

Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan: Information Statement about the referendum

Key points

- A referendum will take place on **Thursday 19 March 2026**
- It will take place in the parish of **Marnhull**
- The referendum concerns the proposed **Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan, 2024–2038**

What the referendum is deciding

The question that will be asked in the referendum is:

Do you want Dorset Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Marnhull to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

The referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to this question.

About the proposed Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan

Preparation of a neighbourhood plan for Marnhull began in 2023 with the formation of a neighbourhood plan steering group. The parish council consulted on a draft neighbourhood plan between 10 February to 31 March 2025. The plan was then revised in response to the consultation and submitted to Dorset Council in July 2025. Dorset Council consulted on the submitted plan from 8 August until 19 September 2025.

An independent examiner, Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ, was appointed to examine the submitted plan. The examiner issued his report on 6 January 2026. It concludes that he was satisfied that the plan meets the basic conditions and recommends that it should, subject to some changes, proceed to referendum.

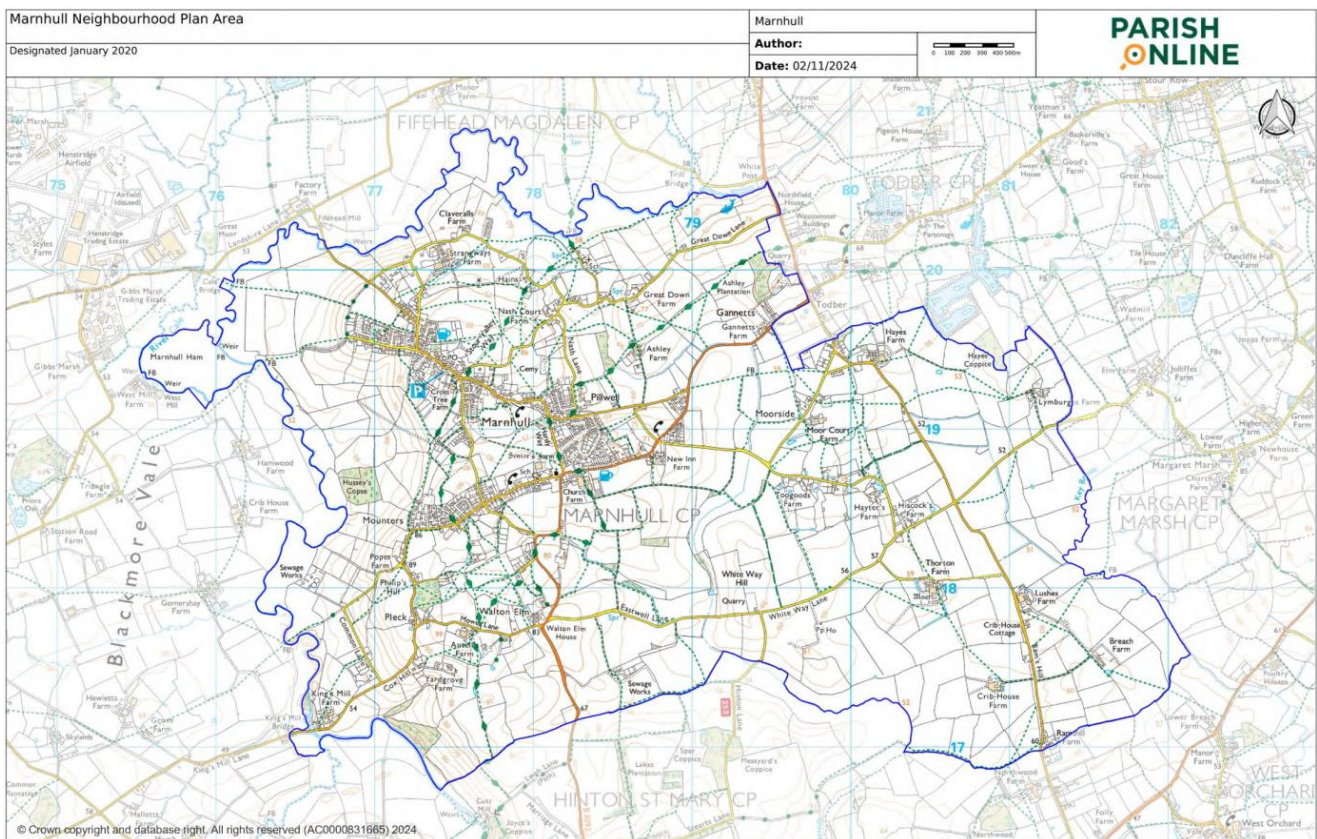
Dorset Council considered the report and issued its decision on 29 January 2026. The Council agreed with the examiner that plan, amended in accordance with the examiner's recommendations, should proceed to referendum.

When will the referendum be held?

The referendum will be held on **Thursday 19 March 2026**.

What is the area covered by the referendum?

The referendum area is the area covered by the neighbourhood plan and is the parish of Marnhull, as shown within the blue outline on the map below.



Who is entitled to vote?

You are entitled to vote in the referendum if you live in the referendum area, you are on the electoral register to vote in local council elections, and you are 18 years of age or over on 19 March 2026.

You have to be registered to vote by **midnight on Tuesday 3 March 2026** to vote in the referendum. You can check if you are registered to vote **by telephoning 01305 838299 during normal office hours**.

How can people vote?

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

You can vote **in person** at your relevant polling station which will be detailed on your poll card. We will issue poll cards to voters around 15 February 2026. The polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on 19 March 2026.

You now need **photo ID** to vote at a polling station. If you don't have accepted photo ID, you can apply for a free voter ID document, which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate. Applications for Voter Authority Certificates must be received by 5:00 pm Wednesday 11 March 2026. www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate

To vote **by post or proxy** in this referendum, you will need to have filled in an application form and sent it to the Electoral Registration Officer. Postal and proxy vote application forms are available from the elections' website www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/how-to-vote or by contacting Dorset Council.

Applications to vote by post must be received by 5pm on Wednesday 4 March 2026.

To vote by proxy, application forms should be received by 5pm on Wednesday 11 March 2026.

However, in certain circumstances emergency proxy vote applications can be received up until 5pm on the day of the poll. 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.

Ballot papers for people who **vote by post** will be posted from 6 March 2026, and will need to be **returned by 10pm on the day of the poll**.

Referendum expenses

The referendum expenses limit that will apply in relation to the referendum is £2,362 plus £0.059 per registered elector (the electorate in January 2026 was 1,752).

What information is there available about the neighbourhood plan?

The specified documents relating to this referendum are:

- The **Marnhull Neighbourhood Plan** 2024 to 2038 (final version, January 2026)
- The **Examiner's Report**
- A **Summary of Representations** submitted to the examiner
- The **Decision Statement**, which includes a statement by the local planning authority that the plan as proposed meets the basic conditions
- The **Information Statement** (this document) – it includes general information regarding town and country planning including neighbourhood planning, plus details on the referendum

Where can the specified documents be viewed?

The **specified documents** may be inspected at the following locations:

- Online at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/marnhull-neighbourhood-plan
- At the following locations:
 - **County Hall**, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ
Open Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5pm.
 - **Sturminster Newton Library**, Bath Road, Sturminster Newton, DT10 1EH (for opening hours, tel: 01258 472669).
 - **St Gregory's Church**, New Street, Marnhull, DT10 1PZ (tel: 01258 821605)

Background information regarding town and country planning

In England, planning applications are determined by local planning authorities such as Dorset Council. Planning decisions are made in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A development plan sets out the planning policies for the development and use of land. The development plan consists of local plans and (where relevant) neighbourhood plans.

At present, the **North Dorset Local Plan Part 1** is the starting point for considering planning applications in the parish of Marnhull. It is available from:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/adopted-local-plans/north-dorset-adopted-local-plan

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011. It aims to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. If a neighbourhood plan receives a successful referendum result, it becomes part of the development plan for its area and is used to help determine planning applications.

The **National Planning Policy Framework** must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. It is available from: www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework

The **Local Development Scheme** contains information on development plan documents that are being prepared by Dorset Council. It is available from: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/the-local-development-scheme-for-dorset-council