

Hermitage Neighbourhood Development Plan Information Statement

1. About this statement

A referendum on the Hermitage Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) will be held on **Thursday 2 May 2024**. This statement provides information on the referendum that is taking place, and the neighbourhood plan it relates to.

2. Referendum on the Hermitage NDP

A referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a question. For this referendum you will receive a ballot paper which asks the following question:

Do you want West Berkshire District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Hermitage to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

3. What is a neighbourhood area?

The neighbourhood area for Hermitage is identified on the map which is included at the end of this Information Statement. The boundary of the neighbourhood area was approved by West Berkshire District Council in April 2019 and covers the parish of Hermitage.

The referendum area is identical to the area which has been designated as the Hermitage Neighbourhood Area.

4. Am I entitled to vote in the Referendum?

A person is entitled to vote in the referendum if on the 2 May 2024:

- he or she is entitled to vote in a local government election in the referendum area; and
- his or her qualifying address for the election is in the referendum area. A persons qualifying address is, in relation to a person registered in the register of electors, the address in respect of which he or she is entitled to be registered.

The referendum will be conducted based in accordance with procedures similar to those used at local government elections.

5. How do I vote in the Referendum?

You will be given a ballot paper at the polling station and you can vote by putting a cross (X) in the 'Yes' or 'No' box on your ballot paper. You will only be allowed to put a cross in one box or your vote will not be counted.

If more than 50% of individuals vote 'yes' in the referendum, then West Berkshire District Council will 'make' the Hermitage NDP. If the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' it will help determine planning applications in the Hermitage Neighbourhood Area. It will also form part of the statutory development plan for West Berkshire.

If more people vote 'no' than 'yes' then the NDP will not be made part of the statutory development plan for the local area.

6. What are the referendum documents and where can you view them?

There are a number of documents that are available to view as part of the referendum. These are listed below:

- The referendum version of the Hermitage NDP;
- The independent examiner's report on the Hermitage NDP;
- A summary of representations submitted to the independent examiner following consultation on the Hermitage NDP;
- A Decision Statement from the Local Planning Authority which confirms that the Hermitage NDP with modifications meets the Basic Conditions and other legislative requirements. It also confirms that the neighbourhood plan can proceed to referendum;
- A statement that sets out general information in respect of town and country planning, which includes neighbourhood planning.

A hard copy of all of the above documents and this Information Statement can be inspected at:

- West Berkshire District Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD (8:30am – 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8:30am – 4:30pm Friday);
- Adelaide Room, Holy Trinity Church, Marlston Road, Hermitage, RG18 9SU;
- The White Horse Public House, Newbury Road, Hermitage, RG18 9TB; and
- The Fox Inn Public House, High Street, Hermitage, RG18 9RB.

In addition, all of the documents can be viewed online on the council's website at <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/hermitagendp>.

7. Referendum Expenses

Expenses can be incurred by an individual or body during the period of the referendum for referendum purposes.

The referendum expenses limit that will apply (as at 2 May 2024) in relation to this referendum is £2,452. The number of persons entitled to vote in the referendum is 1,529.

8. How to find out more

Further general information on neighbourhood planning is available on the council's website at: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>.

For queries regarding planning issues and neighbourhood planning in general, please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01635 519 111 or by email at planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk.

For queries regarding the referendum, please contact the Electoral Services Team on 01635 519 464 or by email at vote@westberks.gov.uk.