

Delegated decision recommendation report

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| Originator | John Devonshire |
| Decision type | Delegated |
| Date | 15 th October 2025 |

Synopsis of report:

The purpose of this report is to consider the feedback received from the consultation on the proposed re-designation of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum. Alongside this, there will also need to be consideration as to whether the Forum would meet the requirements set out under Section 61F (5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The Council's Constitution sets out that for policy making and progression in the consideration of neighbourhood development plans – which would include making a decision on whether to designate a Neighbourhood Forum– both the Corporate Head of Planning, Economy and Built Environment and/or the Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Climate Change Manager have delegated authority to make the decision on the way forward.

Recommendation (s): That the Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Climate Change Manager or the Corporate Head of Planning, Economy & Built Environment AGREES:

- 1. that Runnymede Borough Council should re-designate the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum.**

1. Background

- 1.1 The Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum was originally designated on 14th October 2020 for a five-year period, which expires on the 14th October 2025. The forum was designated to advance neighbourhood planning in the approved Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area, which was designated at the same time.
- 1.2 The Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum has made some advances in progressing neighbourhood planning in the area since first being designated in 2020, with the Forum having undertaken community events and surveys, but as yet, no consultation under Regulation 14 (pre-submission consultation & publicity) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) has occurred.
- 1.3 In order to continue to work towards a pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan, the Forum wishes to continue to exist, and consequently has submitted an application for redesignation. No change is proposed to the Neighbourhood Area to be covered by the Forum.
- 1.4 In accordance with regulation 9 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the Council is required to consult for at least six weeks on the proposed redesignation of the Forum. This took place over a six-week period between Tuesday 12th August 2025 and Tuesday 23rd September 2025. In accordance with regulations (9A(2)(b)) of the same regulations, a decision must be made within 13 weeks of the initial publication of the Neighbourhood Forum application, which based on this first being publicised on

12th August 2025, is Tuesday 11th November 2025. This report aims to enable a decision to be made within the 13-week period in line with the relevant regulations.

2. Considerations

2.1 Regulation 8 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires the following to be submitted to the Council as part of an application to designate a Neighbourhood Forum.

- (a) the name of the proposed neighbourhood forum;
- (b) a copy of the written constitution of the proposed neighbourhood forum;
- (c) the name of the neighbourhood area to which the application relates and a map which identifies the area;
- (d) the contact details of at least one member of the proposed neighbourhood forum to be made public under regulations 9 and 10; and
- (e) a statement which explains how the proposed neighbourhood forum meets the conditions contained in section 61F(5) of the 1990 Act.

2.2 The above information was submitted to the Council (see <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/5>), and having reviewed the information provided, the requirements of these regulations are considered to be met.

2.3 To meet the requirements of regulation 9 as set out above, consultation on the proposed Neighbourhood Forum was undertaken between 12th August 2025 and 23rd September 2025. These regulations require the Council to 'publish the following on their website and in such other manner as they consider is likely to bring the application to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the area to which the application relates':

- (a) a copy of the [Forum] application;
- (b) a statement that if a designation is made, no other organisation or body may be designated for that neighbourhood area until that designation expires or is withdrawn;
- (c) details of how to make representations; and
- (d) the date by which those representations must be received, being not less than 6 weeks from the date on which the application is first publicised.

2.4 To satisfy the regulatory requirements set out above, as part of this public consultation, the Council has emailed those on the Council's Planning Policy consultation database, as well as putting a notice in the official noticeboard in the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area. Copies of the application have also been put in Woking Library and the reception area at the Civic Centre in Addlestone. The application documentation was also published on the Council's website for the duration of the consultation period.

2.5 Four responses were received to this consultation (see Appendix 1). One of these responses raised an objection to the redesignation of the Forum. The other three responses were either supportive or raised no comments. In terms of the objection, this is in regard to the extent of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area and that the Forum may wish to change the status/use of the Hare Hill SANG which should be excluded from the Neighbourhood Area.

- 2.6 In response to the objection, the extent of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area was considered appropriate when designated by the Council's Planning Committee in 2020 and the extent of the Neighbourhood Area has not changed nor is being proposed for change since designation in 2020. In terms of the comments regarding the Hare Hill SANG, this is owned and managed by Runnymede Borough Council and allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan as a SANG. Any Neighbourhood Plan Policy would need to be in conformity with the Local Plan including Hare Hill's use as a SANG. Nevertheless, it remains that this application and consultation is only concerned with the re-designation of the Neighbourhood Forum and therefore cannot consider the extent of the Neighbourhood Area designation.
- 2.7 It is therefore considered that the Council should redesignate the Neighbourhood Forum as all parts of the relevant regulations as described in this report are considered to have been met. Therefore, it is recommended to the Corporate Head of Planning, Economy & Built Environment /Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Climate Change Manager that the proposed Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum is re-designated for a further five years in accordance with Section 61F(5) of the 1990 Planning Act (as amended). This period will start from the date that this decision is made.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 If the Corporate Head of Planning, Economy & Built Environment / Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Climate Change Manager determines that the proposed Neighbourhood Forum should be re designated, regulation 10 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires that the Council publicises the designation of the Forum on their website and 'in such other manner as they consider is likely to bring the designation to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area'. This includes:
- (a) the name of the neighbourhood forum;
 - (b) a copy of the written constitution of the neighbourhood forum;
 - (c) the name of the neighbourhood area to which the designation relates; and
 - (d) contact details for at least one member of the neighbourhood forum.
- 3.2 The above information will be updated (where required) on the Council's website, which already has an existing webpage specifically related to Neighbourhood Planning for Ottershaw. The Council will also email those on the Council's Planning Policy consultation database, and put a notice in the official noticeboard in the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area to confirm that the Council has made the decision to redesignate the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum and to confirm where the relevant documentation can be viewed. A decision to re-designate the Forum would enable the organisation, that was the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum (until its five-year period expires), to be a recognised Forum for the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area again and thus continue to work towards a first Neighbourhood Plan for the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area.

4. Resource/financial implications (where applicable)

- 4.1 The Council responsibilities associated with delivering neighbourhood planning are being undertaken within the existing resources of the Planning Policy Team, drawing upon the expertise of other staff as required, and utilising existing budgets and government funding at the relevant stages of Plan preparation.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Where officers have concluded that the application to re-designate the Neighbourhood Forum is legally compliant, the Corporate Head of Planning, Economy & Built Environment/Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Climate Change Manager has delegated authority to make the decision on the way forward. National regulations require that the Council considers the consultation responses received, and whether those representations should be acted upon / result in changes being made to the proposed Neighbourhood Area. The Council's decision must be published on its website and 'in such other manner as they consider is likely to bring the designation to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area' as per regulation 10 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) as set out above.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 Part of the Forum application includes a statement which sets out that the proposed Forum 'comprises a diverse group of residents and community representatives'. Alongside this, there is also a stated commitment that as the Forum seeks re-designation, 'that they remain committed to upholding the principles of transparency, inclusivity, and democratic participation in all aspects of our work'. As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process itself, the Forum will need to meet a formal legal requirement to produce what is known as a 'Basic Conditions Statement', which is an assessment to examine the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to the 'protected characteristics' as identified in the Equality Act 2010. This assessment requires them to follow the correct legal processes in order for the Examiner and Runnymede Borough Council to conclude that the Neighbourhood Plan will have regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 The Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum will need to develop a Neighbourhood Plan which takes account of environmental/sustainability and biodiversity implications to ensure conformity with the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan. As part of the 'Basic Conditions' statement required under Schedule 4B(8)(2) of the 1990 Planning Act (as amended), the draft plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and must not breach or is otherwise compatible with assimilated obligations including on environmental/biodiversity implications.

8. Other implications (where applicable)

- 8.1 There are no known other implications.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Officers take the view that the proposed re-designation of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum should go ahead for a further five years. This period would start from the date that the decision is made and published on the Council's website as required by the regulations set out above.

Background papers

Appendix 1 - Summary of the consultation responses received

Forum Redesignation Application - Available at

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/5>

Recommendation agreed by the Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Climate Change Manager on 14th October 2025.

Signature: *Georgina Pacey*

Date: 14th October 2025

APPENDIX 1 – Summary of the consultation responses received

This consultation ran from Tuesday 12th August – Tuesday 23rd September 2025. Four responses were received, and these are set out below.

| Representor | Comments | Officer Response | Actions / amendments made to the proposed re-designation of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum |
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| National Highways | <p>National Highways was appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as a strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such we work to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity. We are specifically concerned with any proposals which have the potential to impact the safety and operation of the SRN, particularly the M25 J11 and J12 and the M3 J2 which are located in close proximity to the village of Ottershaw and fall within the wider Runnymede Borough Council area.</p> <p>Following a review of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum Application to Runnymede Council for Redesignation, we are satisfied that this consultation</p> | Noted. | None |

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| | does not directly impact National Highways or our network. However, we look forward to being consulted on any planning applications within Ottershaw and the wider Runnymede Borough Council area that have the potential to impact the SRN in the future. | | |
| Natural England | No comments. | Noted. | None |
| Private Individual | Support for the Forum continuing to serve its community. The forum has dealt with a wide variety of planning related issues over the past 5 years, none of which would have been given voice if the forum had not existed. | Support noted. | None |
| Private Individual | <p>I write concerning the re-designation of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum and Area.</p> <p>I declare an interest in that I am an RBC warden for Hare Hill Open Space within this Area, and have been so since about 2008, while my wife has been a warden for 30 years.</p> <p>I was surprised in 2020 when this proposal was first made, on the grounds of the area which this Forum selected itself to represent. It extends way too far beyond Ottershaw, and I object strongly to this attempt to exert influence over areas which are not Ottershaw in any meaningful way. Although I seem to recall the area was originally stated to follow old</p> | <p>The comments made in this representation are noted but mainly focus on the extent of the Neighbourhood Area which is not the subject of this consultation, only the re-designation of the Forum.</p> <p>It is noted that similar objections to the extent of the Neighbourhood Area were made when it was first designated in 2020 and the Borough Council, in considering those objections, took the decision that the extent of the area was appropriate. It is not considered that there has been any significant or material change in circumstances since the</p> | None |

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| | <p>boundaries - I forget the details, but (for example) old parish boundaries, constituency boundaries, postal routes, roads, tracks and so forth - that really isn't the case. For example, the NW corner at Gracious Pond road is a point of land probably drafted to claim the houses of Stonehill, for it seemingly follows no other old boundary. The area covers all of the land south to McLaren and north east up to Bittams Lane, up to the motorway link road which is almost the back fences of the estate there. That's not Ottershaw, and really none of Ottershaw's business.</p> <p>My particular objection is the eastward extent to Howards Lane in Rowtown, where it literally ends at the front fences of the houses there. This is not acceptable to me. The residents of Howards Lane are not Ottershaw, they are Rowtown, and they are not represented by Ottershaw. A Rowtown Neighbourhood Forum could reasonably claim all the current ONF area westwards to Slade Road were it to follow similar principles.</p> <p>The 27 acre patch of land between these two communities is Hare Hill Open Space, a SANGS owned by RBC. Its use, management, control, future and planning are nothing to do specifically with either community, but</p> | <p>designation in 2020 and therefore the extent of the area remains appropriate, largely based on the Ottershaw Ward boundary, excluding the areas of Rowtown and Addlestone. Nevertheless, it remains that this application and consultation is only concerned with the re-designation of the Neighbourhood Forum and therefore cannot consider the extent of the area designation.</p> <p>Comments regarding the SANG at Hare Hill are noted. The SANG is owned and managed by the Borough Council and is allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan as a SANG. Any Neighbourhood Plan for</p> | |
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| | <p>obviously has some bearing with both. I note, for example, that ONF has in the past put forward ideas to annex some of that space as a new play area for Ottershaw children. I fear this proposal was made in order to free up current play space within Ottershaw for more housing. If Ottershaw wants to build more housing, that's not my problem, but the ONF should not even think of biting pieces off Hare Hill, and (simply by making the suggestion) implying that it represents all of Hare Hill's adjacent communities in this matter. Similarly ONF has expressed some views both to maintaining the current SANGS status of Hare Hill (namely the cost and location of required parking space) and to its possible change to Local Nature Reserve status. In my view this is nothing to do with Ottershaw town planning, but is instead an environmental matter to be decided by RBC environmentalists.</p> <p>I therefore suggest:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum be restricted to an area which is strictly the Ottershaw housing area (a matter to be debated I daresay, as quite reasonably some outlying properties may then choose to opt in, and others to opt out). It should not in principle extend more than halfway to any other settlement. | <p>Ottershaw would need to be in conformity with the 2030 Local Plan (or its successor) including the use of Hare Hill as a SANG only. In terms of Local Nature Reserve Status, it is not within the power of a Neighbourhood Plan to make this designation.</p> | |
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| | 2. That Hare Hill Open Space be entirely excluded from any Neighbourhood Forum. Such an exclusion would be worth making for all other such green space unless privately owned. | | |
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