



Beccles Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

Information for voters

Town and Country Planning, England | The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

About this Booklet

On **16th September 2021** there will be a referendum on a neighbourhood development plan for your area. This booklet explains more about the referendum and how you can take part in it.

The booklet has information about:

- Referendum expenses;
- The neighbourhood area;
- The neighbourhood plan; and,
- The development plan (of which neighbourhood plans are a part).

The Referendum

A Neighbourhood Planning Referendum will be held for the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan on **16th September 2021**.

A referendum asks you to vote '**yes**' or '**no**' to a question. For the referendum on the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan you will receive a ballot paper with this question:

Do you want the Broads Authority and East Suffolk Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Beccles to help them decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

This question is specified in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 of The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.

Who can vote in the referendum?

You can vote in the referendum if you live in the Beccles parish area (see map page 4) and:

- You are registered to vote in the local council elections; and
- You are 18 years or over on 16th September 2021.

You have to be registered to vote by 31st August 2021 to vote in the referendum. You can check if you are registered to vote by calling East Suffolk Council Electoral Services on 01502 523320.

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

Ways of Voting

There are three ways of voting:

1. In person on 16th September 2021 at your local polling station, which will be either:

Public Hall
Smallgate
Beccles
NR34 9AD

St Lukes Church
61 Rigbourne Hill
Beccles
NR34 9JQ

The polling station will be open from 7:00am to 10:00pm. It is easy and a member of staff will always help if you are not sure what to do.

You will receive a poll card confirming your polling station for this referendum. If you do not receive your poll card, contact 01502 523320.

2. By post:

If you have a postal vote already, you will receive a poll card confirming this.

If you want to vote by post, and do not currently, you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Services Team. Completed application forms must be received by 5pm on 1st September 2021.

We can send postal votes overseas but you need to think about whether you will have time to receive and return your completed postal vote by 10pm 16th September 2021.

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 16th September 2021 from the Electoral Services Team.

3. 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 someone that you trust to vote on your behalf.

If you want to vote by proxy, you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Services Team. Completed application forms must be received by 5pm on 8th September 2021.

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 the Electoral Services Team.

Electoral Services Team Contact Details

Electoral Services
East Suffolk Council
2 Canning Road
Lowestoft
NR33 0EQ

01502 523320
elections@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

How do I vote in the referendum?

You vote by putting a cross (X) in the 'yes' or 'no' box on your ballot paper. Only put a cross in **one** box or your vote will not be counted.

Referendum result

Positive: If more people vote 'Yes' than 'No' in the referendum, then the Broads Authority and East Suffolk Council will use the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan to help them decide planning applications in Beccles neighbourhood area in the future.

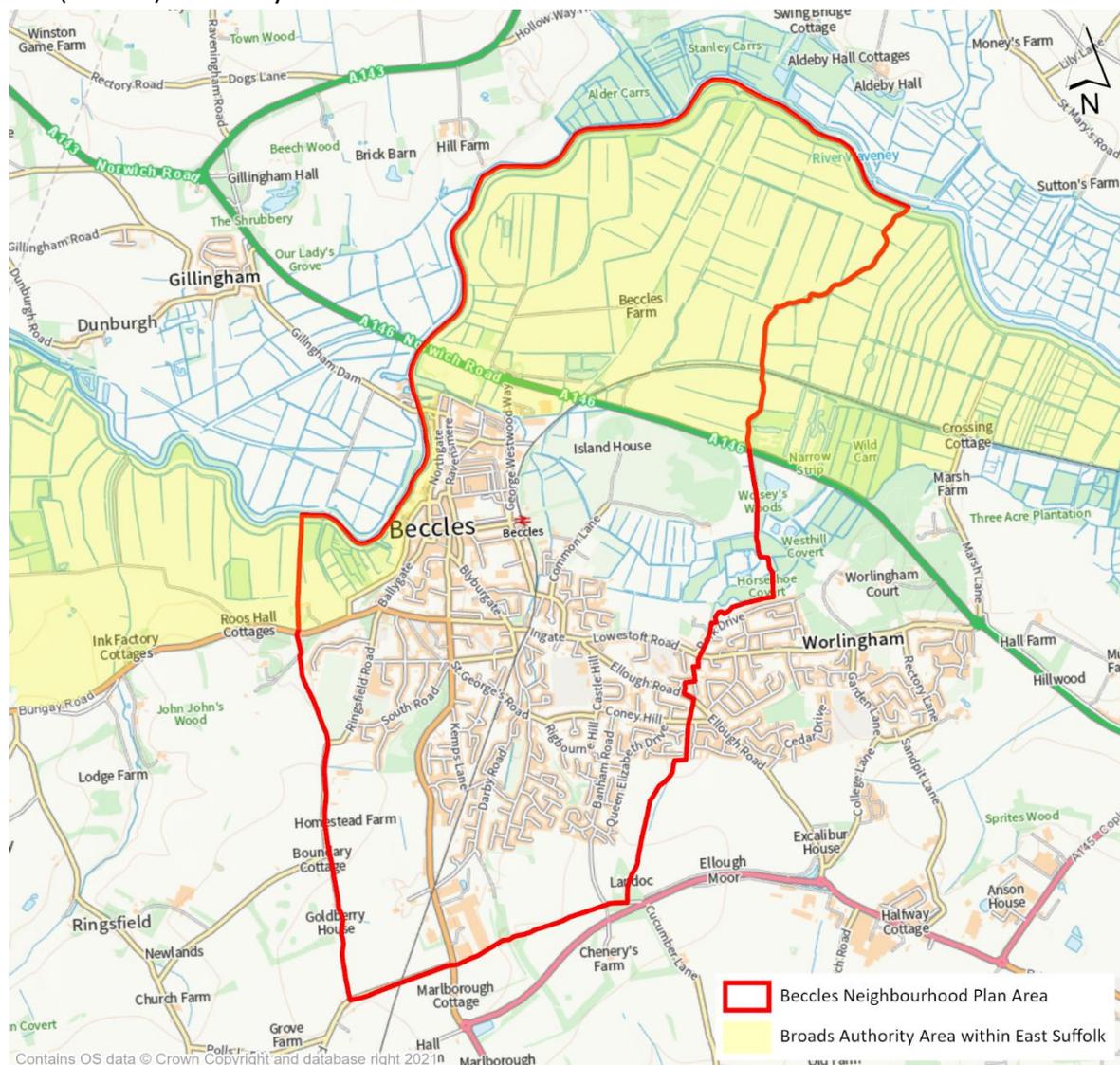
At that point, the neighbourhood plan comes into force as part of the statutory development plan for the area (see section ‘What is a Development Plan?’) and thereby the starting point for the determination of relevant planning applications.

To complete the neighbourhood plan process and to give the neighbourhood plan its full legal weight, the Broads Authority and East Suffolk Council would then need to formally “make” the neighbourhood plan. This would normally occur within 8 weeks of the referendum date.

Negative: If more people vote ‘No’ than ‘Yes’ then planning applications will be decided without using the neighbourhood development plan as part of the development plan for Beccles.

The Referendum Area

The referendum area is the same as the neighbourhood plan area, which was designated by the (former) Waveney District Council on 8th November 2017.



Referendum expenses

Expenses can be incurred by an individual or body during the period of the referendum, for referendum purposes.

The referendum expenses limit that will apply in relation to this referendum is £2,843.48. The number of persons entitled to vote in the referendum is 8,042.

The Beccles Neighbourhood Plan

What is Neighbourhood Planning?

Neighbourhood planning is a tool which enables local communities to play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work.

A community can prepare a neighbourhood plan. This plan can show how the community wants land to be used and developed in its area. The plan can be comprehensive or limited in terms of the issues covered.

A neighbourhood plan has to complete a number of formal stages including public consultation and independent examination before it can proceed to referendum.

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended), a copy of the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan is provided as one of the specified documents which must be made available in relation to the referendum. (See later section on specified documents).

What is a neighbourhood area?

A neighbourhood area can cover a single street or large urban or rural areas. Where there is a Parish or Town Council, the neighbourhood area will often follow the parish/town administrative boundary. The boundaries of a neighbourhood area are put forward by:

- Parish or Town Councils; or,
- A neighbourhood forum (a group of at least 21 people) in areas without parish councils.

In Beccles, the boundary of the neighbourhood area was determined by the (former) Waveney District Council on 8th November 2017 and comprises the whole parish of Beccles (see map above). The agreed referendum area is identical to the neighbourhood plan area.

Who can prepare a neighbourhood plan?

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by town or parish councils, or neighbourhood forums. In the case of Beccles, the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Beccles Town Council (the Qualifying Body).

What is a Development Plan?

In England, the planning system is plan led. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

A development plan is a set of documents that set out the policies for the development and use of land across the entire local planning authority area.

The local planning authorities are the Broads Authority and East Suffolk Council. The adopted Local Plan for the East Suffolk area is the Waveney Local Plan (March 2019) and the adopted Local Plan for the Broads Authority area is the Broads Local Plan (May 2019). Suffolk County Council is the relevant local planning authority for matters relating to minerals or waste.

Specified Documents

The specified documents are set out in paragraph 4 of The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended). They comprise:

- The draft Beccles Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036 (Referendum Draft, August 2021);
- The report of the independent examiner;
- A summary of representations submitted to the independent examiner;
- A statement by the Broads Authority and East Suffolk Council that the draft plan meets the basic conditions and Convention rights (Decision Statement);
- A statement that sets out general information as to town and country planning including neighbourhood planning and the referendum (this Information for voters); and,
- A statement containing basic information about the referendum (Information Statement).

Each of these specified documents is available for viewing via East Suffolk Council's website:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/beccles-neighbourhood-area/>

The Specified Documents are also available to view at:

Beccles Library
Blyburgate,
Beccles,
NR34 9TB

If you are unable to view the documents online or at Beccles Library, you may request a paper copy free of charge by emailing planningpolicy@eastsoffolk.gov.uk or calling 01394 444557. Please note that if you wish to contact us via telephone, we are currently operating under a voicemail service. Please leave a message including your contact details and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

If you are unable to view the documents online or at Beccles Library and do not wish to receive documents by post, the Council is able to make arrangements for documents to be viewed in person, by appointment, in the Council's offices at either Riverside, Lowestoft or East Suffolk House, Melton, in a Covid secure manner. Arrangements can be made by contacting the Planning Policy and Delivery Team on the details above. Please note staff are continuing to work from home and therefore it will not be possible to speak to staff in the office about the documents. If you have any queries about the documents, please use the phone number or email above. The provisions are subject to review in relation to the practicality and possibility for documents to be made available in the Council's Customer Service Centres and in libraries for public inspection, subject to changes to national restrictions.

If you have any queries with regard to the Neighbourhood Plan please contact Dickon Povey on (01502) 523047 or email dickon.povey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

For any queries regarding the referendum process/ voter registration please contact Tim Willis on 01502 523253 or email tim.willis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk