

SOUTHBOROUGH AND HIGH BROOMS NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2024 - 2038: DECISION STATEMENT

1. Summary

- 1.1. Following a favourable referendum result, notice is given that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (“the Borough Council”), at its meeting on 15 July 2026, ‘made’ the Sandhurst Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024 – 2038. Since a positive referendum on 18 June 2026, the Neighbourhood Plan has had full weight and forms part of the statutory Development Plan for Southborough Parish and, as such, is a key policy document in the determination of planning applications for development in Southborough Parish.
- 1.2. The ‘made’ Southborough and High Brooms Neighbourhood Development Plan (SHBNDP) can be viewed on the [Borough Council’s website](#).

2. Background

- 2.1. Upon application by Southborough Town Council (“the Town Council”), as the Qualifying Body, the Borough Council designated Southborough Parish as a ‘Neighbourhood Area’, [under Part 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#), in June 2023.
- 2.2. Following Regulation 14 consultation on a draft version, a ‘Submission’ version of the Southborough and High Brooms Neighbourhood Development Plan was prepared and submitted to the Borough Council in May 2025 under Regulation 15 of the relevant Regulations. The Borough Council then undertook formal consultation on the SHBNDP and its supporting documents which were publicised, and representations were invited. The period of formal consultation ran from 11 June to 25 July 2025.
- 2.3. An Independent examination followed, conducted by written representations, and the Examiner, Mr. Andrew Ashcroft, published his final report on 07 January 2026, concluding that the SHBNDP, subject to certain modifications proposed in his report, did meet the basic conditions as set out in legislation and is compatible with [Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#) and could therefore proceed to local referendum.
- 2.4. The examination was undertaken by written representations. The Examiner also recommended that the referendum area be the designated Neighbourhood Area (Southborough Parish).

3. Decision and Reasons

- 3.1. With the incorporation of the Examiner's modifications, the Borough Council agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan met the basic conditions and other requirements and could be put forward for a local referendum. This was held on 18 June 2026. It posed the question '*Do you want Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Southborough and High Brooms to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?*' The outcome was that 1194 (88.6 %) of the 1348 people who voted were in favour of the Plan.
- 3.2. Paragraph 38A(4)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires that the Borough Council must 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan if more than half of those voting have voted in favour of the Plan, unless (under Para. 38A(6)) this would breach or would otherwise be incompatible with an EU obligation or any of the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998).
- 3.3. In line with the outcome of the referendum and having further considered whether making the Neighbourhood Plan would breach or would otherwise be incompatible with any EU obligation or any of the Convention rights, the Borough Council resolved, at its meeting on 15 July 2026 that: *The Southborough and High Brooms Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024-2038 incorporating the Examiner's modifications, as presented to local referendum, be 'made' with immediate effect and form part of the Council's Development Plan.*

4. Availability of documents

- 4.1. The 'made' Southborough and High Brooms Neighbourhood Development Plan, Declaration of referendum results and related documents can be viewed on the Borough Council's [Southborough and High Brooms Neighbourhood Plan webpage](#).
- 4.2. The report to Full Council in relation to the 'making' of the Neighbourhood Plan can be viewed on the [15 July 2026 Full Council agenda](#). The Full Council minutes will be available on the webpage after the meeting.
- 4.3. For further information, please contact the Planning Policy Team by email at: neighbourhoodplans@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Carlos Hone, Head of Planning, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council 16 July 2026