



Northumberland
County Council

Belford Neighbourhood Plan

Referendum Information Statement (Including Information for Voters)

Statement Published: **Monday 5 February 2024**

Referendum Date: **Thursday 14 March 2024**

Contents

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan](#)
3. [How do I vote in the referendum?](#)
4. [What is a Neighbourhood Plan?](#)
5. [What is the Development Plan?](#)
6. [Who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?](#)
7. [The Neighbourhood Area](#)
8. [Can I vote?](#)
9. [Ways of voting](#)
10. [Voter Identification](#)
11. [Am I registered to vote?](#)
12. [Referendum expenses](#)
13. [Specified documents to be published before Referendum](#)
14. [How to find out more](#)

1. Introduction

On Thursday 14 March 2024, there will be a referendum on a neighbourhood plan for your area. This statement explains more about the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part in it. This statement provides information about:

- The referendum and how you can take part;
- The planning system in England;
- Neighbourhood plans;
- The Neighbourhood Area.

2. Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan

A referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a question.

For this referendum you will receive a ballot paper with this question:

“Do you want Northumberland County Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Belford Parish to help decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?”

3. How do I vote in the referendum?

You vote by putting a cross (X) in the 'Yes' or 'No' box on your ballot paper.

You should put a cross in only **one** box or your vote will not be counted.

If more people vote 'Yes' than 'No' in this referendum, then Northumberland County Council will use the Neighbourhood Plan to help decide planning applications in the Parish of Belford.

If more people vote 'No' than 'Yes', then planning applications will continue to be decided without using the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan. Instead planning applications would be decided using policies in the Northumberland Local Plan.

4. What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood planning powers were introduced in the Localism Act in 2011 with the purpose of enabling communities to play a direct role in planning for development in their local areas. Communities, led by a Town or Parish Council prepare the neighbourhood plan, which will contain planning policies that will be used to help determine planning applications. When a

neighbourhood plan passes a local referendum, it becomes part of the development plan for that neighbourhood area and must be used by officers at the County Council to help in making decisions on planning applications in that area.

5. What is the Development Plan?

In England, decisions on planning applications are made by local planning authorities. Those decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan is a set of documents that contain policies for the development and use of land in a local planning authority area.

Northumberland County Council is the local planning authority for Northumberland with the exception of areas covered by the Northumberland National Park where the Northumberland National Park Authority is the local planning authority.

6. Who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

Where town or parish councils exist, they are the only organisations that can start the work of preparing a neighbourhood plan.

In this case, the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Belford Parish Council with the support of local people.

7. The Neighbourhood Area

Neighbourhood plans can only be created in formally designated neighbourhood areas.

Neighbourhood areas will normally follow parish boundaries or groups of parishes.

The Referendum area is identical to the area designated as the Belford Neighbourhood Area and is shown on the map.

Belford Neighbourhood Area



8. Can I vote?

You can vote in the referendum if you live in the Parish of Belford and:

- You are registered to vote in local council elections; and
- You are 18 years of age or over on **Thursday 14 March 2024**.

You have to be registered to vote by **Tuesday 27 February 2024** to vote in the referendum. You can check if you are registered to vote by calling our Helpline on 01670 624844.

The referendum will be conducted based on procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections.

9. Ways of voting

There are three ways of voting.

In person on Thursday 14 March 2024:

- At your local polling station. It is easy and a member of staff will always help if you are not sure what to do.
- The polling stations is at:

Belford Bell View
33 West Street
Belford
Northumberland
NE70 7QB

- The polling station is open from **7am to 10pm**.
- You will receive a poll card for this referendum. If you do not receive your poll card, you can contact our Helpline on 01670 624844, or email us on elections@northumberland.gov.uk.

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 form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive **by 5pm on Wednesday 28 February 2024** at this address:

Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

- 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.
- You should receive your postal vote about a week before polling day. If it doesn't arrive in time, you can ask for a replacement **up to 5pm on Thursday 14 March 2024** by contacting our Helpline on 01670 624844.

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 you trust to vote on your behalf.
- To vote by proxy, you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive **up to 5pm on Wednesday 6 March 2024** at this address:

Northumberland County Council
 County Hall
 Morpeth
 Northumberland
 NE61 2EF

- 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.

Postal and proxy vote application forms are available from our Helpline on 01670 624844 or by emailing elections@northumberland.gov.uk You can also download forms from Northumberland County Council's website.

Postal vote application details can be found here:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/apply-vote-post>

Proxy vote application details can be found here:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/how-vote-proxy>

10. Voter Identification

You must bring photographic identification to vote. You will not be able to vote unless you show photographic identification to the polling station staff.

A full list of accepted photographic identification is set out below:

- A passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a Commonwealth country;
- A driving licence issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or an EEA state
- A biometric immigration document
- An identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- A Blue Badge
- A national identity card issued by an EEA state
- An Older Person's Bus Pass
- A Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- An Oyster 60+ Card
- A Freedom Pass
- A Scottish National Entitlement Card issued in Scotland
- A 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card issued in Wales
- A Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card issued in Wales
- A Senior SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- A Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- A War Disablement SmartPass or War Disabled SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- A 60+ SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- A Half Fare SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- An Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland
- A Voter Authority Certificate or a temporary Voter Authority Certificate.

If you do not possess any of the above forms of photographic identification, you can apply to the Electoral Registration Officer for a free Voter Authority Certificate. Completed applications must reach us before **5pm on Wednesday 6 March 2024.**

A full list of accepted photographic identification is set out on your Polling Card. Alternatively, please contact our Helpline on 01670 624844, or email us on elections@northumberland.gov.uk for further information on identification requirements.

11. 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 our Helpline on 01670 624844.

If you are not registered to vote, you will need to submit an application to register. You can do this online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Alternatively, you can contact Electoral Services on the helpline number above to apply by telephone or to be sent with a paper application form.

However you choose to submit your application, you will need your National Insurance Number.

12. Referendum expenses

Expenses can be incurred by an individual or body organising a campaign during the period of the referendum for referendum purposes. There is a limit to the amount that campaigners can spend on their advertising for the referendum.

The Referendum expenses limit¹ that will apply in relation to the Belford Neighbourhood Plan Referendum is **£2435.80** to each campaign organiser. The number of persons entitled to vote in the Referendum by reference to which the limit has been calculated is 1,251 (as at **1 December 2023**).

13. Specified documents to be published before Referendum

The County Council makes available a number of documents that are relevant to the referendum. These are called the **Specified Documents** and comprise:

- Belford Neighbourhood Plan: Referendum Version;
- Report of the independent examiner (published July 2023);
- Summary of the representations submitted to the independent examiner;
- Statement by the local planning authority that the draft plan meets the basic conditions (*The Regulation 18 Decision Statement*); and a
- Statement that sets out general information as to town and country planning including neighbourhood planning and the referendum (*Referendum Information Statement including Information for Voters*)

¹ As set out in Regulation 6 of The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.

These documents are available on the County Council's neighbourhood planning website:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning.aspx>

Where people entitled to vote are unable to access these documents online printed copies can be made available on request. Please call on 0345 600 6400 or email neighbourhoodplanning@northumberland.gov.uk

Belford Parish Council may make alternative arrangements for providing access to the specified documents. Anyone wishing to discuss those arrangements should contact the Clerk, Isabel Hunter by telephone on 01289 306365 or by email at belfordpc12@gmail.com.

14. How to find out more

Further information on neighbourhood planning, including documents relating to the Belford Neighbourhood Plan, can be found on the County Council's website at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning.aspx>

For queries about neighbourhood planning in general, please contact Northumberland County Council's Neighbourhood Planning Team by email: neighbourhoodplanning@northumberland.gov.uk

For more information about voting and the arrangements for this referendum, please contact our Helpline on 01670 624844 or email elections@northumberland.gov.uk

This document was produced by:

Neighbourhood Planning
Planning Services
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

T: 0345 600 6400

If you need this information in Large Print,
Braille, Audio or in another format or
language please contact us:

(Telephone) 0345 600 6400

(Typetalk) 018001 0345 600 640