

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK CORE STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 The New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) has published the “pre-submission” version of its Core Strategy and Development Management Policies. This is the document that the NPA intends to submit for public examination to the Secretary of State. Before the document is submitted, there is a 6 week period for making representations. After the 6 week period, the NPA will consider the representations made and whether to submit the Core Strategy. Only minor changes can be made at that stage.
- 1.2 This report recommends that the document be supported by New Forest District Council.
- 1.3 The text of the full NPA document can be seen at:
newforestnpa.gov.uk/core_strategy.pdf

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This follows on from consultation on a joint National Park Core Strategy and Management Plan in the autumn of 2008 which resulted in much local controversy. NFDC (Cabinet of 5 November 2008 – see minute in Appendix 1 to this report) expressed very serious concerns about the content of the 2008 consultation draft, in particular:
 - There was an over-emphasis on the first National Park purpose of conservation;
 - There was inadequate recognition of the social, economic and community needs of the 34,000 people whom live in the National Park;
 - There was inadequate recognition of the need to work with NFDC, which is the local authority responsible for most of the National Park area, and with other organisations;
 - Inadequate account had been taken of the views expressed by District Council representatives in the consultations and workshops held in drawing up the Plan;
 - The Plan needed to better reflect the needs of the local economy, which contributes in its own right to the social and economic health of the area. The relevant test should be whether economic development harms the special qualities of the National Park rather than whether it contributes positively towards National Park purposes;
 - The Plan did not take proper account of the relationships with the areas surrounding the National Park, most of which lie in New Forest District, and of how it could contribute towards resolving issues in the wider area;
 - There were concerns about the zoning approach proposed, which was considered to be unduly restrictive;

- There was concern that the Plan would not produce enough affordable housing, which was not included in the priority objectives or actions. There was no proper evidence relating to the economic viability of the policies proposed at that stage. Consistency was needed with the policies on affordable housing in the rest of New Forest District, especially as the District Council is the housing authority for most of the National Park;
- The Plan dealt inadequately with the needs of local businesses (including those related to tourism);
- The transport proposals (which included reference to possible road pricing) were unrealistic;
- There was insufficient recognition of the work being done through the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) to promote green infrastructure initiatives as an alternative to the National Park;
- The proposed changes to policies for recreational horse-keeping were not justified by evidence.

2.2 The NPA recognised that the concerns expressed by NFDC and by other organisations were very serious concerns. A series of workshops were held – attended by NFDC Members and Officers – to discuss the way forward. In addition there has been discussion of specific policy areas with the relevant NFDC officers, and discussion at Member level through the Joint Members Advisory Group.

3. THE REVISED NATIONAL PARK CORE STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

- 3.1 The revised document is very different from the 2008 consultation document. It is different in scope, in that the National Park Management Plan has been separated out. The Management Plan was the subject of a report to Cabinet on 4th November 2009 and was supported by NFDC.
- 3.2 The revised Core Strategy document has with it a suite of Development Management policies which are largely based on the previous New Forest District Local Plan policies that applied to the National Park area. This report does not comment in detail on the proposed development management policies that will apply within the National Park, but rather focuses on the overall Core Strategy that sets the framework for the Development Management Policies.
- 3.3 In short, NFDC's previous concerns regarding the proposed Core Strategy have been resolved in the revised document. The document that the NPA intends to submit for Examination:
- Properly takes account of the social, economic and community needs of the 34,000 people who live in the National Park, while still reflecting National Park purposes;
 - Properly reflects the New Forest District Sustainable Community Strategy;
 - Recognises the responsibilities of NFDC regarding the National Park area and states the need to work together with other organisations including NFDC;
 - Sets out the relationships with the surrounding areas, including the adjoining areas in New Forest District, in a much better way and emphasises the need for cross-boundary working;
 - Sets out a Vision, Objectives and Spatial Policies that properly relate to each other and can be supported;

- Better reflects the needs of the local economy and local businesses, and takes on board the comments made on these matters by NFDC;
- Includes policies on affordable housing that are evidence-based and complement those accepted by the Inspector as a “welcome and innovative approach” in NFDC’s Core Strategy;
- Recognises the PUSH green infrastructure work.

3.4 NFDC’s Employment and Tourism Manager, Housing Strategy and Development Manager; and Principal Engineer (Transport Policy) are all satisfied that previous concerns have been resolved in the revised document.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS /CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 These are all taken into account in the above report and the recommendations to support the revised document.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

6.1 The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder considers that the revised document is a much improved Core Strategy and supports the recommendations.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

That New Forest District Council:

- (i) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the revised National Park Core Strategy and Development Management Policies document;**
- (ii) is very pleased that the comments made by New Forest District Council on the previous consultation draft have been taken on board; and**
- (iii) supports the revised document.**

For Further Information Please Contact:

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Background Papers

Published documents

MINUTE OF CABINET OF 5 NOVEMBER 2008

62. NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK PLAN CONSULTATION DRAFT (REPORT B).

Cllrs Rickman and Mrs Holding declared personal interests in this item as Council appointed representatives on the New Forest National Park Authority. They did not consider their interests to be prejudicial. They remained at the meeting, took part in the discussion and voted.

The Cabinet considered a response to a consultation on the draft New Forest National Park Authority Plan.

The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder said that the Council had now produced their own Local Development Framework Core Strategy and he regretted that the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) had not felt able to join the Council in producing a joint strategy. He felt that the NFNPA document was one dimensional and did not take into account such issues as the housing and transport needs of local people.

A well attended informal meeting, on 13 October 2008, to which all members of the Council had been invited, had been able constructively to produce a draft response to the consultation which formed the basis of the Cabinet's deliberations.

The Cabinet agreed that it was important that the Council and the NFNPA worked collaboratively together however, there were a number of areas of concern in the proposed Plan. In particular the Employment, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder said that the housing needs of young people were not being addressed and this was important to enable a sustainable vibrant community to be maintained within the New Forest. Concern was also expressed at the proposed zoning of areas which could lead to different planning requirements within one parish.

RESOLVED:

That the New Forest National Park Authority be informed that the Council:

- (i) Welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft New Forest National Park Plan;
- (ii) Emphasises the need for the New Forest National Park Plan properly to deal with the needs of the 34,000 people who live in the New Forest National Park and the related economic, social and community needs, as well as reflecting National Park purposes;
- (iii) Urges the New Forest National Park Authority, in finalising the New Forest National Park Plan, to take on board the comments made in Section 3 of Report B to the Cabinet; and
- (iv) Aims to continue to work with the New Forest National Park Authority to secure the outcomes set out in recommendations (ii) and (iii) above, with the intention of achieving an outcome where both the Council and the New Forest National Park Authority will have compatible plans that can be mutually supported.