

## NFNPA 683/24

### NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING

25 JULY 2024

#### WELLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - ADOPTION

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

#### **Summary:**

Following receipt of the independent Examiner's Report and recommendations into the draft Wellow Neighbourhood Plan in April 2024, the National Park Authority agreed what actions to take in our published 'Decision Statement' of May 2024 (report PC 460/24).

Under the relevant regulations, the final part of the Neighbourhood Plan-making process is a local referendum for residents within the parish of Wellow. The referendum was arranged by Test Valley Borough Council (as the 'relevant council') and was held on 11 July 2024. Over 90% of local residents who voted in the referendum on 11 July supported the draft Wellow Neighbourhood Plan (Annex 1), meaning it can proceed to adoption by the two local planning authorities (New Forest National Park Authority and Test Valley Borough Council).

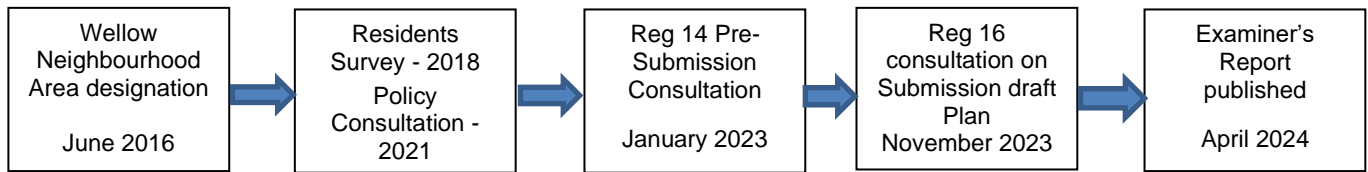
This report therefore recommends the formal 'making' (i.e. adoption) of the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan (Annex 2) for the part of the parish within the New Forest National Park. Once adopted, the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory 'development plan' for the National Park – alongside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

#### **Recommendation:**

**The Wellow 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 Wellow parish.**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Work on the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan commenced in 2016 when the Parish Council applied to the National Park Authority and Test Valley Borough Council for the whole of the parish to be designated as a 'Neighbourhood Area'. Around 15% of the parish of Wellow lies within the National Park, including Wellow Common, Canada Common and the small settlements at Canada and Blackhill. The designation was confirmed by both local planning authorities for their respective areas in Summer 2016.
- 1.2 Following an inaugural meeting with residents and others in December 2016, the Parish Council established a Steering Committee to drive work on the draft Wellow Neighbourhood Plan. A dedicated webpage on the Neighbourhood Plan was established and several parish-wide surveys were conducted to inform the preparation of the Plan (including an assessment of local housing need). The diagram below summarises some of the key stages that the preparation of the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan has gone through over the last eight years.



- 1.3 The Authority has liaised with Wellow Parish Council and Test Valley Borough Council throughout this Plan-making process. The Examiner's Report into the draft Wellow Neighbourhood Plan (April 2024) concludes that provided the recommendations set out in the report are followed, "...the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan would meet the basic conditions, and therefore recommend that, as modified, it should proceed to a referendum..." (paragraph 125).
- 1.4 Following receipt of the Examiner's Report in April 2024, 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 PC 460/24 was agreed at the May 2024 Planning Committee 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 Wellow and that there was no need for it to be extended further. This was in accordance with the independent Examiner's recommendations.

## **2. Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Local Referendum – 11 July 2024 (Annex 1)**

- 2.1 As the 'relevant council' under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, it was the responsibility of Test Valley Borough Council to make arrangements for the referendum into the Wellow 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; the information that must be made available; the hours of polling; and the notice required in advance of the referendum date. The referendum was conducted in accordance with procedures similar to those used at local government elections.
- 2.2 The referendum was held on 11 July 2024. The required notices regarding the date of the referendum and how people could vote were published in accordance with the requirement notice period. The question asked was "Do you want Test Valley Borough Council and New Forest National Park Authority to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Wellow to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?: The main headlines from the referendum result set out in Annex 1 are:
- Turn-out of 22.58% of the eligible electorate in the parish of Wellow; and
  - **90.86%** of 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 (90.86%) of the local community in Wellow who voted supported the Neighbourhood Plan. This is a strong expression of support for the Neighbourhood Plan by the local community in Wellow.

### **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 July 2024 referendum supporting the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan, the Plan must be ‘made’ (i.e. adopted) by the National Park Authority and Test Valley Borough Council within eight weeks of the referendum date.
- 3.2 This report therefore recommends that the Wellow 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 July 2024 referendum. On adoption, the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory ‘development plan’ for the part of the National Park within the parish of Wellow; forming the basis of planning decisions in that area. Test Valley Borough Council will be formally adopting the Neighbourhood Plan insofar as it relates to the majority of the parish within their planning jurisdiction through their own processes.
- 3.3 The recommended adoption of the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan for the area of the parish within the National Park marks the final step in the plan-preparation process which commenced in 2016. As set out in the Examiner’s Report (April 2024), “...the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan makes appropriate provision for sustainable development. I conclude that in this and in all other material respects, subject to my recommended modifications, it has appropriate regard to national policy. Similarly, and again subject to my recommended modifications, I conclude that the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area. There is no evidence before me to suggest that the Plan is not compatible with EU obligations, including human rights requirements.” Members are therefore asked to formally ‘make’ (or adopt) the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **Recommendation:**

**The Wellow 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 Wellow parish.**

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**Papers:** **NFNPA 683/24** – cover paper

**Annex 1** – Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Referendum (11 July 2024) – results of poll

**Annex 2** Wellow Neighbourhood Plan (for adoption)

#### **Equality Impact Assessment:**

No impacts have been identified. The Wellow Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared through several rounds of public consultation and independent examination. Wellow Parish Council employed a number of initiatives - including surveys, community engagement and evidence base studies – to inform the Plan-preparation process. The independent Examiner concluded that the Plan was legally-compliant.

## Annex 1 - Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Referendum (11 July 2024) – results of poll

### DECLARATION OF RESULT OF POLL

#### Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan for Wellow

I, Andrew Ferrier, being the Counting Officer at the above referendum held on Thursday 11 July 2024, do hereby give notice that the number of votes cast in this referendum on the question –

**Do you want Test Valley Borough Council and New Forest National Park Authority to use the neighbourhood plan for Wellow to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?**

was as follows:

	Votes Recorded	Percentage
Number cast in favour of a Yes	557	90.86%
Number cast in favour of a No	55	8.97%

The number of ballot papers rejected was as follows:	Number of ballot papers
A want of an official mark	0
B voting for more answers than required	0
C writing or mark by which voter could be identified	0
D being unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty	1
E rejected in part	0
Total	1

Electorate: 2,715

Ballot Papers Issued: 613

Turnout: 22.58%

And I do hereby declare that more than half of those voting have voted in favour of the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan.

Dated: Thursday 11 July 2024

Andrew Ferrier  
Counting Officer

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