estates and the village’.
18. ‘Separation between new developments and 'historic' Renhold with countryside and tree planting. Keep Renhold village separate from new developments and limit traffic. Don't destroy wildlife habitats, like badger sets in Salph End with development’.
19. ‘I would like all the rubbish that has been dumped in the brook opposite Fiona Way removed. There are shopping trolleys, bicycles and various street signs and bags of rubbish that are polluting the river and causing harm to the wildlife’.
20. The green spaces are an important part of the villages, they support an abundance of wildlife and are part of the heritage of the village. It identifies the village boundaries and activities.
21. ‘No, as I believe Renhold should accept there is a growth in population and as such should accommodate some growth in the village and allow for some developments with preference given to those with local connections. There should also be a realisation that there is a need for different housing needs from large single family homes to smaller retirement and starter homes for individuals with the parish’.
22. ***Community:*** Comments included:
23. ‘What exactly are the existing community facilities?’
24. ‘What new facilities are in the Plan?’
25. ‘Solve the problem of the village hall’.
26. ‘Agreed, but this is not made easy by the village layout and the disparity of old and new communities’.
27. ‘Encourage integration of the new estates with the original village’.
28. ‘I support moves that are focussed upon keeping Renhold as a rural community. I also support initiatives to sustain, enhance and promote cohesion between the old village and the new developments’.
29. ‘Community facilities and infrastructure should not be at the expense of compromising the green gaps and especially the separation from Bedford’.
30. To increase the size of the churchyard to allow the burial of village residents within the churchyard rather than the borough burial ground’.
31. ‘To keep local village life alive’.
32. ‘Support the village church and school’.
33. ‘Better access to the grounds of the village hall. A small children’s play area, picnic tables and a bin’.
34. ‘We agree with all of the points and would like to contribute to the growth of the village by providing a small-scale housing development, that directly meets the needs of the plan and would provide additional benefit back to the community’.
35. ‘Although the parish is well served with recreation parks for children, it would be good if there were more facilities within the parks for toddlers and babies, such as baby swings’.
36. ‘I would like to see more inclusion on the newer development sites. We feel as a whole pushed out of the Renhold plan. Like an unwanted relative’.
37. ‘This is an admirable aim but the cost of providing community facilities and infrastructure is very expensive and as Renhold is very near to Bedford most residents do have access to a wide range of facilities. It is important to preserve the facilities that we do have e.g. School, Church, Village Hall, Post Office, Pub and the services and activities that take place in them hopefully do promote social cohesion. It also is dependent upon residents supporting the facilities!’
38. ‘Better access to and use of the Village Hall for the local community’.
39. ‘I recognise the need for new housing but there are new estates are poorly designed with too much emphasis on profitability. There is barely any separation between homes and very little consideration given to parking. Most modern families nowadays have 2-3 vehicles with nowhere to park them or indeed, charge them. Green open spaces and trees are vital for the wellbeing of people and we need to maintain the excellent open spaces currently within the Parish’.
40. ‘Small scale housing development only. Zero carbon initiatives. Facilities for all ages people with disabilities. Glass recycling facility’.
41. ‘I would like to see some action taken on the cars that park on the grass verges near to the Bedford junior football club establishment at the end of Fiona Way. These cars are churning up the grass which residents have to pay to have maintained as its not yet been adopted which is unacceptable’.
42. ‘Important in providing facilities for those living in the village, to ensure the characteristic of the village remains and is protected. Any new facilities need to be considered to remain in keeping with the village’.
43. ‘It seems that Renhold could be better served by a village hub with the village hall, school and football club sharing facilities’.
44. ‘Housing - small scale development (individual houses if possible) to suit the needs of younger people finding it difficult to access the housing ladder’.
45. ***Connectivity:*** Comments included:
46. ‘Better bus or car hire service’.
47. ‘What new traffic calming measures could be found?’
48. ‘I believe that we need to enhance the knowledge of town or urban dwellers in the importance of nature and especially the need for farming, or we face running out of food’.
49. ‘We support this vision and think this is key to supporting generations to come’.
50. ‘To provide more accessibility and movement around the village, with better signage and footpaths’.
51. ‘To use every available assistance to increase access to areas that are not at present available and to promote traffic calming and wheelchair accessible footpaths’.
52. ‘To keep the village boundaries and not to allow the village to become part of Bedford town.’
53. ‘Encourage walkers/joggers/riders/cycles to say hello - often no response!’
54. ‘A footpath giving access form the village to the village hall’.
55. ‘I think all the points raised there are sensible. Perhaps inclusion of digital connectivity’.
56. ‘Parking and traffic is a huge issue around the school hours. However re-instigating the free bus would have a huge impact on the parking and traffic issues. This bus used to bring the children from the lower newer estates to the school and if it was re-implemented would surely help with the traffic issues around school drop off and pick up’.
57. ‘Replace current stiles with types which allow access for dogs’.
58. ‘I live on the Cranbourne Gardens estate and honestly, I am pleased with the current green spaces with perhaps the exception of the children's play areas, which have seen better days. Though, I imagine that because children play less outdoors nowadays for a variety of reasons. There is ample paths for pedestrians and cyclists with easy access to the river and connectivity to the other estates’.
59. ‘Conserve and enhance countryside, biodiversity and wildlife habitats including Local Green Space designation and green space improvements’.
60. ‘I would like to see traffic calming measures introduced as there are many cars that speed down the road and should a child or animal be crossing they would be hurt and possibly killed. If a 20 MPH speed limit is introduced this should be monitored so that the speeding cars can be fined’.
61. ‘Providing accessible green spaces and pathways. replacing stiles with gates to promote use of the spaces. Which in longer term will demonstrate the importance of the countryside’.
62. ‘Connectivity is not just public footpaths but also for people to bike as an example’.
63. ‘Bearing in mind that Great Barford will be building 500 houses towards Water End, a proper footpath along the St. Neots Road/ Bedford Road connecting Water End, Renhold to Great Barford would make walking and cycling a safer pursuit’.
64. ***Assessment:*** The responses to the draft vision have been assessed as follows:
65. There is a high degree of support for the vision, which reflects the fact that it was based upon the responses to an earlier community survey so it has clearly reflected the balance of community sentiment accurately.
66. Maintaining physical separation between Renhold and Bedford is supported, but also preserving the gaps between the ‘ends’ and a new perspective which is maintaining separation from neighbouring villages. The latter may have particular relevance given the proposed expansion of Great Barford..
67. Some interesting dilemmas are posed by the response to the ‘community’ theme:

* What community facilities and infrastructure specifically are being proposed?
* Have the cost implications of building and operating them been considered?
* Is there a risk of duplication of provision that is already relatively accessible in neighbouring parts of Bedford?
* How can the Neighbourhood Plan help to make the residents of the newer parts of the village feel more integrated?

1. The connectivity theme highlights a number of traffic and parking issues that are not directly within the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan, so what extent can the document help to address the expressed community concerns?
2. The issue of including digital connectivity within this theme is an excellent one, although it might sit better under the community theme, as one of the elements of community infrastructure.

**Views on the draft objectives**

1. The draft objectives are as follows:
2. ***Countryside:***

* To maintain the rural character and historic environment of the Parish.
* To preserve a separation between the Bedford urban area and Renhold to avoid coalescence.
* To protect and enhance existing views into, out from and across the Parish.

1. ***Community:***

* To protect the character of the Parish with well-integrated, small-scale housing development to meet local needs, enhanced opportunity for biodiversity and net zero carbon whilst maintaining the gap between urban Bedford and the gaps between the Ends.
* To safeguard and enhance the long term future of existing community facilities for all ages.
* To promote the provision of new facilities to address the future needs of the village.

1. ***Connectivity:***

* To conserve and enhance countryside, biodiversity and wildlife habitats including Local Green Space designation and green space improvements.
* To upgrade and extend footpaths and bridleways to provide a multi-functional Green Infrastructure network which encourages non-vehicular travel.
* To deter through traffic and develop new, alternative traffic calming measures to encourage safe and sustainable movement within the Parish.

1. Respondents were asked whether they support the draft objectives and responded as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Response*** | ***No. Respondents*** | ***% Respondents*** |
| Yes | 41 | 91.1% |
| No | 1 | 2.2% |
| Unsure | 3 | 6.7% |

1. Respondents were asked for views and suggestions on the objectives and the following comments were received.
2. ***Countryside:***
3. ‘Avoid Renhold becoming part of Bedford’.
4. ‘Provision of more litter and dog bins, e.g. church entrance by the bench, entrance to Hookham’s Lane and Wood Lane by the bench’.
5. ‘Must keep the gap between the borough and the village’.
6. ‘Much of this will be at risk if East-West Rail goes ahead’.
7. ‘We love our views and would be devastated to see them go. It was out top selling point to buying in the beautiful village of Renhold’.
8. ‘To prevent rat runs through the village and traffic calming through the village to prevent speeding and keep speeds low to discourage traffic’.
9. ‘Cowslips for the village verges. Reduce urban signage. Monitor excessive light pollution. Bright exterior lights on houses should be discouraged’.
10. ‘Suggest the addition of the word "structural" before coalescence to make clear that this is about building and not people’.
11. ‘I am wholly supportive of the objectives for the countryside’.
12. ‘There is a lot of wildlife returning to the area and we must ensure that their habitat is cleaned up and then maintained.
13. ‘Please do not forget about Cranborne Gardens area to not box in within Bedford’.
14. ‘General comment: lots of focus and explicit call out of green gaps, little explicit comment about the surrounding countryside reaching down to the Ouse which has been subject to two major roads that are growing in traffic volumes (A4280 & A421), plus a recent 3 day concert and potential proposal from hotel, etc. The only reference is to the view. What about other impact e.g. environmental?’
15. ***Community:***
16. ‘Small-scale developments could mean different things to different people and could perhaps be refined with a numerical level. Only two houses under construction behind Hookham’s Lane link Salph End to the urban school and have, to my mind, poor access onto Hookham’s Lane’.
17. ‘New facilities? Who will decide what is needed?’
18. ‘I think the aim of net zero carbon is too great, so I would remove the reference to it from the wording of the objective’.
19. ‘More community litter picks planned and advertised’.
20. ‘Totally agree. Discuss possible youth groups e.g. Scouts, Guides etc. Provide a better play area for the children’.
21. ‘A doctor’s surgery may be needed and the school may need to be enlarged’.
22. ‘No. I do not support the term of ‘small-scale housing. It is too ambiguous and in the view of some could mean housing development that could be well over 50 houses or more. I would support small-scale housing of 3-4 houses, but no more. It would be appropriate when a large house is knocked down to build 2-3 houses on that site’.
23. ‘We support this and feel that it’s important’.
24. ‘I would like more community events, quizzes, barn dances, fairs, village picnics and rounders’.
25. ‘What does small-scale housing development mean? The three houses built where the pub was is a small development but the houses built were clearly for wealthy people. We need low-cost, affordable housing for locals’.
26. ‘I don’t understand why the children of local residents cannot have use of the Bedford junior football club building?’
27. ‘Possibly new buildings or play areas where older children can play football and other sports like skateboarding without having to pay. This would keep them off the streets and give them somewhere to go to socialise and keep fit’.
28. ***Connectivity:***
29. ‘I cannot stress enough the need to limit/control traffic movements, especially if the suggested employment site at the A421 gets approval’.
30. ‘Perhaps road bumps, though unpopular with some, would prove very effective’.
31. ‘Need speed cameras on Ravensden Road’.
32. ‘To deter traffic passing through the village is extremely desirable’.
33. ‘Upgrading and extending footpaths and bridleways would be fantastic and encourage more non-vehicular travel’.
34. ‘Can we reference the impact of broader connectivity on the Parish, e.g. Rail link, A4280, A421 and the need to be at the heart of planning proposal for major routes and work with local authorities to minimise noise/pollution from the roads (it’s getting worse!) - maybe a point (d)?’
35. ‘I feel that the aims and vision for Renhold have been well considered by the contributors and am grateful for all the work and effort put in on behalf of the residents’.
36. ‘Maintain footpath and bridleways, consider opening footpath for cyclists, more continues bridleways connection (at the moment very patchy’.)
37. ***Assessment:*** The responses to the draft vision have been assessed as follows:
38. Adding the word ‘structural’ to the word ‘coalescence’ in the second bullet point of the countryside objectives is a sensible suggestion.
39. The potential impact of East-West Rail and the proposed ‘science campus’ are not addressed overtly in the objectives and perhaps should be.
40. Maintaining the distinction between the ‘new estates’ and urban Bedford is perhaps an even more important issue given their relative proximity than some of the more established parts of the village’.
41. Community facilities may need to be more specifically defined.
42. Clarifying the extent of ‘small-scale’ housing should allay many or all of the expressed concerns.

**Conclusions**

1. The survey has provided a valuable endorsement that the distillation of the views expressed by the local community in the original survey have been appropriately translated into a vision and objectives that reflect a balance of local views.
2. Based upon the comments received, the draft vision and objectives might be finessed as follows. Any suggested changes are highlighted in italics and bold text:
3. ***Countryside:*** ‘To preserve the distinctive character of our Parish, in particular the agricultural and parkland landscape that comprises the green gaps between the historic Ends and our newer developments, whilst also maintaining our ***structural*** separation from the Bedford urban area’.

* To maintain the rural character and historic environment of the Parish.
* To preserve a separation between the Bedford urban area ***and the parts of Renhold that are closest to it***, to avoid ***structural*** coalescence.
* To protect and enhance existing views into, out from and across the Parish.

1. ***Community:*** ‘To ensure that the needs and aspirations of residents of the Parish are reflected in the provision of appropriate community facilities and infrastructure that promote, sustain and enhance social cohesion’.

* To protect the character of the Parish with well-integrated, small-scale housing development ***of up to ten dwellings in total*** to meet local needs, enhanced opportunity for biodiversity and net zero carbon whilst maintaining the gap between urban Bedford and the gaps between the Ends.
* To safeguard and enhance the long term future of existing community facilities for all ages.
* To promote the provision of new facilities to address the ***current and*** future needs of the village.
* ***To encourage and support the provision of high capacity digital infrastructure to give local residents access to high-speed broadband.***

1. ***Connectivity:*** ‘To enhance the natural environment and biodiversity of the Parish and to amplify the benefits of this by connecting more people to nature through the creation of better, safer and more sustainable access to it’.

* To conserve and enhance countryside, biodiversity and wildlife habitats including Local Green Space designation and green space improvements.
* To upgrade and extend footpaths and bridleways to provide a multi-functional Green Infrastructure network which encourages non-vehicular travel.
* To deter through traffic and develop new, alternative traffic calming measures to encourage safe and sustainable movement within the Parish ***and to mitigate the potential impact of major proposed infrastructure projects like East-West Rail and the ‘Science Campus’.***.

1. The next steps should be:
2. To finesse the draft vision and objectives in the light of the suggested additions and amendments above.
3. Developing draft Neighbourhood Plan policies to reflect the vision and objectives, along the lines of the ‘Green Gaps’ policy that has already been produced.