



Information for Voters Neighbourhood Plan
Referendum for

Watton

About this booklet

On Thursday 18 January 2024 there will be a referendum on a neighbourhood plan for your area. This booklet explains more about the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part in it. In this booklet you can find out about:

- What is Neighbourhood Planning?
- Referendum on the neighbourhood plan (and how you can take part)

What is Neighbourhood Planning?

Neighbourhood planning aims to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. The Neighbourhood plan shows how the community wants land to be used and developed in its area. It is a development plan document that, if adopted, will support Breckland Council's decision-making in regard to its role as the Planning Authority.

What is a neighbourhood area?

A neighbourhood area can cover single streets or large urban or rural areas. The boundaries of a neighbourhood area are put forward by a town or parish council.

In Watton, the boundary of the joint neighbourhood area was determined by Breckland Council and covers the parish of Watton.

Who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by the community and led by town or parish councils. In this case, the Watton neighbourhood plan was prepared by the parish council of Watton.

What is a Development Plan?

In England, planning applications are determined by local planning authorities in accordance with the Development Plan. A Development Plan is a set of documents that set out the policies for the development and use of land across the entire local authority area. Within Breckland, the local planning authority is Breckland Council.

Neighbourhood Planning in Watton

The Referendum area has been designated as the parish of **Watton**. The Referendum area has been designated as the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Specified (relevant) documents

Paper copies of this Referendum Information Statement, along with the specified documents, are available to view during normal opening hours at:

- Breckland Council Offices, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, NR19 1EE
- Watton Town Council Offices, Middle St, Watton, Thetford IP25 6AG
- Watton Library, George Trollope Road, Watton, IP25 6AS

The specified documents are:

- The Watton Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Report of the Independent Examiner
- A Summary of the representations submitted to the Independent Examiner
- A Statement by the local planning authority that the draft plan meets the basic conditions and complies with the relevant legislation
- A statement that sets out general information about town and country planning including neighbourhood planning and the referendum.

A copy of the specified documents may also be inspected on the following website:

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/watton>

Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan

A referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a question. The question which will be asked at the Referendum is:

“Do you want Breckland Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Watton to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?”

How do I vote in the referendum?

You vote by putting a cross (X) in the 'Yes' or 'No' box on your ballot paper. Put a cross in only **one** box or your vote may not be counted.

If more people vote 'yes' than 'no' in this referendum, then Breckland Council will use the neighbourhood plan to help it decide planning applications in Watton.

The neighbourhood plan, once adopted, will become part of the Development Plan.

If more people vote 'no' than 'yes', then planning applications will be decided without using the neighbourhood plan as part of the Development Plan for the local area.

Can I vote?

You can vote in the referendum if you live in the parish of Watton and:

- You are registered to vote in local council elections; and
- You are 18 years of age or over on Thursday 18 January 2024

You have to be registered to vote by Tuesday 2 January 2024 to vote in the referendum. You can check if you are registered to vote by calling Electoral Services on 01362 656870. The referendum will be conducted based on procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections.

Ways of voting - There are three ways of voting:

In person

- At your local polling station. It is easy and a member of staff will be there to help if you are not sure what to do.

The polling station will be at:

- Queens Hall, Norwich Road, Watton, IP25 6DA
Polling stations are open from 7:00am to 10:00pm.

By post:

- If you have a postal vote already, you will receive a poll card confirming this. To vote by post, you will need to complete an application to vote by post via the government website [Apply for a postal vote - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) or alternatively you can send a paper application. In either case it must be received by the electoral registration officer by no later than 5pm on Wednesday 3 January 2024. Paper applications can be sent to the following address: **Electoral Services, Breckland Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, NR19 1EE**
- Postal votes can be sent overseas but you need to think about whether you will have time to receive and return your completed postal vote which must be received by the Counting Officer by no later than 10pm, Thursday 18 January 2024.
- You should receive your postal vote about a week before polling day. If it doesn't arrive, you can ask for a replacement up to 5pm on Thursday 18 January 2024 by contacting Electoral Services on 01362 656870.

By proxy:

- If you have a proxy vote already, you will receive a poll card confirming this.
- If you can't get to the polling station and don't wish to vote by post, you may be able to vote by proxy. This means allowing somebody that you trust to vote on your behalf.
- To vote by proxy, you will need to complete an application to vote by proxy via the government website <https://www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote> or alternatively you can send a paper application. In either case it must be received by the electoral registration officer by no later than 5pm on Wednesday 10 January 2024. Paper applications can be sent to the following address: **Electoral Services, Breckland Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, NR19 1EE.**
- When you apply for a proxy vote, you must say why you cannot vote in person.
- Anyone can be your proxy as long as they are eligible to vote and are willing to vote on your behalf. You will have to tell them how you want to vote.

Am I registered to vote?

If you're not registered, you won't be able to vote. You can check if you are registered by calling Electoral Services on 01362 656870.

If you are not registered to vote, you will need to apply before midnight on Tuesday 2 January 2024. You can apply online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

Registration forms are available from Electoral Services on 01362 656870 or by emailing elections@breckland.gov.uk.

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 in relation to the Referendum is the number of persons entitled to vote in the Referendum, by reference to which that limit has been calculated, is £2,777.24.

The Referendum will be conducted in accordance with procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections.