

# Extract of Planning Committee Agenda 14<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020

## 7. DESIGNATION OF OTTERSHAW NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM AND OTTERSHAW NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA (PLANNING POLICY-GEORGINA PACEY)

**Synopsis of report:** The Localism Act 2011 introduced the concept of neighbourhood planning enabling local communities to prepare their own neighbourhood plans.

A neighbourhood plan is prepared by a neighbourhood forum and its geographic extent is designated through a neighbourhood area. A neighbourhood plan, once adopted, will form part of the development plan for Runnymede and will be a material consideration in decision making for individual planning applications within that neighbourhood area.

Applications for neighbourhood forums and neighbourhood areas must be made to and determined by the Borough Council. Applications for the designation of an Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum and Neighbourhood Area have been received by the Borough Council and have been subject to public consultation. Twelve letters of representation have been received. Six of these letters are from local residents and generally raise objections to the extent of the neighbourhood area proposed.

The Neighbourhood Forum application is considered to fully meet the conditions set out within the relevant regulations. The geographical extent of the proposed Neighbourhood Area is also considered appropriate with one small modification, and compliant with relevant regulations. As such, it is considered that an Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area can be designated as shown on the plan attached to this report at Appendix D and an Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum can be designated for the area shown.

**Recommendation(s):** The Planning Committee is recommended to **RESOLVE** to:

- i) **Designate the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area as identified on the plan attached to this report at Appendix D; and,**
- ii) **Designate the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum to cover the area as shown on the plan attached to this report at Appendix D.**

### 1. Context of report

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011, through amendments to the Planning Act 1990 introduced the concept of neighbourhood planning enabling a Parish Council or a body designated as a neighbourhood forum to prepare neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders for their area. Once adopted, a neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan for an area and its policies would be a material consideration in decision making for that area along with the policies in the adopted Local Plan. Similar to Local Plans, neighbourhood plans can contain a suite of planning policies which are specific to that neighbourhood area, but which have regard to national planning policy and are in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan.
- 1.2 The first step towards preparing a neighbourhood plan is the designation of a neighbourhood forum. The forum oversees the preparation and content of the plan for the designated neighbourhood area. Section 61F of the 1990 Planning Act sets

out the requirements for a body to be considered a neighbourhood forum and Section 61G the requirements for the designation of a neighbourhood area.

- 1.3 Once prepared, a neighbourhood plan is subject to consultation and examination in a similar manner to the Local Plan, but if recommended for approval by an Inspector, the plan can only be made with agreement of the local planning authority, following the outcome of a local referendum.

## 2. Report and options considered

- 2.1 The Borough Council has received applications for the designation of an Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum and an Ottershaw neighbourhood area. The geographic extent of the proposed neighbourhood area as submitted by the prospective Forum is shown at Appendix D. The area proposed is bound by Stonehill Road to the north west, the St Peter's Hospital site and A320 to the north, a range of features including the River Bourne, M25, a number of roads, the edges of established residential development and parts of recognised footpaths to the east/south east, and the Borough boundary to the west. The proposed area is contained entirely within the Ottershaw ward although excludes the area bounded by Spinney Hill, Ongar Hill, Hare Hill and the Ridings, the Scout Hut and Creepers Nursery, which the prospective forum considers to be part of the separate Rowtown community, and the area to the east of the M25, which the prospective forum considers to be part of the Addlestone community.

### The Neighbourhood Area Application

- 2.2 Any new neighbourhood area must be designated by the Borough Council. In considering an application for area designation, the Council must have regard to the desirability of maintaining the existing boundaries of areas already designated as neighbourhood areas and the appropriateness of the proposed neighbourhood area. A neighbourhood area cannot overlap with an existing designated neighbourhood area nor can a neighbourhood area overlap with a parished area if proposed by a neighbourhood forum, or body capable of being designated a neighbourhood forum.
- 2.3 The application for the area must also be subject to public consultation for at least six weeks. This was undertaken between 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The information submitted with the area application is available to view at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/15577/Neighbourhood-Planning>. Twelve letters of representation were received in response to the forum and area applications (six from organisations; namely Highways England, Natural England, National Grid, Sport England, Surrey County Council (Waste and Minerals) and Transport for London. The remaining six are from local residents (six letters received from four addresses). All of these local residents object to the extent of the neighbourhood area. Two of the letters also express concerns about the powers of the Forum. The letters received are summarised below:
  - Natural England, Sport England, Surrey County Council (Waste and Minerals Planning Authority) and Transport for London did not wish to make any specific comments on the applications. However, Natural England and Sport England did provide general advice and guidance on neighbourhood planning. Surrey County Council advised of the existence of minerals and waste designations in the proposed neighbourhood area which should be considered by the Forum in the development of their Neighbourhood Plan.
  - Highways England requested that in the Table on Page 14 of the *Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan: Area and Forum application* document 'Highway Authorities' should be listed as a Stakeholder in the row for Landowners. In addition, it was requested that Highways England continue to be consulted as this Neighbourhood Plan progresses. This consultee has requested early

engagement on discussions/ issues/schemes on the A320/M25 Junction 11 corridor.

- Avison Young on behalf of National Grid has carried out an assessment with respect to National Grid's electricity and gas transmission assets and National Grid has identified no record of such apparatus within the submitted neighbourhood plan area.
- Concern that the Forum and Area were created and reached this stage following a single door drop of leaflets, which seemingly did not extend to those living on the edge of Rowtown. Given the aims and geographic reach sought by the Forum, information should be sent to those in the margin beyond the proposed boundary as well as other interested parties including the Event Directors of the local parkrun, voluntary wardens of the SANGS in the proposed areas etc. before the applications are considered.
- There is no reason in seeking to cover the Ottershaw electoral ward; a boundary which carries no weight at all in this context. There can be no justification in seeking jurisdiction over the land extending between the McLaren works north to St Peters Way, and from Gracious Pond Road eastwards to Rowtown. This is an attempted annexation which entirely ignores the neighbours and their legitimate interests and keeps them ignorant.
- The residents and businesses of the more far-flung parts of the proposed area need to be alerted.
- The Forum has cherry picked in deciding the extent of the Neighbourhood Area; excluding those parts of the ward that they may find inconvenient while including Great Grove Farm, long a target of developers.
- The prospective Forum's description of the area doesn't specifically mention the green space included within the boundary, describing the area as "mostly residential, along with schools, shops, commercial premises, and other community and social facilities". If the "community and social facilities" they outline is how they view the green space, then concern that they cannot possibly value it as part of the green corridor that is absolutely vital to wildlife and environment in this area.
- The Forum claims its proposed boundary follows a natural division, which is between the KT15 and KT16 postal areas; this has no weight or merit in defining an Area and is scarcely natural.
- It is claimed that there is no conflict with other nearby villages. The Forum must be required to demonstrate that proposition with hard evidence, given that Rowtown was apparently not told, and much of the proposed boundary crosses enormous tracts of green space to the north, east and south before abutting directly on to the property fences in the neighbouring villages.
- The Hare Hill Open Space is included in the proposed Area. This is a SANGS which is part of a regional strategy. This open space is also bordered to the north, east and south by Rowtown. Yet this space is claimed by the Forum as part of Ottershaw. Many green spaces in Surrey extend over multiple formal and informal districts, and it is ludicrous to pass any degree of control to a single village committee whilst excluding the rest.
- A number of Rowtown residents are extremely upset that this plan proposes to include Hare Hill Open Space. This area is equally (if not more) important to Rowtown residents as to those of Ottershaw. Hare Hill Open Space is

bound to the north, east and south by the Rowtown community. For this reason alone, suggests that this plan should not be considered until all relevant Rowtown residents have also been consulted.

- It appears that at no point has the Forum made any contact with at least two Open Space volunteer wardens or with RBC Open Spaces team, regarding their claim to Hare Hill Open Space. Concern about the prospective Forum planning the future of this open space over the next 5 years at least.
- The Forum should not suppose it can manage anything at all on a day-to-day basis, or take decisions around activities on Council land, such as Park Run. Assumes that the Forum would pass recommendations to RBC, but it is unclear whether RBC would be under an obligation to act if the Forum was unchallenged.
- The Chair of (the) Neighbourhood Area Working Group is “Chairman, Non-Executive Director or Managing Director of a number of major public and private home building companies”. Another is in the buy to let business. Surely this represents a potential conflict of interest.
- The Forum currently reportedly has 66 members (2 to 2.5% of Ottershaw’s population) with all decisions by majority vote. If this proposal is accepted, just 34 people will be empowered without election to represent anyone within the Area. There wouldn’t appear to be any right of appeal against any decisions made leaving a system wide open to abuse of power and the quashing of individual opinion.
- Concern that the Forum would be allowed to stop parkrun being held in one of the included SANGS if they felt it was undesirable, despite it being such a tremendous health initiative which also brings a fair amount of trade into the area on Saturday mornings.
- Any essential development that the Forum does *not* like will be unilaterally pushed out to the neighbouring villages.
- A stated purpose of the Forum is to promote community cohesion. It is actually igniting in-fighting between Ottershaw and those surrounding villages and communities that feel their encroachment and will only exacerbate this if it starts making recommendations to RBC.
- A declared aim is to make the area more sustainable and to protect natural environment/green space/green corridors between built-up areas. The Forum does not declare what will be kept or made sustainable, nor in what way, and provides no evidence that this statement is anything other than a green platitude.
- The first stated Vision for the village is “a sustainable, vibrant community”. “Sustainable” is not a word which excludes removing trees and laying concrete, and currently “vibrant” is code for more people, shops and commercial premises. The second vision includes “attractive, high quality development.” Representor suggests most residents of Ottershaw live there because they like it as a small, green, non-vibrating community largely free of industrial premises. Yet the Forum, unelected, will be empowered to promote infilling green spaces in and near the village with new development. Concerns about impacts of development on wildlife.
- The Forum classes stakeholders into three categories. (1) A high interest/high influence group of landowners, developers and local authorities; (2) a high interest/medium influence covering politicians, economy, health, education, heritage groups and neighbouring wards; and (3) a medium

interest/medium influence group comprising the residents and their community clubs and groups. This is a brazen statement that developers will take priority over residents in the Forum, which in itself seems to be a case for rejecting this proposal.

- There is a sunset clause in the Plan, limiting it to five years. It appears that if RBC accepts the Forum as the legitimate representative of the Area, then for five years they cannot be challenged externally, only by their own members. There must be a constitutional way for their decisions to be challenged from the outside, to watch for and prevent any abuse of power.
- The proposal shuts out everyone except a tiny core group, who state a wish to build Ottershaw into what sounds like a town.
- The Forum presents no evidence that this is the will of residents and has an officer with a vested interest in promoting such development. A single in-area door-drop leaflet was never a sufficient mandate to seek such powers and then to proceed with the Plan to RBC.
- Can understand the exclusion of the land within Ottershaw ward to the east of the M25 but not the other proposed exclusions. The Electoral Maps have already defined the Ottershaw Ward to include the area bordering on Spinney Hill, Hare Hill and Ongar Hill.
- Representor from Spinney Hill considers himself to be part of the Ottershaw community supporting the local Doctors Surgery, Post Office, Grocer, Hairdressers and Food Outlets in Ottershaw Village.
- Suggestion that either all the area within the defined Ottershaw Ward boundary west of the M25 be included in the Proposed Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area or the line is redrawn to exclude the areas covered by the Great Grove and Old Oak Farms and the Hare Hill Open Space as these border on Spinney and Hare Hill.
- The whole community of the Ottershaw Ward should be able to benefit from a complete Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area and have a voice.
- The defined boundary seems to have little justification nor follow any logical or natural boundaries.
- The proposed area for the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan suggests that those parts of the Ottershaw ward which the prospective Forum do not wish to include are actually parts of other communities which are covered by other wards. In order to meet the desires of the Ottershaw group, would it not be most appropriate to reduce the size (and council representation) of the Ottershaw ward and to re-assign the 'spare' council seat(s) thus generated either to a new ward or by extending the existing wards which cover the areas not wanted by Ottershaw.
- It appears that the Plan is wanting to include most of the land in the Ottershaw Ward but is specifically excluding 44% of the Ward's dwellings (i.e. people living in the more densely populated area of the remaining 8% of the Ottershaw Ward) from having the option of joining the Forum. This seems at odds with one of the Forums objectives which is stated as 'Promoting community cohesion'.
- Object to the inclusion of SANG in the Neighbourhood Area. All SANGS should all be excluded from any local Plan area and retained within the influence of the Runnymede Borough Plan where elected councillors can

make decisions for the whole borough's benefit following representations from local residents.

- If it is not considered appropriate to remove SANGs from Neighbourhood Areas, then the Hare Hill Open Space SANGS should not be included in the Ottershaw area but await inclusion in the Rowtown Plan which it is understood is being developed in the near future. The name Hare Hill SANG suggests it is appropriate to be included within the Hare Hill / Rowtown neighbourhood, whom the Ottershaw Plan wish to exclude. As evidence, it should be noted that the Runnymede SANG Survey completed in 2012 shows that majority of visits to the Hare Hill Open Space originate from the Rowtown / Addlestone area.
- Representor from Howards Lane has strong links with the Ottershaw area and is generally supportive of the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. However, objection to the Area Designation in the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan Document as it includes the Hare Hill Open Space which is bounded on three sides by houses in Row Town, is used, in the main, by people from the Row Town Area, is a very important natural environment for the Row Town Area, is cared for by volunteer wardens, 2 of whom live in Row Town, provides a green route for Row Town residents to access Ottershaw Schools and the Doctors' Surgery.
- Row Town residents are in the process of putting together a Forum to develop their own Neighbourhood Plan and the Hare Hill Open Space should be included in the Row Town Designated Area.

2.4 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended) require a decision on area designations to be made by the Borough Council within 13 weeks from the date immediately following that on which the application is first publicised. As such, the Borough Council must make a decision on the area designation by 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

2.5 The options open to Members of the Planning Committee are:

- i) To **resolve to designate** the Ottershaw neighbourhood area as identified on the plan attached to this report at Appendix D; or
- ii) To **resolve to refuse** the Ottershaw neighbourhood area as identified on the plan attached to this report at Appendix D, **but to modify** the boundary so that some of this area is designated as a neighbourhood area.

2.6 In general a proposed neighbourhood area should be considered appropriate unless it is proposed to overlap with another neighbourhood area or parished area. Having reviewed the information submitted, the proposed area does not overlap with any other neighbourhood area and does not contain any area under the jurisdiction of a Parish Council. When considering the appropriateness of a neighbourhood area beyond these initial high level considerations, national legislation provides little guidance. In reaching a judgement about the appropriateness of the extent of a neighbourhood area, the Council should have regard to whether the proposed area is a consistent and coherent neighbourhood area to 'plan' for, if the proposed area makes sense to the community and is logical in spatial terms. If the Council wishes to refuse an application on the basis that the area is not considered appropriate, then the Council must use their powers of designation to conclude a more appropriate designated area.

2.7 The documents received with the Forum and Area applications state that the proposed area is entirely contained within the Ottershaw Ward, but excludes the area bounded by Spinney Hill, Ongar Hill, Hare Hill and the Ridings, the Scout Hut and Creepers Nursery, which are considered to be part of the separate Rowtown

community, and the area to the east of the M25 which is considered to be part of the Addlestone community. Members of the proposed Forum therefore feel the proposed area shown on the plan attached to appendix A to be representative of the Ottershaw community.

- 2.8 Through the consultation carried out on the extent of the neighbourhood area, six local residents have expressed concerns about the proposed location of the boundary. In the main, this relates to the exclusion of some areas of the larger Ottershaw ward and also the inclusion of the majority of the Hare Hill Open Space, as well as the inclusion of other SANG land and open spaces.
- 2.9 In relation to comments made about the suitability of inclusion of open spaces within a neighbourhood area, including SANG land, there is considered to be no reason why such land should not be included. A neighbourhood plan puts in place planning policy for a neighbourhood area to guide future development. A neighbourhood plan is about the use and development of land and may contain a vision, aims, planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development or for additional protection. It may deal with a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues (such as housing, employment, design, heritage and transport) or it may focus on one or two issues only. Importantly, it must be remembered that a neighbourhood plan must meet certain specified 'basic conditions'. These ensure that plans contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, have regard to national policy and guidance and are in general conformity with adopted strategic local planning policies. Despite the current negotiations on leaving the EU, the requirements to comply with EU obligations will continue to apply for the time being but may be replaced with a requirement to meet UK law at some point in the future.
- 2.10 In relation to national and local policy in relation to the provision of SANG specifically, as a Competent Authority, the Council has a requirement to provide a strategy to ensure the long-term protection of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA), in compliance with the Habitats Regulations, whilst enabling otherwise acceptable development. In 2009, the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board, comprising all affected local authorities adopted guidelines in the form of a Delivery Framework to protect the TBHSPA from new residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of the Heaths. This Framework includes the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) utilising new or upgraded existing open space to divert recreational activity away from the designated SPA. In 2009, at a local level, the Council formally adopted amended Supplementary Planning Guidance that set out a policy for residential development proposals within 5km of the TBHSPA in line with this agreed Framework (and which relies on the provision of SANG). It is a legal requirement incumbent upon the Council as Competent Authority to provide a strategy to ensure the long-term protection of the SPA, in compliance with the Habitats Regulations. This role would continue, even if a Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in Ottershaw containing areas of SANG. The bodies who can act as a competent authority are set out in regulation 7 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The list set out at Regulation 7 does not allow for a Neighbourhood Forum to act in this role. As such, for clarification, Runnymede Borough Council would remain responsible for the management of the Borough's SANGs, even if a SANG was located in a designated Neighbourhood Area.
- 2.11 Beyond the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan as described at paragraph 2.9 above, the Neighbourhood Forum would not have additional jurisdictions (for example to determine whether a Park Run event was to go ahead within the Neighbourhood Area) as this is not a planning policy matter. Neighbourhood Planning is concerned solely with creating a layer of planning policy for an area against which planning proposals are assessed as part of the Development Plan.

- 2.12 In relation to whether it is appropriate for the neighbourhood area to exclude the area bounded by Spinney Hill, Ongar Hill, Hare Hill and the Ridings, the Scout Hut and Creepers Nursery, and the area to the east of the M25, it is possible that the boundaries of the neighbourhood area could have been drawn in a number of different locations along this eastern side. It is accepted that residents living in Rowtown and the part of Addlestone in the Ottershaw ward to the east of the M25 may have differing views as to whether they feel they should be part of the Ottershaw neighbourhood area. However, spatially, the area of Green Belt between Ottershaw and Rowtown (largely formed by the Hare Hill Open Space) is considered to provide a degree of physical separation between the Rowtown and Ottershaw areas and as such, in principle it is considered acceptable for the Urban Area of Rowtown contained in the wider Ottershaw ward to not be included in the Ottershaw neighbourhood area.
- 2.13 The Hare Hill Open Space separates Rowtown from Ottershaw and as such it is considered that it would be acceptable for this open space to fall within a neighbourhood area for either Rowtown or Ottershaw. The Council can only consider the proposal before them at the current time. As such, it is considered that the inclusion of the majority of the Hare Hill Open Space within the Ottershaw neighbourhood area is acceptable.
- 2.14 Overall, having considered the information submitted, officers are content that the proposed neighbourhood area shown at Appendix D is appropriate and complies with the relevant legislation. It is therefore recommended that Members of the Planning Committee resolve to designate the neighbourhood area as shown at Appendix D.

### **The Neighbourhood Forum Application**

- 2.15 A neighbourhood forum must be designated by the Borough Council and it must satisfy a number of conditions. Only one relevant body can be designated as a neighbourhood forum for the area. A forum must be established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area; its membership must be open to and can include at least 21 individuals who live, work or are elected members for that area. The forum must also have a written constitution.
- 2.16 In determining whether to designate a body as a neighbourhood forum, the Council must have regard to whether the body has secured at least one individual from each of the three different groups expressed in 2.14 above (those that live, work or are elected members for the area), that its membership is drawn from different parts of the proposed neighbourhood area, is representative of different sections of the community and that the purpose of the forum reflects, in general terms, the character of the area.
- 2.17 The application for the forum must also be subject to public consultation for at least six weeks. This was undertaken between 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The information submitted with the forum application is available to view on the Council's website at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/15577/Neighbourhood-Planning>. As set out earlier in this report, twelve letters of representation were received for the forum and area applications. Two of these letters raise concerns about the role and remit of the Neighbourhood Forum.
- 2.18 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended) require a decision on forum designations to be made by the Borough Council within 13 weeks from the date immediately following that on which the application is first publicised. As such, the Borough Council must make a decision on the forum designation by 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020.



- 2.19 The documents received with the Forum and Area applications contain a Consultation Strategy and Plan. Further details have separately been provided by the prospective forum detailing how they have engaged with the local community to date about their intention to produce a neighbourhood plan. This includes:
- Creation of a website which provides information about the proposal to form an Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan, the area and forum applications and Ottershaw's history. It also includes a joining form for the Forum.
  - The distribution of 1800 leaflets about the proposal to develop a neighbourhood plan to all houses in the proposed Ottershaw neighbourhood area and approximately 600 leaflets to those outside of the proposed Ottershaw neighbourhood area during the month of August. These leaflets also advertised the website. The 600 outside of the area were exclusively distributed to the area located around Hare Hill, Spinney Hill & Ongar Hill. Residents on the fringes of the Ottershaw neighbourhood area have been encouraged to join the Forum in order to keep up to date with what is developing in Ottershaw. Those "associate" forum members receive all the communications that are received by Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum members. Associate members can express their opinions but have no voting rights. The leaflets also contained a questionnaire; the purpose of which was to identify membership type, residency type & age category of different forum members to ensure that the prospective forum is reaching a representative cross section of the residents in the proposed Ottershaw neighbourhood area.
  - The delivery of additional leaflets to businesses and shops.
  - 3 banners & 50 posters were printed & displayed in prominent high traffic areas within Ottershaw & are still on display for the foreseeable future.
  - Social media has been used to publicise the intention to produce a neighbourhood plan. Specifically, the Ottershaw Grapevine & the Ottershaw Nextdoor facebook pages have been used to inform the community & generate registrations. Also, the use of email addresses held by various networks such as OWAIRA, BENRA, BLARA, Ottershaw Society & others have been used to distribute the message.
- 2.20 Having assessed the information submitted, officers consider that the conditions for neighbourhood forum designation have been met and can confirm that:
- 1) The statement accompanying the application for forum designation sets out that the forum intends to promote and improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area, to seek to make the area more sustainable, protect the natural environment & the green belt, and maintain green corridors between built areas, and promote community cohesion;
  - 2) Membership is open to anyone living or working in the neighbourhood area or who is an elected Member for the area, as well as businesses or other bodies or organisations e.g. education, health services, churches, charities, societies, landowners, etc, which operate in the Area, through their appointed representatives. An updated list of Forum members was shared with the Council on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020. This shows that the forum has in excess of 21 members (198 at the time of writing) including those living and working in the area, and 2 Ottershaw ward Councillors;
  - 3) The list of forum members identifies members from different parts of the area;
  - 4) The proposed forum has developed a written constitution which was made public during the consultation period, and;

- 5) There is no other neighbourhood forum currently designated for the proposed area.
- 2.21 Whilst concern is expressed in relation to the involvement of one Forum member in a number of public and private home building companies and another in the buy to let business industry, it is considered important that there are a range of Forum members with different areas of expertise, as well as other skills and interests.
- 2.22 In terms of the influence of the prospective Forum on development in the area, the remit of a neighbourhood plan is set out at paragraph 2.9 and 2.11 above. In addition, in responding to comments about whether the Plan would be representative of the views of local people, it must be remembered that prior to coming into force and becoming part of the Development Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan must first secure more than 50% of the vote in favour of adopting the Plan in a local referendum.
- 2.23 Overall it is recommended that Members of the Planning Committee resolve to designate the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum covering the area as shown in Appendix D.

#### Other comments

- 2.24 One representor has questioned whether in order to meet the desires of the Ottershaw group, it would be appropriate to reduce the size (and council representation) of the Ottershaw ward and to re-assign the 'spare' council seat(s) thus generated either to a new ward or by extending the existing wards which cover the areas not wanted by Ottershaw. Officers are of the view that this goes beyond the scope of the considerations of this report, however, would stress that there is no requirements for neighbourhood areas to mirror ward boundaries.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 Neighbourhood planning has been introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Whilst the designation of a neighbourhood forum and neighbourhood area does not have policy framework implications, a neighbourhood plan once made will form part of the development plan for Runnymede. Subsequently, any policies in a neighbourhood plan will be a material consideration in decision making on individual planning applications within that neighbourhood area alongside the policies of the Local Plan.

### **4. Resource implications**

- 4.1 Resource implications of the suggested course of action include:

- On staffing needs, the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012) sets out the consultation for neighbourhood forums and areas have to be undertaken by the Borough Council.

- Similarly, consultation on the proposed neighbourhood plan, organisation of a referendum and payment for the examination is resourced by the Borough Council.

### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 The Town & County Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) place a statutory duty on local planning authorities to advise or assist communities in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans.

6. **Equality implications**

- 6.1 There are no equality implications relating to the designation of the neighbourhood forum or neighbourhood area. The membership of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum is open to all members of the local community in line with Section 61F of the Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Equality implications will however need to be considered by the forum when preparing the Ottershaw neighbourhood plan policies.

7. **Conclusions**

- 7.1 The Planning Committee is recommended to RESOLVE to:

Designate the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area as identified on the plan attached to this report at Appendix D; and,

Designate the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum to cover the area as shown on the plan attached to this report at Appendix D.

**(To resolve)**

**Background Papers**

Appendix D: Plan of the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum Area as submitted

