

**AM 596-21**

## **NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **AUTHORITY MEETING – 1 JULY 2021**

#### **NEW MILTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - ADOPTION**

**Report by:** David Illsley, Policy Manager

#### **Summary:**

Following receipt of the Examiner's Report and recommendations into the draft New Milton Neighbourhood Plan in December 2019, the National Park Authority agreed what actions to take in the published 'Decision Statement' of January 2020 (report NFNPA 592/20).

Under the relevant regulations, the final part of the Neighbourhood Plan-making process is a local referendum for residents within the parish of New Milton. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic all Neighbourhood Plan referendums were postponed nationally between Spring 2020 and Spring 2021. This meant the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan referendum was delayed until May 2021, when it was held at the same time as the local elections. The referendum was arranged by New Forest District Council (as the 'relevant council') and was held on 6 May 2021. The overwhelming majority of local residents who voted in the referendum supported the proposed Neighbourhood Plan (Annex 1), meaning it could proceed to adoption by both local planning authorities.

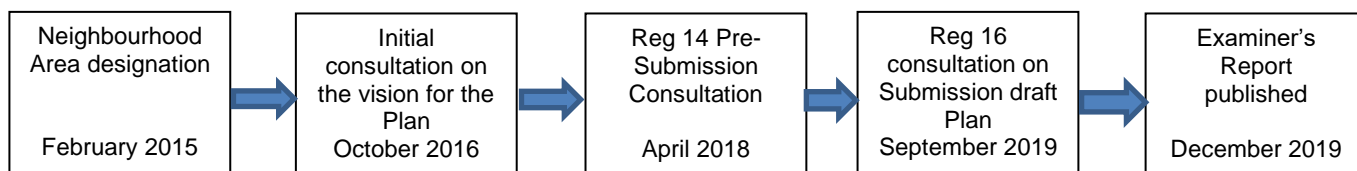
This report therefore recommends the formal 'making' (i.e. adoption) of the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan (Annex 2) for the part of the parish within the New Forest National Park. Once adopted, the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory 'development plan' for the National Park – alongside the Authority's adopted Local Plan (2019) - and will form the basis for decisions on planning applications within the parish.

#### **Recommendation:**

**The New Milton Neighbourhood Plan (Annex 2) be formally 'made' (i.e. adopted) and brought into immediate effect to form part of the statutory 'development plan' and the basis for planning decisions within the part of the National Park in New Milton parish.**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Work on the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan commenced in November 2014 when the Town Council applied to the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council for the whole of the parish to be designated as a 'Neighbourhood Area'. Around a third of the parish lies within the National Park (focused around Bashley and Ossemsley) and the designation was confirmed by both local planning authorities in February 2015.
- 1.2 The Parish Council, their appointed consultants and the various working groups they established have undertaken a significant body of evidence gathering, appraisals/assessments and consultation since Neighbourhood Area was designated in 2015. The diagram below summarises some of the key stages that the preparation of the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan has gone through over the last six years.



1.3 The Authority has liaised with New Milton Town Council and New Forest District Council throughout this Plan-making process. As noted in the Examiner's Report into the draft Neighbourhood Plan (December 2019), "*It is clear that NFDC and NFNPA have been appropriately involved in the formulation of the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan...*" (paragraph 4.8). The Examiner's Report concluded that the policies in the draft Neighbourhood Plan will ensure the parish of New Milton continues to be a vibrant and sustainable community; and that the Neighbourhood Plan will become an important element of the planning policy framework for the area (paragraph 5.5).

1.4 Following receipt of the Examiner's Report, it is the responsibility of the local planning authority / authorities to:

- ensure the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions and to determine whether it proceeds to referendum, with or without modifications; and
- decide whether the voting area should be the Neighbourhood Area or should include other areas too.

1.5 Report NFNPA 592/20 was agreed at the January 2020 Authority meeting and sets out a 'Decision Statement' in response to each of the independent Examiner's recommendations. It was also agreed that the voting area for the local referendum would be the Parish of New Milton and that there was no need for it to be extended further. This was in accordance with the independent Examiner's recommendations.

## 2. Local Referendum – 6 May 2021 (Annex 1)

2.1 As the 'relevant council' under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, it was the responsibility of New Forest District Council to make arrangements for the referendum into the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan. The National Planning Practice Guidance resource on 'Neighbourhood Plans' and the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 provide details on the referendum process. This includes the question to be asked; details of the information that must be made available; the hours of polling; and the notices required in advance of the referendum date.

2.2 In Spring 2020 the Government introduced changes to neighbourhood planning in response to the coronavirus pandemic and the restrictions on movement and social interaction. Regulations linked to the Coronavirus Act 2020 meant that no elections or referendums could take place until May 2021. The New Milton Neighbourhood Plan was caught by these restrictions and the referendum was therefore postponed for a year.

2.2 The referendum for the Neighbourhood Plan was subsequently held on 6 May 2021, at the same time as the local elections. The required notices regarding the date of the Referendum and how people could vote were all published in March 2021. The question asked was "*Do you want New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority to use the Neighbourhood Plan for the New Milton area to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area?*" and the main headlines from the referendum result set out in Annex 1 are:

- Turn out of 35.7% of the eligible electorate in the parish of New Milton; and
- 88% of the local residents who voted in the referendum voted in favour of the Plan

2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan-making process requires at least 50% of the people who vote in a referendum to support the Plan for it to proceed to adoption. As highlighted above, the overwhelming majority (88%) of the local community in New Milton who voted supported the Neighbourhood Plan. Over a third of all the eligible voters in the parish voted, meaning over 7,500 people endorsed the Plan. This positive turnout highlights the benefits of holding the Neighbourhood Plan referendum alongside local elections.

### **3. Adoption as part of the ‘development plan’ for the National Park (Annex 2)**

3.1 With a majority of those who voted in the May 2021 referendum supporting the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan, the Plan must be ‘made’ (i.e. adopted) by the National Park Authority and District Council within eight weeks of the referendum date.

3.2 This report therefore recommends that the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan – as set out in Annex 2 – be formally adopted by the National Park Authority. The Plan has been through several rounds of public consultation; independent examination; and has been positively endorsed by the overwhelming majority of local residents who voted in the May 2021. On adoption, the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory ‘development plan’ for the part of the National Park within the parish of New Milton; forming the basis of planning decisions in that area. New Forest District Council formally adopted the Neighbourhood Plan insofar as it relates to the two thirds of the parish within their planning jurisdiction in June 2021.

3.3 The recommended adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan for the area of the parish within the National Park marks the culmination of over 6 years work by the Town Council, their consultants and local community. As set out in the Examiner’s Report (December 2019), “*The commitment of the Town Council to the preparation of the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan is clear and much effort has been made towards securing a strong raft of local policies that will result in the achievement of the Council’s vision and objectives.*” Members are therefore asked to formally adopt the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **Recommendation:**

**The New Milton Neighbourhood Plan (Annex 2) be formally ‘made’ (i.e. adopted) and brought into immediate effect to form part of the statutory ‘development plan’ and the basis for planning decisions within the part of the National Park in New Milton parish.**

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**Papers:** **AM 596-21** – cover paper  
**Annex 1** – New Milton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum (6 May 2021) – results of poll  
**Annex 2** – New Milton Neighbourhood Plan (for adoption)

**Equality Impact Assessment:** No impacts have been identified.