

RAVENSDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

LAUNCH EVENTS 29TH FEBRUARY AND 7TH MARCH 2020

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

This note summarises the comments made by attendees at the awareness-raising launch events held for the Neighbourhood Plan. A range of exhibition panels and text, together with questions to elicit responses, on a number of topics were displayed at both venues. Attendees were invited to add their comments to the display panels by post-it notes or on flipcharts. 108 people attended the two events, representing all parts of the parish, as well as two attendees from an adjoining parish. There were some family groups including children.

The similarity of the reactions reflects the general outcomes of the Residential Survey. Regardless of which part of the parish the attendee was from, the consensus of opinion was considerable..

Generally, the comments covered three broad themes.

1. The cohesion of the parish. As a settlement, Ravensden is in three distinct locations but residents are clear that not enough has been done to enable a closer connection between these locations.

- Walkways and footpaths are either currently inadequate, non-existent where needed, or dangerous to use. There are no designated cycleways. The existing pedestrian infrastructure fails to connect the parish with amenities like the shop, schools, church, village hall and open spaces.
- Roadside footpaths, where they have been provided, tend to be poorly maintained and narrow which is dangerous with heavy commercial traffic and speeding cars passing. Pathways and verges are considered insufficient for families and children.
- The fear is that further development will encourage more traffic which will greatly disadvantage pedestrians and exacerbate the disjointed nature of the parish.
- It is not possible for children to walk safely to the local primary school from outside Church End. This leads to a lot of car-based journeys to the school, with attendant parking issues

It was widely agreed that a unifying pedestrian infrastructure was needed to connect the parish and its facilities together. The bus services are not currently providing this. There is no service connecting Cleat Hill or Wayside Farm Park to the Village Hall or Church; or Church End/Church Hill to the village shop.

2. The nature of any potential development, including Graze Hill.

- There was a strong view about building eco-friendly properties but maintaining the character of the parish as far as possible.
- With the ageing profile of the current population in mind, affordable and retirement homes including bungalows, sheltered accommodation & residential / secure care were preferred to flats or housing estates. Starter homes were also seen as being required rather than family housing.
- It was considered that the disparate nature of the parish would be exacerbated by the Graze Hill development which will relate more to the Bedford urban area than Ravensden, making it imperative for better connection of that development (and the country park extension) with the rest of the parish than is currently proposed (e.g. footways/cycleways from the access roundabout on Cleat Hill to the Crossroads)

3. Environment. The comments ranged from air-quality, traffic safety and littering issues arising from the Sunderland Hill green waste site, to the availability of open space and leisure facilities in the parish.

- Several suggestions were made that The Charity Field and/or Freemans Common could be designated as a 'parish green'. If so, pedestrian connectivity would need to be improved.
- There are areas of visual and historic interest that should be protected and enhanced – e.g. Mowsbury Hillfort, ancient woodlands etc.
- A great deal of comment was provided about the importance of preserving trees and hedgerows as part of the innate character of the parish. It was commented that this has been regarded with a cavalier attitude by some in the past, to the detriment of the whole parish.
- We were pleased to get responses from younger parishioners which substantiated the concerns of parents in general about the requirements for facilities such as cycle and footpaths to link schools, places of interest and recreational open space.

Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, April 2020