

Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan

Basic Conditions Statement

May 2022



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Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan - Basic Conditions Statement

1. Introduction

This Statement has been prepared by Ravensden Parish Council to accompany the Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan 2030 on submission to Bedford Borough Council (BBC) under regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended (“the Regulations”).

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the Parish Council, the qualifying body, for the Neighbourhood Area covering the whole of the Parish, as designated by BBC on the 23rd October 2019 (See Figure 1 below).

The policies described in the Neighbourhood Plan relate to the development and use of land in the designated Neighbourhood Area and do not relate to any other designated Neighbourhood Area.

The plan period is for 10 years up to 2030, a period which aligns to the current adopted Bedford Borough Council Local Plan.¹

The Neighbourhood Plan does not include provision about development that is excluded development in accordance with relevant legislation².

The NP document also contains (at Section 11) a number of non-statutory proposals that relate to local planning matters which do not form part of the examined ‘neighbourhood development plan’ but provides a ‘wish list’ that has emerged during consultation that the Parish Council has considered during the preparation of the document.

The Statement addresses and shows full compliance with each of the four ‘basic conditions’ required of the Regulations and explains how the submitted Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of paragraph 8 of schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Regulations state that a Neighbourhood Plan will be considered to have met the basic conditions if:

- Having regard to National Policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Development Plan
- The making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- The making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area)
- The making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan does not breach,

¹ Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 adopted by Bedford Borough Council on 15th January 2020

² Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Section 38B(1)(b) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 61K.

and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations.

In order to consider the requirements to be compatible with EU obligations, a further basic condition is set out in the Regulations

- The making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

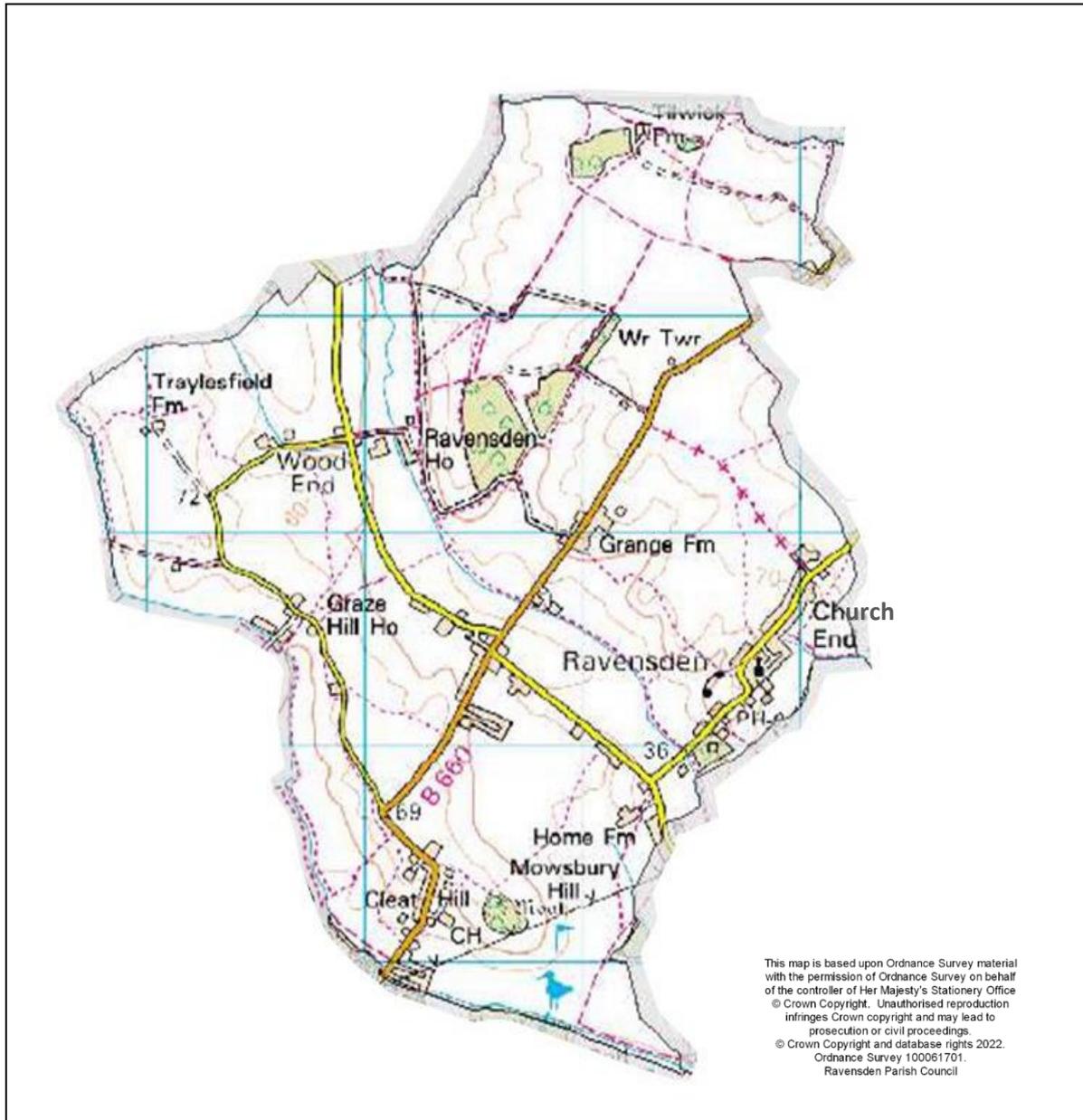


Figure 1: Map showing the Designated Area of Ravensden Parish

2. Background

The plan preparation has been led by Ravensden Parish Council, through its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It has comprised three main stages:

- Evidence gathering which has been set out in the background evidence, including
 - Housing Needs Survey
 - Residents Survey
 - Ravensden Green Infrastructure Plan
 - Local Green Spaces Assessment Report
 - Site Assessment Report
- Draft Neighbourhood Plan (pre-submission Draft version); the draft plan and accompanying background documents were published for a period of 6 weeks ending on 4th April 2022 in accordance with regulation 14 of the Regulations.
- Submission Neighbourhood Plan which takes into account representations received on the Regulation 14 version and has been amended as required for submission to BBC; it is accompanied by the *Basic Conditions Statement* and the *Consultation Statement*.

Ravensden Parish Council formally launched the Neighbourhood Plan in November 2019, led by a steering group which included residents and Parish Councillors. The Steering Group met on 33 occasions over the period up to May 2022 (despite the restrictions of Covid and the need therefore for virtual meetings) and provided regular updates at bimonthly parish council meetings.

A rigorous programme of community engagement has (despite the limitations of 'lockdown'), helped to make sure that the Neighbourhood Plan is based on a proper understanding of the area and fully reflects the views, aspirations, needs and priorities of local people including householders, businesses and landowners.

Before all events, and at key stages as the Neighbourhood Plan evolved, leaflets were hand-delivered to every household in the Parish. A dedicated NP website and Village Facebook page were established, and frequent use was made of the Parish-wide email server and social media. This included a dedicated focus on Green Infrastructure aspects.

Documents posted on https://www.ravensden_plan.info, provided key information and timely updates on progress with notification of forthcoming events.

Three public 'Drop-in' events³ were held (despite the disruption of the Pandemic) at key stages with extensive information displays including questionnaires to encourage public feedback. These were well-received by local residents.

³ Feb/Mar 2020, Sep/Oct 2021 & Feb 2022

A full record of Consultations is provided in the *Consultation Statement* with major milestones summarised in Figure 2.

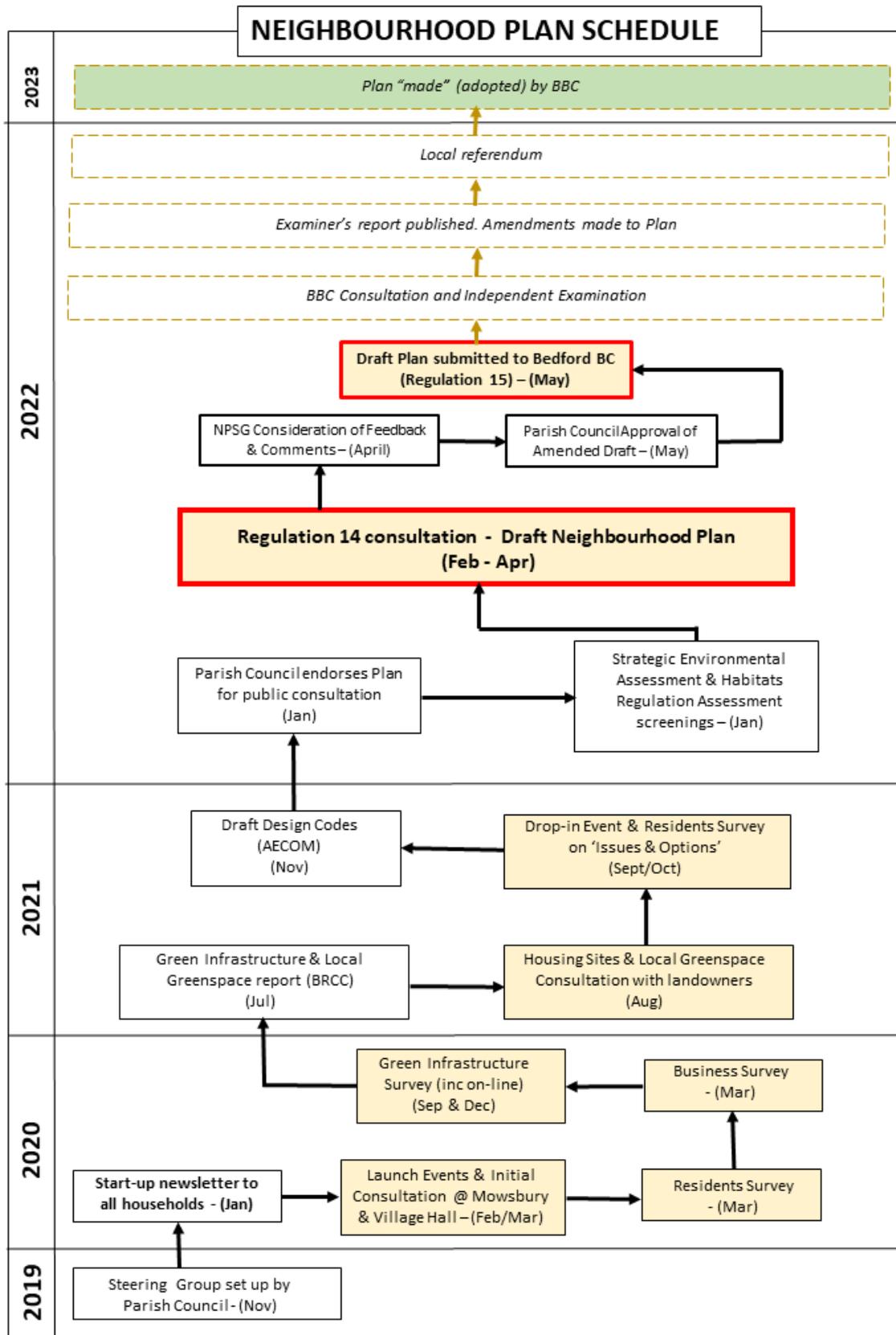


Figure 2

The Neighbourhood Plan momentum was on occasions impacted by parallel consultations on the East West Rail Project. The route corridor preferred by EWRCo⁴ for the central section would run through the Parish and have a profound impact on its rural character and amenity.

In concert with neighbouring Parishes this route corridor is being strongly resisted and better alternatives recommended. As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) a formal decision will be made under different legislation; however, the Neighbourhood Plan will remain a material consideration and the weight to be given to it in decision-making on East-West Rail will be for the Planning Inspectorate and, in due course, the Secretary of State to assess. A formal Neighbourhood Policy (RNP10) has been put forward to address mitigations required to minimise the negative impact on the community and environment should the current EWR plan go ahead. However, this is not a policy which seeks to resist the principle of the central section of East West Rail, and it is not considered to be provisions relating to “excluded development”.

The key communications and consultation held as the Neighbourhood Plan developed are fully set out in the separate *Consultation Statement*.

Housing Needs Assessment and Consultation Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) was commissioned to carry out a Housing Needs Survey (HNS) which reported in 2016 and identified a small need for affordable and market housing. This report predated the designation of the Neighbourhood Plan area and the start of the Neighbourhood planning process but was evidence which was taken into account in the preparation of the Plan. 125 responses were returned representing an encouraging return rate of 42%. A version of the final report from BRCC was published on the website⁵ which broadly supported the need for new affordable houses and for a supply of houses to attract first-time buyers and for current residents wishing to downsize locally.

Although the survey is 6-years old, these housing needs have been restated in wider NP surveys and consultations in 2020 and 2021. This targeted local need remains important to the long-term vitality and sustainability of the Parish, despite recent rented accommodation being offered on the Curry Mansion site (Ravensden Crossroads) and the future prospect of 49 affordable units becoming available at the Ravensden Park (Graze Hill) site.

The Neighbourhood Plan does not rely on the 2016 HNS, and repeating the BRCC exercise is considered unnecessary and impractical, given recent planning permissions; the absence of accurate and up-to-date Census information; and consultation fatigue. No rural exception sites are proposed in the Plan (Policy 7S and Policy 67 of the LP2030) and Policy RNP3 requires any application for residential development to demonstrate that the mix and tenure meets an identified local need (and is in-line with LP Policy 58S – affordable housing)

Green Infrastructure Plan and Consultation. Ravensden’s natural environment is highly valued along with its heritage features and rural aspects. This priority is

⁴ Potential route alignments identified in the EWR Non-Statutory Consultation – from EWRCo Reg 14 Response

⁵ <https://ravensdenplan.info/documents>

reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan which has been informed by a Green Infrastructure Plan which identified potential Local Green Spaces for designation by the Neighbourhood Plan.

BRCC was commissioned by the Parish Council to prepare the GI Plan⁶ fully involving the local residents in surveys and on-line presentations despite the then extant pandemic lockdown. 35 GI survey responses were submitted in Oct 2021 and the resulting Green Infrastructure Plan has received strong support in all subsequent consultation events. It broadly supports the Borough's Green Infrastructure plans and policies, identifies local aspirations and priorities, and includes a supporting 'action plan' which includes both statutory NP initiatives and other actions and aspirations.

The methodology is described further in the Green Infrastructure Plan document itself, and Policies within the NP address Local Greenspace (RNP6) and Heritage Assets (RNP7).

Housing Site Consultation. There is no requirement in the adopted Local Plan LP2030 for the Parish to contribute any more housing up to 2030 and this looks likely to continue in current review of the Local Plan. However, to reflect NPPF guidance that neighbourhood plans should give particular consideration to the opportunities for allocating small scale sites for possible housing development, a number of sites were considered based on the Borough Council's 'Call for Sites' exercise for the Local Plan 2030 and the current review to 2040. Candidate sites were appraised in accordance with nationally recognized methodology, and a list of sites potentially suitable for small scale housing development was identified. The two shortlisted sites have broad support from local residents, as confirmed in the Regulation 14 Consultation in March 2022

Regulation 14 Consultation

The Regulation 14 consultation ran for a period of six weeks from 19th February 2022 to 4th April 2022 and is fully covered in the *Consultation Statement*.

The draft neighbourhood plan was publicised to everyone who lives or works in the Parish, plus Bedford Borough Council, the list of statutory consultees, adjacent parish councils, elected officials, landowners, local businesses, and local organisations. The publicity included a full copy of the draft plan on the NP website, a comprehensive summary delivered to every household, a well-attended drop-in event and details of where paper copies were available. Comments, observations, and feedback were invited within the six-week period, including a questionnaire available in paper and on-line versions and a dedicated email server.

The Neighbourhood Plan website (linked to the Parish Council website) was updated to make the Regulation 14 consultation live; this included all of the

⁶ https://ravensdenplan.info/application/files/4116/2935/8178/Ravensden__GI_Plan_8.7.21_1_final_plan.pdf

documents being consulted upon, a link to the online survey, a copy of the paper feedback form, all the plans/maps and details of how to respond.

The consultation was also advertised on the Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page. The result of this consultation was that 51 responses were received, and these were individually considered, and response carefully documented whilst retaining confidentiality.

The Neighbourhood Plan document, GI Plan, Local Green Space Assessment, and Housing Site Assessment reports have been updated as necessary, in response to the Regulation 14 feedback.

The Parish Council has also worked closely with officers of Bedford BC since the start of the Neighbourhood Plan process to collate and examine the evidence base, to design and iterate policy proposals and to define the proper relationship between the NP and the adopted Local Plan (and the emerging Local Plan review).

The Neighbourhood Plan has not sought to duplicate Local Plan policies which will continue be used in determining planning applications. This has allowed the Neighbourhood Plan to focus on locally relevant and important policies.

3. Conformity with National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published on 27th March 2012 and updated on 24th July 2018, 19th February 2019 and 20th July 2021. The Parish Council has referred to the latest version to provide guidance on the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

There are several NPPF paragraphs that provide general guidance on neighbourhood planning, to which the Neighbourhood Plan has directly responded: In relation to the presumption in favour of sustainable development:

- Paragraph 11: the neighbourhood plan promotes a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to meet the development needs of the area; aligns growth and infrastructure; improves the environment; and mitigates climate change (including making effective use of land) and adapt to its effects
- Paragraph 12: the development plan is the starting point for decision-making, and this includes any Neighbourhood Plan
- Paragraph 13: Neighbourhood Plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies
- Paragraph 14: The adverse impact of allowing housing development that conflicts with the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided a number of timing and

housing supply criteria are met.

The Parish Council considers that the Neighbourhood Plan is planning positively for future development in the Parish and supports the delivery of the strategic policies of the adopted Development Plans as advised in the above paragraphs of the NPPF

- Paragraphs 18 and 21: advise that policies to address non-strategic matters and detailed matters should be included within neighbourhood plans, and the Neighbourhood Plan contains such policies.
- Paragraphs 29 and 30: provide advice on non-strategic policies and the role of neighbourhood plans. The Neighbourhood Plan establishes a shared vision for the area and its policies shape, direct and help deliver sustainable development. It has sought to translate objectives into a number of meaningful planning policies to complement other development plan policies for managing development.
- Paragraph 37: The Neighbourhood Plan meets the “basic conditions” and other legal requirements (as set out in paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)

The Neighbourhood Plan strikes a positive balance between the policy constraints of the Parish and the need to support the general requirements of the Local Authority development plan as set out in section 5 below.

The Neighbourhood Plan avoids duplicating development plan policies by focussing on site-specific and other policies that translate the general requirements of the Local Plan into a local context. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the development plan for the Parish and will be used in determining planning applications.

Set out below is a brief summary of how each policy conforms to the NPPF. The particular paragraphs referred to in the table are those considered the most relevant to each policy but are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all possible relevant paragraphs.

Overall, NPPF paragraph 30 states that once a Neighbourhood Plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing policies in the Local Plan where they are in conflict.

Table 1 : NPPF Conformity

Policy	NPPF Para no.	Commentary
RNP1 Cleat Hill / Mowsbury Special Policy Area	15, 16	Is positively prepared and clearly sets out how planning applications should be considered in this area (defined on an Inset Plan) and serves a clear purpose by correcting an anomaly in the Borough Local Plan 2030 which treats the whole area as countryside despite its mostly built-up character.
RNP2 Guidelines for further development at Ravensden Park	16, 98, 100, 126, 130-132, 153-156, 174, 179	Although the site was allocated in the Borough Local Plan 2030 (Policy 24), this policy complements the Local Plan in line with NPPF para 30 by giving greater clarity to the boundary between the housing and the country park as reflected in the outline planning permission and setting out ongoing requirements for future planning applications.
RNP3 Development of land adjoining Willow Farm, Butler Street	28, 70, 119-121, 124, 126, 130-131, 153-156, 174, 179	The proposal reflects NPPF guidance that particular consideration should be given to opportunities for allocating small and medium size sites suitable for housing; and the substantial weight to be given to using brownfield land for homes and other identified needs.
RNP4 Conversion of Barns , Cleat Hill Farm	28, 70, 120(d), 189-190	The proposal reflects NPPF guidance that particular consideration should be given to opportunities for allocating small and medium size sites suitable for housing; that policies should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings; and the desirability of putting heritage assets to viable uses consistent with their character.
RNP5 Design & Sustainability guided by Design Codes	9,11, 28, 126-132, 153-158	This policy reflects NPPF guidance which emphasises the importance of good design and its contribution to sustainability; the need for clear design vision and expectations in plans; and for policies which reflect local aspirations

		based on effective community engagement. Design Codes can maximise clarity about design expectations.
RNP6 Allocation of Local Green Spaces	28, 100-103, 174	This policy comes out of the work on the Ravensden Green Infrastructure Plan and designates sites which are suitable for inclusion in the NP. It provides an appropriate level of protection which could continue beyond the Plan period, in accordance with the NPPF.
RNP7 Protection of Heritage assets	190	The policy reflects the guidance in the NPPF with respect to the conservation and enhancement of both designated and undesignated heritage assets and their settings, which contribute to the character of the Parish.
RNP8 Protecting important Community Facilities	28, 92, 93, 98, 100	This policy reflects NPPF guidance in relation to policies which guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.
RNP9 New Community Facilities	93	This policy reflects NPPF guidance by ensuring established facilities are able to develop and modernise
RNP10 East West Rail - mitigation	104, 174, 179, 185-186	This policy is consistent with the NPPF which advises that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan making so that potential impacts can be identified, assessed and taken into account including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains.
RNP11 Priorities for Developer Contributions (CIL) in the Parish	34, 104, 106	This policy identifies how contributions from development could go towards priorities for local infrastructure, in accordance with the NPPF .

4. Contribution to Sustainable Development

The basic condition of “contributing to the achievement of sustainable development” requires a broad scope of assessment to embrace social and economic, as well as environmental objectives.

The Policies and Objectives defined within the Neighbourhood Plan comprise a balance of social (*Soc*), economic (*Econ*) and environmental (*Env*) goals required to fully realise the Vision for the Parish defined and supported by NP consultation.

The Vision is:

“By 2030, Ravensden Parish will be:

- **A sustainable, safe and well-integrated place in which to live, work and spend leisure time, and which is responsive to climate change and decarbonisation objectives**
- **A rural/semi-rural area containing compact settlements which meet local needs; whose character and integrity are safeguarded through high quality design; and which are set in attractive and accessible countryside which also provides a buffer to large-scale expansion of Bedford**
- **Part of a thriving, cared-for natural and historic environment”**

The *Social goals* (*Soc.*) are to improve local amenities, meet future housing needs where appropriate and encourage safe and sustainable movement across the Parish. *Economic goals* (*Econ.*) include the protection of existing assets and promoting new facilities where possible to ensure the continuing vitality of the Parish. *Environmental goals* (*Env.*) relate to design and sustainability; landscape, biodiversity, heritage, green infrastructure and Local Greenspaces..

However, the objectives recognise there are environmental constraints within which the social and economic objectives must operate, by ensuring development is in keeping with the predominantly rural character of the Parish.

The policies therefore translate the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan into viable and effective development management policies which will deliver strong social, economic and environmental outcomes.

The sustainability attributes of each policy are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Sustainability Attributes

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

Policy	Soc	Econ	Env	Commentary
RNP1 Cleat Hill / Mowsbury Special Policy Area	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Guidelines to protect and enhance local character, which is beneficial to both the environment and social interactions of residents.
RNP2 Guidelines for further development at Ravensden Park	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Guidelines for any future planning applications for vibrant new housing area and country park extension which is beneficial to environment and wellbeing of residents.
RNP3 Development of land adjoining Willow Farm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A proposal for 10-15 new dwellings to meet local needs making use of a partly 'brownfield site' and which brings positive social and environmental benefits.
RNP4 Conversion of Barns Cleat Hill Farm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A proposal for sensitive conversion to residential with detailed requirements to be followed to ensure highway safety with protective measures on environment and biodiversity.
RNP5 Design & Sustainability guided by Design Codes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Detailed measures to encourage all planning applications to follow best practice in design and sustainability and respect the new Design Codes with resulting social, environmental, and economic benefits to the Parish.
RNP6 Allocation of additional Local Green Space	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Allocating a further 5 sites across the Parish as Local Green Spaces to give extra protection from development whilst bringing social and environmental benefits with improved biodiversity, and economic advantages by enhancing local amenities.

RNP7 Protection of Heritage assets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	o	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A policy to protect our listed buildings and their setting and other features of conservation interest thereby benefitting the local community and environment.
RNP8 Protecting important Community Facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A Policy which seeks to protect a number of local community assets which are important to the life of the Parish or ensure suitable replacement facilities are built if there is still need for them. This supports rural character and is beneficial to both the environment and the social interactions of residents.
RNP9 New Community Facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Criteria to be applied when new facilities are proposed. This policy will deliver a positive impact on the rural character of the Parish and will enhance the wellbeing of residents through sympathetic design and improved amenities.
RNP10 East West Rail - mitigation of disruption	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	o	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If it is built (despite local opposition) this policy ensures detailed measures to mitigate worst impacts thus protecting the local environment and rural character.
RNP11 Priorities for Developer Contributions (CIL) in the Parish	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This Policy will be very positive for the social and environmental character of the Parish by enhancing local infrastructure and integration.

5. General Conformity with Strategic Local Policies

Local development plan documents currently consist of the saved policies of the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013, and the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030. The Local Plan includes new policies for management of development as well as allocating sites for new housing and employment development. There is a requirement for neighbourhood plans to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan, and the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared with this in mind.

Although there is no requirement in the Borough Local Plan 2030 for any additional housing to be provided in the Parish in the Plan period – and the emerging Borough

Local Plan 2040 appears to maintain this stance – the Neighbourhood Plan takes the opportunity to allocate two small development-sites in the Parish. One (for 10-15 units) utilises a part-brownfield site, and the other is for conversion of agricultural barns for up to 5 units. These proposals have attracted support from local residents.

The following tables set out the comparison of Neighbourhood Plan policies with policies from both extant Local Plans.

Accordingly, the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the Local Plans and the policies have been designed to add local context to the development plan policies of the area.

Table 3: Conformity with BBC Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 and Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030

Ravensden NP Policies	BBC Local Plan 2030 & ADLP2013	Commentary
RNP1 Cleat Hill / Mowsbury Special Policy Area	LP Policy 7S ADLP Policy AD1	This policy complements the Borough Local Plan 2030 by providing clarity as to how development proposals should be considered in this largely built-up area within defined countryside.
RNP2 Guidelines for further development at Ravensden Park	LP Policy 24	This policy supplements Policy 24 in the Borough Local Plan 2030 by clarifying the boundary between the residential and country park elements of the site and setting out ongoing requirements which will apply to subsequent applications for the whole site.
RNP3 Land development at adjoining Willow Farm	LP Policies 3S (viii & ix), 6, 46S, 58S, 59(S) (Also, BBC Open Space SPD 2013)	This allocation is consistent with the overall spatial strategy in the Borough Local Plan 2030, and its policies for Small Settlements, sustainability, and affordable housing.
RNP4 Conversion of Barns Cleat Hill Farm	LP Policies 7S, 41S and 65	This allocation is consistent with policies for development in countryside, protecting the historic environment and heritage assets and the re-use of redundant buildings in the countryside

RNP5 Design & Sustainability guided by Design Codes	LP Policies 28S, 29, 53-54 and 93	This policy – and the preparation of the Design Codes – provides local context for, and elaborates on Local Plan policies for place-making, design quality and principles, layout and accessibility, energy efficiency and sustainable drainage.
RNP6 Allocation of additional Local Green Space	LP Policies 35S and 45 ADLP Policies AD 24 and 40	A policy which augments the number of Local Greenspaces in the Parish and reinforces their protection from development, consistent with ADLP Policy AD24; and which reinforces ADLP Policy AD40 for defined Village Open Spaces.
RNP7 Protection of Heritage assets	LP Policy 41S	A policy which complements and provides local context for the protection of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings, which contribute to local character. and which should be conserved and enhanced
RNP8 Protecting important Community Facilities	LP Policies 83 and 99	A policy which enhances relevant Local Plan policy by requiring marketing evidence to demonstrate there is no longer an economic case for retaining a number of locally defined facilities, before alternative uses are permitted.
RNP9 New Community Facilities	LP Policies 7S and 98	A policy which supplements Local Plan policy by providing locational guidance for new facilities in the Parish and setting out more detailed development management considerations.
RNP10 East West Rail - mitigation	LP Policy 90S(iv)	A policy which sets out detailed mitigation measures appropriate to the local context and which conforms with and supplements relevant Local Plan policy, which provides no detail as to the route of the East-West rail scheme and no measures to mitigate its potential impacts either during construction or operation.
RNP11 Priorities for Developer Contributions (CIL) in the Parish	LP Policy 86S	A policy which complements relevant Local Plan policy by setting out detailed local priorities for how contributions towards local infrastructure, expected from development, will be spent.

6. Compatibility with EU Legislation

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The SEA Regulations require the consideration of the significant environmental effects of the plan or programme, and of reasonable alternatives that take into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.

A screening report has been prepared by Ravensden Parish Council (as the Responsible Body) to determine whether or not the content of the Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan (NP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the extant regulations. This document accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan.

In accordance with current government advice the first part of the assessment determined that the NP falls into a category of plans requiring SEA. The second part of the assessment considered whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment using criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

The assessment concluded that it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan and that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not therefore required.

Three statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) were consulted in January 2022.

In their response (dated 26th January 2022) Natural England confirmed their satisfaction with the conclusion of no likely significant effect on designated sites as a result of the neighbourhood plan. No other statutory consultees responded to this consultation.

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 [the Habitats Regulations] require that Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is applied to all statutory land use plans in England and Wales. HRA is achieved by carrying out an Appropriate Assessment. This is undertaken mindful of an assessment on the wider Local Plan 2030 undertaken in 2018 and National Site Networks (2019).

Bodsey Ecology were contracted to undertake a screening of the Neighbourhood Plan. This ensures that the NP has policies which avoid or mitigate against likely significant effects identified in the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 and complying with those of Bedford Borough.

These screenings assume that water quantity and quality in the River Great Ouse will not be compromised because the future strategic plans of Anglian Water will prevent this from happening.

The HRA screening concluded that the Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan can proceed as it will not have adverse impacts on any National Site Network sites, the qualifying features and/or the integrity of those sites itself or in combination with other plans that have currently been adopted. These conclusions were endorsed by responses received from statutory consultation bodies (January 2022).

Human Rights and Equalities Assessment

The Neighbourhood Plan has regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act.

The overall purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to improve the quality of life for people living and working in the parish from an environmental, social and economic point of view. The aims and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have been formulated in response to local people’s views and in the light of evidence gathered for the Parish, in order to meet the needs expressed and address the issues identified.

In order to confirm that the NP does not have any unintended consequences for particular groups the strategic aims and the policies in the Plan have been scrutinised to ensure that they do not disadvantage any potentially vulnerable groups. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between persons who have a “protected characteristic”⁷ and those who do not.

An assessment has been made on whether the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics. Certain protected characteristics are not affected by the Neighbourhood Plan, namely gender reassignment, race, religion, or sexual orientation. For persons with these characteristics, the Plan has a neutral effect. Where policies in the Plan would adversely affect persons with these protected characteristics, they would not be differently affected than persons without these characteristics.

Table 4 Human Rights

Policy	Outcome for persons with certain protected characteristics
RNP1 Cleat Hill / Mowsbury Special Policy Area	Neutral Impact
RNP2 Guidelines for further development at Ravensden Park	Broadly positive impact
RNP3 Land development at adjoining Willow Farm	Broadly positive impact

⁷ “Protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation

RNP4 Conversion of Barns Cleat Hill Farm	Neutral Impact
RNP5 Design & Sustainability guided by Design Codes	Broadly positive impact
RNP6 Allocation of additional Local Green Space	Neutral Impact
RNP7 Protection of Heritage assets	Neutral Impact
RNP8 Protecting important Community Facilities	Broadly positive impact
RNP9 New Community Facilities	Broadly positive impact
RNP10 East West Rail - mitigation of disruption	Neutral Impact
RNP11 Priorities for Developer Contributions (CIL) in the Parish	Broadly positive impact

7. Conclusion

Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan has been carefully prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations and satisfies the Basic Conditions as set out in paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.
