**Media statement from John Howell, MP – issued June 30th 2018**

John Howell MP, the Member of Parliament for the Henley Constituency and Government Champion on Neighbourhood Planning has welcomed the successful referenda in Benson and in Watlington which have approved their Neighbourhood Plans.  The two plans have full legal effect now that they have passed their local referendum and will be used to determine planning decisions that affect Benson and Watlington. The referenda in both villages were convincing. In Benson the percentage pass rate was 93.1% on a turnout of 35%. In Watlington, the pass rate was 80.9% on a turnout of 47.4%.  Both turnouts were significantly better than for the recent South Oxfordshire District Council by-election in Benson (27.8%).

John Howell MP said:

*“I congratulate both Neighbourhood Planning teams on their successful referenda.  A lot of hard work went into these Plans by a large number of people. They patiently dealt with local issues to provide genuinely local views of where housing should go in their communities and how the villages should be developed. This was also the first time that I had been able to participate in a referendum since I live in one of the areas covered by a Plan. In both cases I am particularly glad to have been able to provide advice at various stages of the Plans’ development.”*

John Fowler of the Benson Neighbourhood Planning team said:

*“The Benson Neighbourhood Plan Team are extremely delighted by the Referendum outcome and the very strong support shown for our Plan. The Plan's adoption is the culmination of over 2 years hard work by volunteers to reach this stage. The Plan is not just about Housing and a Relief Road but protects and enhances Benson’s Green Infrastructure, sets Design Guidelines for the new developments, provides new Community Facilities and will provide significant Community Infrastructure Levy revenue for the benefit of all residents. The focus now shifts to ensuring the facilities and benefits committed by developers and others are realised.”*

**Gill Bindoff of the Watlington Neigbourhood Plan team added:**

***“The Watlington Neighbourhood Plan now has a very strong local mandate.  It has been developed from the beginning as a community Plan and that has produced a high level of support. After all the hard work it is good to know that the Plan now carries full weight and that Watlington  people will have a say about how their community grows”.***