

RAINOW PARISH PLAN - LAND AND ENVIRONMENT GROUP

Meeting held on 25 February 2005

Present: Nick Carter, Ian Brammer, Brian Kilcoyne, Colin Pickford, Steve Rathbone, Andrew Renshaw

Built environment:

The group did not identify any significant issues about village buildings, apart from some minor concerns that the planning authorities seem on occasion to be restrictive to the detriment of appearance or functionality.

It was felt that signs and other "street furniture" could benefit from a review. For example, there was some extremely intrusive road signing above the village, whilst the speed limit and other traffic calming signing was inadequate. There was concern about the intrusive impact of possible mobile phone masts or other equipment.

Affordable housing was discussed, although it was recognised that this was being covered by other groups. This is a complex subject, in terms of people's views and the challenge of proving the need and actually getting some built. The group felt that if this were to be taken forward it would need dedicated and sustained effort.

Parish assets, historic/heritage features, and village history

The group noted that there was a considerable amount of historic and heritage features in and around the village (not including the many historic properties). A number were identified in the discussion, including reservoirs/ponds, tumuli, mill sites. It was recognised that Rainow contained a wealth of such features. There was concern that these were not always well maintained, that some were at risk and that more could be done to provide benefits for the village.

The group noted with warm approval the work of a number of villagers to capture the history of the village, which was leading to the production of a book, and an archive which was currently planned to be held at One House nursery. The group felt that more could be done to make the local history accessible, and identified a number of opportunities:

The parish plan and the history work were on similar timetables and could reinforce each other in the coming year.

This could lead to some additional presentational material (maps, pocket guides etc to complement the parish map)

The village might consider installing some information at key sites, and perhaps a permanent information site at the centre of the village.

The group discussed why this would be a good thing - was it for the benefit of the village, or those who visited, or to ensure that awareness was raised to help with efforts to preserve and protect historic/heritage features. This led the group to consider whether the village wished to promote itself as a tourist destination and felt this was something to be brought out at an early stage to inform development of the plan.

The Institute was discussed, and the question of who owned or managed it came up. It was felt that this needed to be on a more transparent basis. The proposal to explore the future use of the Lamaload pumping station was also discussed as possibly presenting an opportunity for village facilities. The Millenium field proposal was briefly discussed, and it was felt that this should be reviewed to establish whether there was still a need and a desire to promote such a facility.

The group did, however, wonder how many community facilities the village needed or could sustain. The village currently had a school, Institute and Church centre and there was discussion about the need for new facilities, for example for a scout group. The group considered it important that best use was made of all facilities, and discussions should be held with the managers of existing facilities once the needs have been clarified.

Landscape

The group discussed the possible changes arising from agricultural reform and changing farming practices. There were clearly risks that the landscape could change for the worse, with areas of land becoming run-down. This would impact on the farming economy, as well as on leisure and amenity use. However, the group felt this was an area in which there was little if any opportunity to make an impact, although there was a role to ensure that there was wider awareness within the village.

Traffic speed and volume

The group considered that the main road through the village presented significant problems. Three key issues were identified:

Reducing the speed limit to 30mph, in particular on the section in front of the church where there was considerable turning, crossing, parking and other activity. There were speed issues at other points as well.

The whole panoply of signing and road markings was felt to be inadequate. The red patches on the road seemed to make little impact, and it was felt much more could be done to mark the change from an open road into a built up area. Other villages had very noticeable "gateway entrances".

Enforcement. The group discussed the approach taken in other villages of monitoring by villagers of speeding using police -provided equipment leading to warning notices being issued to persistent speeders by the police. There was a suggestion that this had been considered for Rainow but that the parish Council had been opposed and it had not therefore been taken forward. Automatic speed warning signs such as the one installed at Kettlethume were considered to be effective. Generally, it was felt that much more could be done, and that the road represented a significant risk.

Parking and access were considered major issues throughout the village, for residents, their visitors, the school, organised events and casual visitors such as walkers. Most of the issues were already known and solutions were being sought for some. The issue of additional parking for the church, and the car park and other land on Round Meadow were noted. The group did not have anyone currently resident in Millers Meadow, so could not comment on that part of the village but felt that steps should be taken to identify whether this was considered a major issue there.

The question of parking and access for general visitors/tourists was raised. It was noted that organised walks, for example, are sometimes arranged for Sunday morning, adding to parking pressures at the time of the Sunday morning church service. This came back to the question of whether the village wanted to promote itself to tourists, which would be relevant to a number of other issues.