

AM 736/25

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 MARCH 2026

LYMINGTON AND PENNINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - ADOPTION

Report by: Jade Bowes, Policy Officer

Summary:

Following receipt of the independent Examiner's Report and recommendations into the draft Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan in September 2025, the National Park Authority agreed what actions to take in our published 'Decision Statement' of November 2025 (report PC 500/25).

Under the relevant regulations, the final part of the Neighbourhood Plan-making process is a local referendum for residents within the parish of Lymington and Pennington. The referendum was arranged by New Forest District Council (as the 'relevant council') and was held on 29 January 2026. Over 90% of local residents who voted in the referendum supported the draft Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan (Annex 1), meaning it can proceed to adoption by the two local planning authorities (New Forest National Park Authority and New Forest District Council).

This report therefore recommends the formal 'making' (i.e. adoption) of the Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan (Annex 2) for the part of the parish within the New Forest National Park. Once adopted, the Lymington and Pennington 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. New Forest District Council formally 'made' the Neighbourhood Plan for the area of the parish within their planning jurisdiction on 26 February 2026.

Recommendation:

The Lymington and Pennington 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 Lymington and Pennington parish.

1. Introduction

1.1. 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.

- 1.2. The Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan ‘Neighbourhood Area’ was designated in September 2015 and covers the whole of the Parish. The parish includes the Lymington & Pennington Marshes, Pennington Common and Buckland Rings which all lie within the National Park.
- 1.3. Work on the Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Development Plan has been overseen locally by a steering group of town councillors and community representatives. The Town Council commenced a series of working groups throughout 2016 and 2017, and steering group work continued with help and input from consultants from 2018 until 2023 when informal consultations took place on draft content. Formal public consultation took place on an initial Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) Neighbourhood Plan between 7 August 2024 and 9 October 2024. Following the submission of the draft Neighbourhood Plan to the two local planning authorities in March 2025, the Plan was subject to a final 6-week public consultation between 18 April and 30 May 2025.
- 1.4. The representations made during this final consultation and various supporting documents (including a Consultation Statement and a Basic Conditions Statement) were submitted to the independent Examiner for consideration on 13 June 2025.
- 1.5. The National Park Authority (with New Forest District Council) has provided 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).

2. Examination of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1. The independent Examiner was required to assess whether the Neighbourhood Plan met 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
 - be compatible with EU obligations
- 2.2. The findings of the Examiner, as set out in their independent Examiner’s Report, were received in September 2025. The Examiner recommended eight modifications to the Plan in order that it meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements.
- 2.3. The Examiner’s Report also recommends that the Plan, once modified, should proceed to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.
- 2.4. The National Park Authority, New Forest District Council and the Lymington and Pennington Town Council met in October 2025 to discuss the Examiner’s proposed modifications and there was shared agreement that the Examiner’s proposed modifications to the plan were appropriate.

3. Referendum and the making of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.1. Approval of the Lymington & Pennington Neighbourhood Plan modifications and the decision to proceed to referendum were made at our Planning Committee meeting on 18 November 2025. Full details of the report are available at [Planning Committee 18/11/25 - New Forest National Park Authority](#) (ref 500/25).

- 3.2. As the ‘relevant council’ under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, it was the responsibility of New Forest District Council to make arrangements for the referendum into the 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 noticed required in advance of the referendum date. The referendum was conducted in accordance with procedures similar to those used at local government elections.
- 3.3. The referendum was held on 29 January 2026. The required notices regarding the date of the referendum and how people could vote were published in accordance with the legal requirements. The headlines from the referendum result set out in Annex 1 are:
- Turn-out of 17.1% of the eligible electorate in the parish of Lymington and Pennington; and
 - 92.5% of local residents who voted in the referendum voted in favour of the Plan.
- 3.4. 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 (92.5%) of the local community in Lymington and Pennington who voted supported the Neighbourhood Plan. This is a strong expression of support for the Neighbourhood Plan by the local community in Lymington and Pennington.

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

- 4.1. With a majority of those who voted in the January 2026 referendum supporting the Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan, the Plan must be ‘made’ (i.e. adopted) by the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council within eight weeks of the referendum date – i.e. by 27 March 2026.
- 4.2. This report therefore recommends that the Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan – as set out in Annex 2 – be formally adopted by the 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 January 2026 referendum. On adoption, the Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory ‘development plan’ for the part of the National Park within the parish of Lymington and Pennington; forming the basis of planning decisions in that area. New Forest District Council formally adopted the Neighbourhood Plan as it relates to the area of the parish within their planning jurisdiction on 26 February 2026.
- 4.3. The recommended adoption of the Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan for the area of the parish within the National Park marks the final step in the plan-preparation process. As set out in the Examiner’s Report (September 2025), *“The LPTC, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and other voluntary contributors are to be commended for producing a succinct and comprehensive Plan. The Plan is logically presented, informative and extremely well illustrated. The Consultation Statement and the Basic Conditions Statement were concise and very useful. The Plan also benefitted from the constructive comments from the considered responses from the LPTC and NFDC to my questions. Subject to the recommended modifications, the LPNP will make a positive contribution to the Development Plan for the area and should enable the extremely attractive character and appearance of Lymington and Pennington to be maintained whilst enabling sustainable development to proceed.”* Members are therefore asked to formally ‘make’ (or adopt) the Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The Lymington and Pennington 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 the parish of Lymington and Pennington.

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- Papers:** **NFNPA 736/26** – cover report
Annex 1 – Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan Referendum (29 January 2026) – results of poll
Annex 2 – Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan (referendum version for adoption) Available online only via the NPA website here
<https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/documents/authority-meetings/new-forest-national-park-authority-meeting-26-03-25/>
or via NFDC website here
<https://www.newforest.gov.uk/lymingtonandpenningtonplan>
- Previous papers:** **PC 500/25** - Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan Examiner’s Report – NPA Decision Statement
- Equality Impact Assessment:** No impacts have been identified. The Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared through several rounds of public consultation and independent examination. Lymington and Pennington Town Council employed a number of initiatives - including posters, community engagement and evidence base studies – to inform the Plan-preparation process. The independent Examiner concluded that the Plan was legally-compliant.
- Resources:** n/a

Annex 1 – Lymington & Pennington Neighbourhood Plan Referendum (29 January 2026) – results of the poll

DECLARATION OF RESULT OF POLL

Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan for Lymington & Pennington

I Alan Bethune, being the Counting Officer at the above referendum held on Thursday 29 January 2026, do hereby give notice that the results of the votes cast is as follows:

Question		
'Do you want New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Lymington & Pennington to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'		
	Votes Recorded	Percentage
Number cast in favour of a Yes	1992	92.5 %
Number cast in favour of a No	162	7.5 %

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	1
D	being unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty	3
Total		4

Electorate: 12623

Ballot Papers Issued: 2158

Turnout: 17.1%

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

Dated Thursday 29 January 2026

Alan Bethune
Counting Officer

Printed and published by the Counting Officer.