

RINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN – MAKING THE PLAN (REFERENDUM)

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Council considers the outcome of the referendum of 4 July 2024 as reported in a supplementary update after results are confirmed and considers the recommendations therein.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to consider whether the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan should be made part of the Development Plan for New Forest District (i.e. adopted) following the outcome of the referendum held on 4 July 2024. The formal making of a neighbourhood plan (Regulation 18 Final Version - May 2024) is provided for under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2.2 The version of the Plan subject to this report can be found in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 It should be noted that as the designated 'Neighbourhood Area' is also within the New Forest National Park, the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) are going through a similar process for the part of the parish within its planning area.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Neighbourhood plans were introduced by the Localism Act 2011 to give communities direct power to shape the development of their local area. Neighbourhood plans are planning documents that, once adopted, will then become part of the statutory 'development plan' for the area alongside the Local Plan. Local planning authorities and planning inspectors considering planning applications or appeals must make their decisions in accordance with the policies of the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan 'Neighbourhood Area' was designated in February 2021 and covers the whole of the parish of Ringwood. Just over 50% of the parish area is within the New Forest National Park, and the remainder is within New Forest District Council's (NFDC) planning area.
- 3.3 Work on the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan has been led by a steering group of town councillors and community representatives. The Town Council undertook an initial set of surveys and consultations during 2021 and 2022, and published an initial Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan in February 2023 for public consultation. Following the submission of the draft Neighbourhood Plan to the two local planning authorities in the summer of July 2023, the Plan was subject to a final 6 week public consultation between 18 August and 29 September 2023.

- 3.4 The representations made during this final consultation and various supporting documents (including a Consultation Statement and a Basic Conditions Statement) were submitted to an independent examiner for consideration on 21 November 2023.
- 3.5 The examiner was required to assess whether the Neighbourhood Plan meets the 'basic conditions', which are that it should:
- have regard to national policy;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan; and
 - be compatible with EU obligations.
- 3.6 The Council (alongside the National Park Authority) has had a role in providing advice and assistance to the Town Council in producing its Neighbourhood Plan, as required by paragraph 3 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 3.7 The findings of the examiner, as set out in their independent examiner's report, was received in February 2024. Where necessary the examiner recommended modifications to the Plan in order that it meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements. The examiner report can be found in Appendix 2.
- 3.8 NFDC, NPA and the Ringwood Town Council met in March 2024 to discuss the examiner's modifications and there was shared agreement that the examiners proposed modifications to the plan were appropriate.

4. REFERENDUM AND THE MAKING OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 4.1 Approval of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (with modifications) and the decision to proceed to referendum was made at Cabinet on 1 May 2024 and Council on 13 May 2024. The Council's Decision Statement can be found in Appendix 3.
- 4.2 The required notices regarding the date of the referendum and how people could vote were subsequently published on 24 May 2024.
- 4.3 The referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan is due to take place on 4 July 2024, following the publication of this report. It is therefore intended that a supplementary update is prepared for publication immediately after the result of the referendum is known. This will confirm the outcome of the referendum and the proposed next steps.
- 4.4 If the Neighbourhood Plan successfully passes the referendum stage, it is capable of proceeding to legally become part of the statutory Development Plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Once the referendum has taken place, and regardless of the outcome, the Council can claim £20,000 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) towards the cost of supporting the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, arranging the examination and carrying out the referendum.

6. CRIME & DISORDER, ENVIRONMENTAL, DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None directly arising.

7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None directly arising.

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – [Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan](#)
(Final Version, May 2024)
Appendix 2 – [Examiners Report](#)
Appendix 3 – [NFDC Decision Statement](#)