

Decision Maker:	Executive Director of Place
Date:	30 July 2025
Report title:	Neighbourhood Planning – Application for the designation of the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum
Ward(s) or groups affected:	Forest Hill & Sydenham
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/A
From:	Head of Strategic Planning

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Director of Place:

1. Notes the consultation on the application from the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum to re-designate its Neighbourhood Forum status which closed on Tuesday 6 May 2025. 77 responses were received, with no substantive objections raised that would prevent the re-designation of the Forum.
2. Notes that the London Borough of Lewisham intends to designate the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum as the Neighbourhood Forum for the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Area.
3. Agrees to designate the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum as the Neighbourhood Forum for the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Area.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

4. The alternative option is to not agree to designate the Forum.
5. This is not recommended, as the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum has provided all the necessary documents outlined in Regulation (8) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, to accompany their application (see 'Key Issues for Consideration').
6. The Forum has further satisfied the requirements in order for an organisation or body to be designated as a Neighbourhood Forum, as per section 61F subsections (5) & (7) of Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

7. The Localism Act 2011 (by amending the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ('the Act')) introduced new provisions which empower Parish Councils and

designated Neighbourhood Forums (NFs') to initiate the process for making Neighbourhood Development Orders and Neighbourhood Development Plans in relation to designated Neighbourhood Areas. The powers came into force on 6 April 2012 when the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (the 2012 Regulations') was passed.

8. A Neighbourhood Plan is a plan which sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in the whole, or part of, a Neighbourhood Area. It may contain a range of policies or proposals for land use development that will carry weight in the determination of planning applications. Neighbourhood Development Orders grant planning permission in relation to a particular Neighbourhood Area for development specified in the Order or for a class of development specified in the Order. Both Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the relevant area.
9. Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum was first designated as a Neighbourhood Forum for the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Area in February 2020. The group is now applying to re-designate its Neighbourhood Forum status. This re-designation process must occur every five years.

Neighbourhood Forum preparation stages

10. Under regulation (8) of the 2012 Regulations, where an organisation or body submits a Neighbourhood Forum application, it must include a series of supporting documents accompanying the application. It also needs to be demonstrated that the application complies with requirements set out in 61F (5) of the 1990 Act. These are covered under the section 'Key Issues for Consideration'. The documents have been provided and are appended (Appendix A to E).
11. Regulation (9) of the 2012 Regulations requires local planning authorities to publish the application and any supporting material (found in the appendices) as soon as possible after receiving a Neighbourhood Forum application, which the local planning authority does not decline to consider under Regulation (11). It is required to be published on the local authority's website and in any other manner as the local planning authority considers it is likely to bring the application to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the area for a minimum of 6 weeks, in order to allow for the receipt of representations. Please refer to the Consultation section below (para 34).
12. If the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum status is re-designated, it will continue to have the power to lead the neighbourhood planning process in the corresponding Neighbourhood Area, which includes making of a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order.
13. Following Regulation (9) and working jointly with the London Borough of Lewisham, it is appropriate for LB Southwark undertook a consultation on the proposed re-designation of the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum.
14. The consultation on the application for re-designation of the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum ran from 25 March 2025 to 6 May 2025, in accordance with regulation (9) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
15. 77 responses were received by both LB Southwark and LB Lewisham.

16. Following Regulation (9) and working jointly with LB Lewisham, consultation has now concluded and the decision can be made to designate the Forum.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The requirements of Regulation (8) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

17. Regulation (8) of the 2012 Regulations requires certain documents to be submitted with a Neighbourhood Forum application. Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum has submitted the following supporting documents to accompany their application, including:
- The name of the proposed Neighbourhood Forum (Appendix A);
 - A copy of the written constitution of the proposed neighbourhood forum (Appendix B);
 - The name of the neighbourhood area to which the application relates and a map which identifies the area; (Appendix C);
 - The contact details of at least one member of the proposed neighbourhood forum to be made public under regulations 9 and 10; (Appendix D & Appendix A); and,
 - A Forum Supporting Statement (Appendix E).
18. As such, the Council considers that the requirements of Regulation (8) of the 2012 Regulations have been satisfied in relation to this application.

The requirements of section 61F subsections (5) & (7) of Town and Country Planning Act 1990

19. Section 61F (5) of the 1990 Act sets out certain requirements that must be satisfied in order for an organization or body to be designated as a Neighbourhood Forum. The organisation must be:
- a) Established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the proposed Neighbourhood Area;
 - b) Membership of the organization must be open to:
 - i) Individuals who live in the proposed Neighbourhood Area;
 - ii) Individuals who work there; and
 - iii) Elected members of the London borough Council for the area;
 - c) Membership must include as a minimum 21 individuals, each of whom:
 - i) Lives in the proposed Neighbourhood Area;
 - ii) Works there; or
 - iii) Is an elected member of the relevant Council body for the area;

- d) It must have a written constitution; and,
 - e) Such other conditions as may be prescribed.
20. In the Supporting Statement submitted by the Sydenham Hill Ridge members (Appendix E), it provides a current list of supporters who live or work in the neighbourhood aim to recruit more members that are existing tenants, and people apart of Resident Associations, to voluntarily be a part of the Neighbourhood Forum. Through ongoing events and gatherings, they plan to engage with the local community to help shape planning objectives, policies and visions, alongside widening the membership group of Sydenham Hill Ridge.
 21. Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum has previously been designated as the Neighbourhood Forum for the Area, and the Council still consider the Forum to satisfy the requirements set out under section 61F (5) and (7) of the 1990 Act.
 22. Southwark finds the application, as well as supporting materials Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighborhood Forum have submitted for its re-designation to be of satisfactory quality, and compliant with requirements set out in 61F (5) of the 1990 Act.

Consultation

23. The consultation on the application for re-designation of the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum ran from 25 March 2025 to 6 May 2025.
24. The consultation was publicised in the following ways:
 - Publishing a press notice in Southwark News;
 - Sending out emails to subscribers in the Planning Policy mailing list, in addition to statutory consultees; and
 - Updating the relevant webpages on the Southwark Council website.
25. There were 77 responses received. A full list of responses can be found in Appendix G of this report.
26. A Consultation Report can be found in appendix F of this report.
27. The majority of respondents to the consultation support the re-designation of the group as the Neighbourhood Forum for the Sydenham Hill Ridge neighbourhood Area. There were 5 objections, which have been responded to by officers individually (see appendix F).
28. It is the view of officers that the nature of the objections, when taken together with the many comments in support of the re-designation, are not of significant weight to stop the Cabinet Member from re-designating the forum for a further five years.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impact statement

Community Impact Statement

29. Neighbourhood Plans allow members of the local community to focus on the needs of the specific neighbourhood and to specify what they expect from development in the area.

30. The application submitted by the Sydenham Hill Neighbourhood Forum complies with subsection (7) of section 61F in the 1990 Act, which includes a list of members drawn from different places in the neighbourhood area concerned, and from different sections of the community in that area.
31. Agreeing to the Neighbourhood Forum re-designation from the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum will allow residents in the Neighbourhood Area to comment on the proposed re-designation application.
32. Taken together, the decision is seen to have a positive impact for the community.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

33. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ("2010 Act") which requires the council, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
34. Officers consider that an Equalities Impact Assessment (a tool the council uses to make sure it promotes equality in policies, practices and services) will not be needed for this occasion, as the application submitted complies with subsection (7) of section 61F in the 1990 Act. This is elaborated under 'Key Issue for Consideration', paragraph 16 of this report.

Health impact statement

35. There are no foreseen impacts on health arising from agreeing to the Neighbourhood Forum re-designation from the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum for consultation.

Further guidance

36. None

Climate change implications

37. Neighbourhood Planning, through the adoption of policies that can respond to specific issues within communities, can have a positive impact on mitigating the impacts of climate change.
38. However, there are no foreseen climate change implications arising from agreeing to the Neighbourhood Forum re-designation of the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum for consultation.

Resource implications

39. The administration of the proposed re-designation will be covered within existing staffing resources of the Strategic Planning team.

40. However, MHCLG recently announced that it was ceasing all grant funding to Neighbourhood Forums as of immediately unless grants had already been provisionally agreed with Forums. This led to Locality, the governments neighbourhood advisor body to close its services for all neighbourhood planning functions. The Council met with the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum to discuss these changes and to set out that the Council did not have any other funding pots to support the Forum moving forward. The group assured the Council that it had the funding to continue and that it still wished to proceed with the re-designation application.
41. It should be noted that at present and in line with the legislation concerns around funding is not identified as a reason to refuse a Forum designation.
42. Should the Neighbourhood Plan for Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum proceed to the referendum stage, it will incur an inevitable cost to the Council. This cost would be similar to a ward election, which is usually around £25,000 per referendum. This is likely to be shared between LB Lewisham and Southwark, since Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum is a joint operation between the two boroughs.
43. To date, our understanding is that the Government will still cover the cost of a referendum in the form of a grant up to £20,000.
44. More information regarding the cost of referendum will be revealed once the Draft Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to the Independent Planning Inspector. A separate IDM report will be drafted before Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum starts its referendum process.

Legal implications

45. The recommendation requests that the Director of Planning note the consultation on the application from the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum and agree to designate the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum as the Neighbourhood Forum for the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Area.
46. This decision is made by the Director Planning as it is a favorable decision. In accordance with Lewisham's constitution. If the decision was not to agree the designation this would revert to a Mayor and Cabinet decision, unless written delegation from the Mayor has been given to the Director of Planning.
47. There are no foreseen legal implications in making the decision in this report.

Financial implications

48. There are no financial implications for the council at this stage regarding the Forum's re-designation.
49. Should the Neighbourhood Plan for Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum proceed to the referendum stage, it will incur an inevitable cost to the Council as stated in paragraph 42 above. This cost would be similar to a ward election, which is usually around £25,000 per referendum. This is likely to be shared between LB Lewisham and Southwark, since Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum is a joint operation between the two boroughs.

50. To date, our understanding is that the Government will still cover the cost of a referendum in the form of a grant up to £20,000. Any costs in excess of this will be covered from the Planning Service's existing budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
The Localism Act	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted	Head of Strategic Planning
The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made	

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix A	Neighbourhood Forum application to Southwark
Appendix B	Constitution of Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum
Appendix C	Designated Sydenham Hill Ridge Area May 2019 (Name and Map)
Appendix D	List of Supporters & Members January 2025
Appendix E	Neighbourhood Forum Supporting Statements January 2025
Appendix F	Application for the designation of the Sydenham Hill Ridge Neighbourhood Forum: Consultation Report
Appendix G	Full list of consultation responses

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	David Syme		
Report Author	Konoya Kabir		
Version			
Dated	29 th July		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments sought	Comments included	
Director of Law & Corporate Governance	Yes	x	
Executive Director for Finance, Digital and Corporate Resources	Yes	x	
Cabinet Member	Yes		
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		x	