

RENHOLD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

IMPORTANT GREEN GAPS POLICY

Context

Renhold is a parish with linear built-up areas and in common with an historic tradition in many other rural settlements in Bedfordshire, which is defined by discrete settlement clusters separated by intervening green gaps as ‘Ends’.

The named Ends in the older part of the parish are Salph End, Struttle End, Church End, Top End, Green End and Water End. In keeping with this tradition, the newer housing additions (Cranbourne Gardens, Aspire, The Spires) at the southern end of the parish have also been designed with their own distinct identities and they too are separated by important spatial green gaps.

Finally, the parish as a whole maintains its individual character and rural identity by preserving a clearly demarcated green gap along the boundary between Renhold and the adjoining urban area of Bedford.

The green gaps themselves comprise a mix of rural land uses, including woodland, amenity greenspace, sports pitches and agricultural farmland, but all are fundamental to the character and identity of Renhold.

Community Consultation

As part of the community consultation undertaken in connection with the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan in September 2020, local residents were asked to identify up to three positive aspects of living in Renhold. Three of the top eight aspects identified were:

- Village atmosphere/identity
- Countryside/open space
- Peace/quiet/tranquillity

The survey also asked how respondents would like to see Renhold evolve over the next 10 years. Three of the top eight aspects identified were:

- Maintain the rural/village character
- Preservation/enhancement of countryside/habitats
- Keep a separation between Bedford and Renhold

Based upon the priorities and aspirations identified by the community survey, preserving the existing green gaps reflects the value placed upon them by local residents. With the aims to preserve the distinct character and rural nature of Renhold, areas of undeveloped countryside have been identified where it is considered important to maintain their open nature in order to retain separation between settlement 'Ends' and therefore protect their individual identities and character. These strategic gaps are recognised as Important Green Gaps.

Benefits

In addition to preserving the historic settlement pattern of Renhold and the aspirations expressed in the community survey, protecting the spatial green gaps between the individual historically older and newer 'Ends' in the parish from development will also have the following benefits:

- All of the green gaps are accessible via public rights of way, giving local residents the opportunity for recreation and physical activity in the areas closest to where they live, thus avoiding the need for vehicular use to access the countryside.
- Renhold is rich in biodiversity and green gaps provide an important resource for wildlife, allowing corridors of undeveloped land, across which species can travel and spread, to thrive and be enhanced. The parish currently sustains important populations of nine of most critically endangered 'Red List' bird species of conservation concern, all of which are dependent on the range of habitats in these green gaps.
- Enabling preservation of the parish' tranquillity and dark skies enjoyed by both wildlife and residents.

Relationship with other designated green spaces

Important Green Gaps will both complement and supplement a number of formally designated Local Gaps and green spaces in Renhold, in particular:

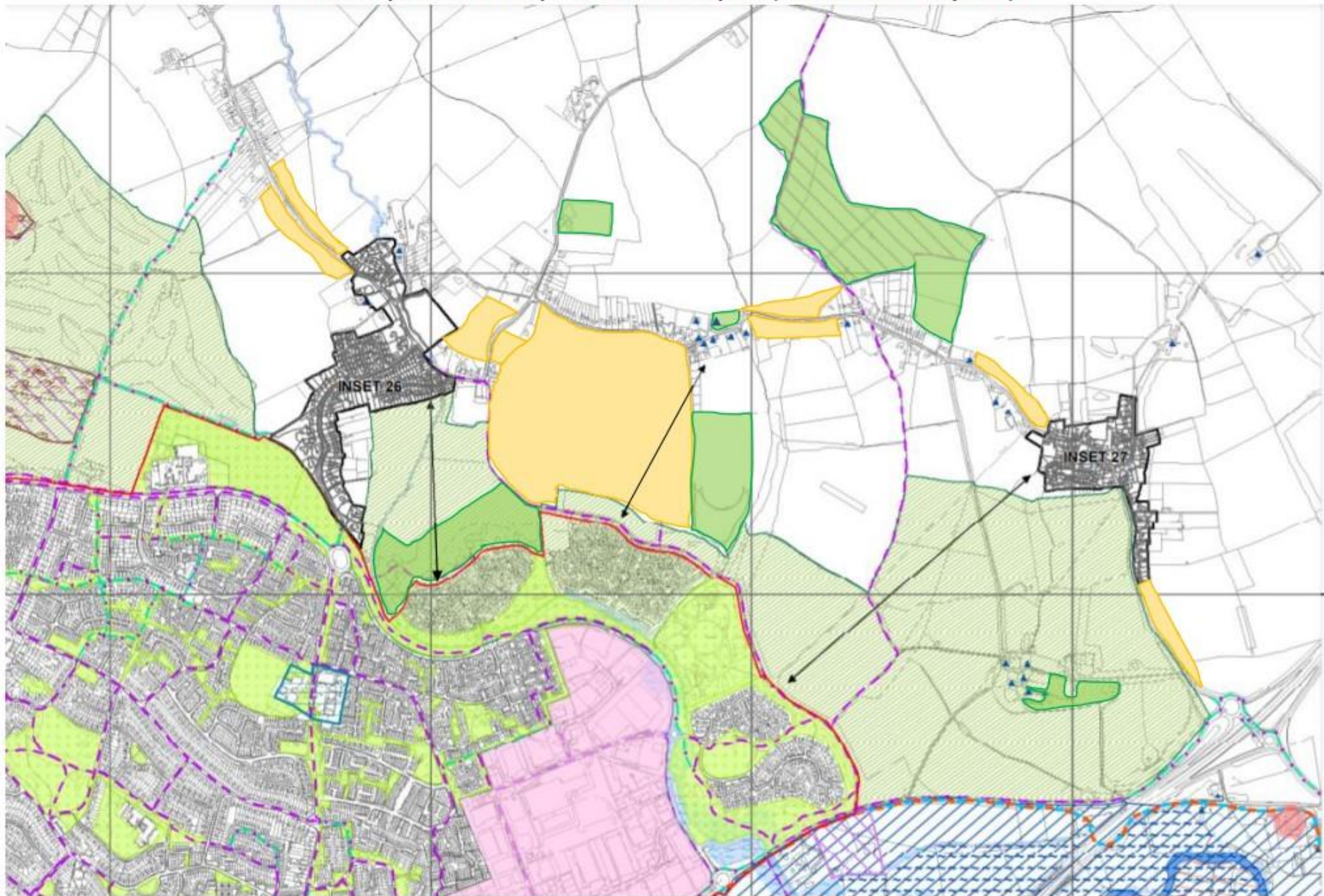
- **Local Green Spaces designated as part of the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan.**
- **Local Gaps designated under Policy AD42 of the BBC Allocations and Designations Local Plan (July 2013)**
- **Urban Open Space, designated under Policy AD43 of the BBC Allocations and Designations Local Plan (July 2013) (shown in Policies Map 2020 Inset 1 Bedford and Kempston).**
- **Land designated as the Bedford Northern Fringes, forming part of the Green Infrastructure Network Opportunity Zones, under Policy AD24 of the BBC Allocations and Designations Local Plan (July 2013) (shown in Policies Map 2020 Inset 1 Bedford and Kempston).**

The identified Important Green Gaps play a specific and distinctive role in conjunction with other protected green spaces, in preventing the coalescence of settlements and ensuring the retention of the open character of Renhold.

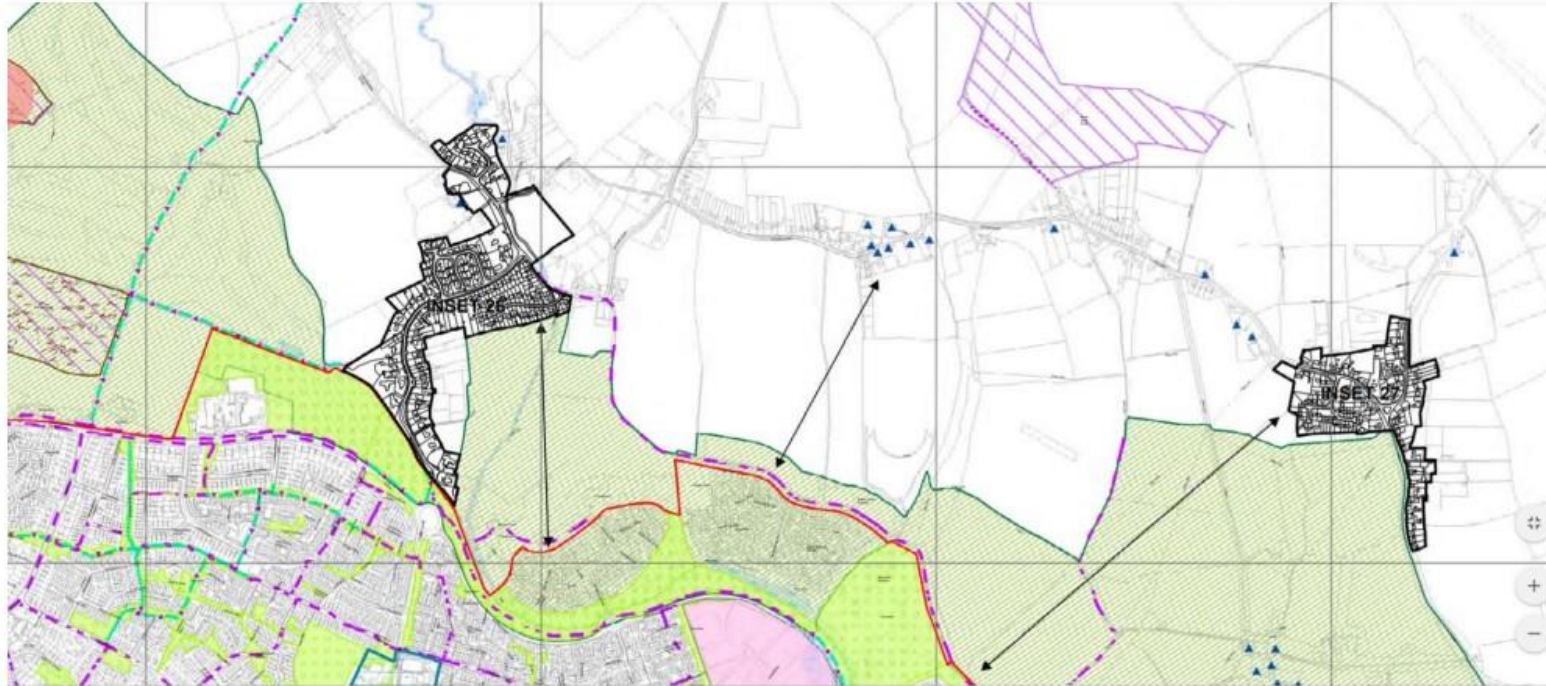
Neighbourhood Plan Policy RENxx on Important Green Gaps

To preserve the distinctive character, identities and setting of the individual and dispersed 'Ends' in Renhold and to maintain the physical and visual separation of Renhold from the urban edge of Bedford, no development will be permitted that compromises the open landscape character comprising the Important Green Gaps shown on the plan below.

Plan - Important Green Gaps and Local Green Spaces (created: 30th January 2022)



MAP SHOWING EXISTING GRRE SPACE DESIGNATIONS



Existing BBC designations:

- ↔ Local Gaps - AD42
- ▨ 6. Bedford Northern Fringes
- ▤ Urban Open Space - AD43
- ▧ County Wildlife Sites - 42S
- ▩ Floodzone 3a - 92

▲ Listed Building – 415

Proposed designations (below):

- ▨ Local Green Space
- ▨ Important Green Gap

APPENDIX: CONFORMITY WITH LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Conformity with the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030

A green gap policy in the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan would conform with the policies and priorities of the '*Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030*' (2020) as follows:

- ***Local Plan objectives:*** These include:
 - Objective 8: 'Develop a strong and multifunctional urban and rural green infrastructure network through protecting, enhancing, extending and linking landscapes, woodland, biodiversity sites, heritage sites, green spaces and paths'.
 - Objective 9. 'Support and create a high quality, inclusive and safe built environment which values local landscape and settlement character and which conserves and enhances the historic environment and is enjoyed by all'.
- ***Policy 6 Development in small settlements*** states that 'within the built form of Small Settlements development will be supported where the proposal contributes positively to the character of the settlement and is appropriate to the structure, form, character and size of the settlement as a whole'.
- ***Policy 35S Green Infrastructure*** states that 'existing green infrastructure in the borough shall be protected, enhanced and managed for the future benefit of the environment, people and the economy'.
- ***Policy 37 Landscape character:*** The policy states that 'development proposals will protect and enhance the key landscape features and visual sensitivities of the landscape character areas identified in the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment May 2014 (or as subsequently amended). Proposals will be required to:
 - Where appropriate incorporate and implement the landscape management guidelines and development guidelines laid out in the BBLCA, and
 - Protect and enhance the character and qualities of the local landscape through appropriate design and management, and
 - Make provision for the retention and enhancement of features of landscape importance, and
 - Safeguard and where possible, enhance key views and vistas, and
 - **Protect the landscape setting and contribute to maintaining the individual and distinct character, and separate identities of settlements by preventing coalescence,** and
 - Where appropriate, provide landscape mitigation.

Conformity with the Bedford BC Landscape Sensitivity Study – Group 1 and Group 2 Villages, Bedford & Kempston Urban Edge (September 2018)

A green gap policy in the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan would conform with the following, relevant visual sensitivities and guidelines explained in this study and set out previously in the *Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment* (2013) which includes a section on the 'Renhold Clay Farmland':

- 3. Visual sensitivities:
‘There is the sense of openness...
Small scale development in the villages and the Ends could lead to loss of their distinctive character. The landscape would also be sensitive to change from further demand for residential development within the urban fringe of Bedford’.

- 4. Landscape management guidelines:
‘... resist development that will result in further loss/ fragmentation of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
Conserve the character of the rural roads, limiting urbanising influences e.g. kerbing and widening...;.

- 5. Development Guidelines:
‘Conserve the scattered farmsteads and historic villages with their pattern of dispersed ‘Ends’ and the views to the stone churches.
Retain the individual settlements avoiding merging these through linear development particularly immediately to the north of Bedford for instance along the roads between the various ‘ends’ of Renhold’.