

# Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan – August 2020 Update

This latest edition of the Neighbourhood Plan newsletter provides an important update following the consultations earlier this year.

**It contains an invitation to take part in a Green Infrastructure Survey covering the whole of Ravensden parish – on 17<sup>th</sup> September – and tells you how to join in.**



Your feedback on our **Neighbourhood Plan (NP)** reflects the comments and priorities of people who live or work in the Parish and will help shape the final document. Your comments will also give the whole local community a louder voice on the Borough-wide Local Plan Review and on East-West Rail. **So in different ways, your continuing involvement on the Neighbourhood Plan is vital.**

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has continued to work on the plan, such as considering all the views from residents at the well-attended village drop-in events held before lockdown, undertaking a detailed analysis of the Residents' and Business Surveys, and contacting local and official organisations. We are starting to look at needs in the parish, as voiced in the surveys, plus options for the future, and we will be holding consultations on this in due course. For more detail, go to [www.ravensdenplan.info](http://www.ravensdenplan.info) which includes all the work so far, plus more information on the future programme of work on the Neighbourhood Plan.

## **The Green Infrastructure Survey**

### ***Ravensden's local environment: what do we value; what do we want?***

The Neighbourhood Plan Residents' Survey showed just how much we value our local environment. A key step in producing our Neighbourhood Plan is to bring this together in a **Green Infrastructure Survey** – and we need your help with this. We live in a great community surrounded by valuable countryside. We also live in an area facing increased pressure for development. We can now have our say in how our local environment should be protected and enhanced.

You are invited to take part in a community engagement activity to help prioritise actions for enhancements to Ravensden's network of public access, biodiversity, heritage and landscape. **Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity** (Beds RCC) has been asked by the Parish Council to lead on the production of a **Ravensden Green Infrastructure Plan**. This will help inform the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

This process would normally start with a face-to-face community workshop, but this will not be possible because of Covid-19 social-distancing restrictions. Instead, this consultation will commence on-line, with a **live Zoom presentation from Beds RCC at 7.30pm on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September**, led by Cliff Andrews from Beds RCC. Following this presentation you will be able to fill in an **online survey**, in your own time, over the subsequent couple of weeks.



**SAVE THE DATE: THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER AT 7.30PM**

The survey will seek your views on what aspects of the local environment you value and what your aspirations are for the future. Maps and guidance notes will be available to view on a dedicated Beds RCC webpage.

**Join the Zoom presentation and hear more about the Ravensden Green Infrastructure Plan by e-mailing [contact@ravensdenplan.info](mailto:contact@ravensdenplan.info). You will be sent a link about a week beforehand to join the live presentation and to access the online survey.**

If you can't take part in the [Zoom presentation](#) or the online survey, you will still be able to have your say. Please still email [contact@ravensdenplan.info](mailto:contact@ravensdenplan.info) but simply request a one-to-one chat. Leave your name and phone number and we'll be in touch.



The results will be drawn together to create a draft Green Infrastructure map of community aspirations. There will be a further consultation later this year before the draft map is finalised. You can see many examples of other successful Green Infrastructure Plans in Bedfordshire at: <https://bedsrcc.org.uk/what-we-do/community-led-planning/green-infrastructure-planning/>

## **Bedford Local Plan Review**



Your household should recently have received a leaflet from Bedford Council about the Borough-wide Local Plan Review, which has just started. Bedford Borough Council recently adopted their Borough-wide Local Plan 2030 but want to update their strategy for housing, employment growth and infrastructure. Government proposals for up to a million new houses by 2050 across the *Oxford-to-Cambridge Arc* (Bedford Borough is at the Arc's centre) are a further impetus.

**This Local Plan Review is critically important.** The potential to impact Ravensden is major, because it could direct much more housing north of Bedford. Issues such as climate change, the natural environment, and sustainability will also be addressed. The Ravensden NP when finalised will need to be consistent with the new Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan Residents Survey supported only limited, if any, further housing in the parish.

The '*Local Plan Review - Issues and Options*' is currently open for public consultation **until 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020** including a 'call for (development) sites'. The Parish Council and the NP Steering Group will be responding, **but it is important that individuals also have their say.**

The Local Plan Review Consultation paper is available at: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy-its-purpose/local-plan-review/>

## **East West Rail Route Options**



Since the decision in January this year to route the East-West rail link north of Bedford (so-called Option E), EW Rail Ltd has been looking at detailed routing options which, if confirmed, would seriously impact Ravensden and potentially devastate surrounding countryside. Option E has been supported by Bedford Borough Council who see this as an opportunity for investment within the town centre and a stimulus for jobs and housing more widely, including north of Bedford.

The whole decision remains controversial and we need to ensure environmental and community impacts are fully addressed. There is also disquiet over a lack of transparency on the financial aspects behind the route selection, and more generally about the Borough Council's apparent preoccupation with developing Bedford Midland Station at the expense of rural landscapes in the north of the Borough. Ravensden Parish Council is working with neighbouring parishes and elected officials and is preparing for the next stages as the scheme evolves.