



Report of the Co-Chairs, June 2025

Introduction

Once again we have decided to hold the AGM as a face-to-face meeting, together with a Forum meeting. We chose this as it allows better discussion, and have combined it with an option to vote remotely for those that can't attend in person.

The AGM allows the Chair's Report to be presented, and provides an opportunity to ask questions. We hope the formal business part will be straightforward, and then to discuss the status of our draft Neighbourhood Plan at the Forum meeting.

Certain parts of the AGM are mandated by our constitution, and we are following those as required. An opportunity has also been given for any other formal motions to be considered in the agenda. The AGM provides an opportunity to summarise and take stock of the past year.

Summary

The key points are given here as bullets, with further explanation in later sections.

- The plan has moved from an early draft of policies within scope, to a well-reviewed version having engaged with a range of stakeholders
- The plan has been reviewed by RBWM, by an independent examiner, and been through public consultation
- The policies are now fairly mature and backed by evidence
- We have organised and attended several events to continue public engagement

Running of the Forum in 2024-2025

The Topic groups were formed to develop policies, and all produced drafts by various methods, capturing as far as possible the aspirations captured from the public meeting in March 2023.

As before, almost all the work of the Forum has been done in the Topic Groups and the Management meetings. When refining and consulting on the draft plan, with most of our active Forum members participating in topic groups, there was not a clear rationale to hold regular whole Forum meetings.

We have met about every 3 months with the RBWM Planning policy team, which has been useful and positive, and we have a good working relationship with them.

Refining and consulting on the draft plan

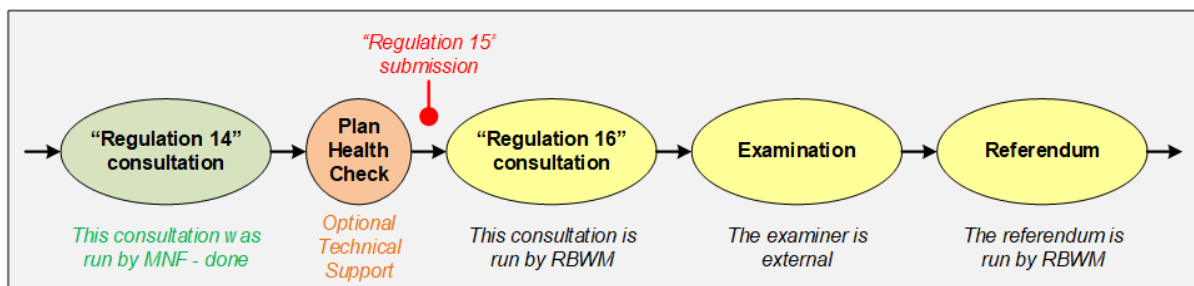
We provided a draft plan to RBWM at the end of July 2024, and in September received back about 70 comments on the plan itself, with another 25 on the Design Code. Included in this was a statement that some of the draft Neighbourhood Plan policies would cumulatively risk housing delivery, and therefore undermine the strategic policies in the RBWM Borough Local Plan (BLP).

It was therefore clear that we had our work cut out to assess all the comments. As RBWM is the local planning authority, if we received comments at the formal Reg-16 consultation stage that Neighbourhood plan policies would undermine the strategic policies in the Borough Local Plan, the examiner would be very unlikely to pass the plan and it would not proceed to referendum.

The next few months were therefore spent understanding the issues, checking alignment with RBWM and national policies, and updating our draft whilst retaining as far as possible the community aspirations. This is detailed, painstaking and time-consuming work – but necessary.

After that we ran the “Regulation 14” consultation, where our draft Neighbourhood Plan is made available for a 6 week formal public consultation. We received responses from about 25 people and organisations, resulting in around 110 points to be considered.

Another round of refinement and updates led to the optional “Plan Health Check”, where our plan is subjected to a trial examination by a person on the panel of (real) examiners. The aim of this step is to find out any problems early while we are still in control of the draft – if any problems come up at the actual examination, the examiner can amend – or delete – policies at their will.



Although some changes were recommended by the Plan Health Check, which we are currently working through, no major issues were identified so we will shortly be asking the Forum for agreement to submit the plan so RBWM can carry out the formal Regulation 16 public consultation.

Ongoing community engagement

Our main line of communication with our members and supporters continues to be our email database which comprises about 450 people, and we have sent nearly 100 items since 2019. MailChimp analytics show the “Open Rate” for our emails is around 50-55% against an average in the sector of 38%.

Our Facebook Page has over 1000 Followers (was 200 in 2020), mainly driven by the posts we share on the Maidenhead Future discussion group, which we administer. The overlap between MailChimp and Facebook is unknown.

Way forward and next steps

The bullet points below give a summary of key steps:

At our 2022 AGM we promised “Full speed ahead” if designated. The key steps were:

- Find out local people’s priorities for planning policies – first iteration done, Mar 2023
- A filtered list of policy topic candidates – done, May 2023
- Form topic groups to develop policies – done
- Find out what MNF can realistically resource – done
- Refine the policies and associated Evidence base – in progress, nearing completion
- Produce a draft “Regulation 14” Neighbourhood Plan to be consulted on - done

It can be seen that we have made steady progress. In practice the process of refining the policies and updating the plan has turned out to be multiple steps rather than a single step, and is still ongoing at the time of writing – but hopefully nearing completion.

The next steps are then the formal Reg-16 consultation, examination (possibly with further updates), and finally the referendum.

Funding & support

As in previous years, funding in 2024-2025 was from a central government grant administered by its agent, Groundwork UK on behalf of Locality. The grant received and details of the expenditure are given in the accounts. We spent almost all of the grant, with the largest amounts being spent on engaging consultants Bioregional for the Net Zero policy cost impact evidence. A requirement of the grant was that all unused funding was to be returned to Groundwork UK at the end of the financial year (31st March 2025), which has been done.

We have now spent almost all the cumulative money available (£18,000) for the Neighbourhood Plan project. With the MNF-led Regulation 14 consultation behind us, and future consultations being led and funded by RBWM, we are not intending to apply for a grant in 2025-26. The Management committee and Topic group leaders have worked hard and made good use of the funds.

The Grant has to be administered by an accountable body, which must be incorporated – MNF is not. Maidenhead Waterways, which is incorporated, has kindly continued to administer the grant for us and we very much appreciate their support.

Management Committee

Over the year 2024-2025 the Management Committee, whom we warmly thank for all their hard work, has been:

- Andrew Ingram and Ian Rose (Co-Chairs)
- Sue Ingram (Secretary)
- Nicola Stingelin (Treasurer)
- Martin McNamee (to June 2024)
- Mark Fessey
- Andy Woodcock
- Richard Davenport
- Mick Jarvis (to February 2025)

- Donna Stimson
- Judith Littlewood

Ian Rose and Andrew Ingram

Co-Chairs

Maidenhead Neighbourhood Forum