



New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Annual Council Meeting Agenda

13 May 2024



SUMMONS

To All Members of the Council

You are hereby summoned to attend the Annual meeting of the District Council to be held in the Council Chamber - Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst, SO43 7PA on Monday, 13 May 2024, at 6.30 pm



Kate Ryan
Chief Executive

Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. SO43 7PA
www.newforest.gov.uk

This agenda can be viewed online (<https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk>).

It can also be made available on audio tape, in Braille and large print.

Members of the public may watch this meeting live on the [Council's website](#).

Enquiries to: Matt Wisdom
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AGENDA

Apologies

1. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 26)

To confirm the minutes of the Special Meeting held on 26 March 2024, and the Ordinary Meeting on 8 April 2024, as correct records.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

To note any declarations of interests made by members in connection with an agenda item. The nature of the interests must also be specified.

Members are asked to discuss any possible interests with Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

3. VOTE OF THANKS TO THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN

4. OUTGOING CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The Chairman will address the Council, after which he and his consort will be presented with badges of their past offices.

5. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

To elect a Chairman of the Council to hold office until the Annual Meeting in 2025.

Cllr Hawkins is the Council's nomination for the ensuing year.

6. ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

The newly-elected Chairman will address the Council.

7. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

To appoint a Vice-Chairman of the Council to hold office until the Annual Meeting in 2025.

Cllr Sleep is the Council's nomination for the ensuing year.

8. ALLOCATION OF SEATS AND APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS (Pages 27 - 30)

To agree the allocation of seats to the political groups on those Committees and Panels to which the political balance rules apply, and to approve the appointment of Members to Committees and Panels.

9. REPORT OF CABINET - 1 MAY 2024 (Pages 31 - 126)

10. NOTICE OF MOTION

In accordance with Standing Order 21, Cllr Richards will move the following motion:-

"This Council notes that:-

- 1. The Leader's foreword to the Corporate Plan states that 'As a well-established community leader, the Council has long recognised the strong heritage and a world-class environment we operate within, and work to protect and enhance. Tackling climate and environmental challenges is key to ensure that the special nature of the New Forest can be enjoyed by future generations.'*
- 2. Two of the four values of this Council are Ambition (We will be ambitious for our people and our place, embracing innovation and best practice) and Fairness (We will act fairly, honestly, and openly in all that we do).*
- 3. The first priority of this Council's Future New Forest transformation programme is "Putting our customers at the heart of what we do".*
- 4. This Council voted in October 2021 to declare a 'Climate and Nature Emergency'.*
- 5. This Council's Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 does not include measurable targets and a mechanism to report progress against such targets to our residents.*
- 6. High performing organisations relish being measured as it allows them to demonstrate their outstanding performance.*

7. That in the [draft consultation version of the Corporate Plan](#), a measurement of “Overall emissions from council activity (Kg of CO2)” was included.

This Council resolves that:-

1. In order to be ambitious, transparent and put our customers at the heart of what we do SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound) targets should be published alongside the Corporate Plan for each item under the “It will be measured by” sections as soon as these targets have been agreed.
2. The mechanisms for reporting against the targets, and publishing progress on a minimum of an annual basis, will be set out alongside the targets.
3. The targets for Place Priority 2 “Protecting our climate, coast, and natural world” will be amended to include a measurement of “Overall emissions from council activity (Kg of CO2)” during this financial year and a target to then reduce these emissions agreed for each subsequent year of the corporate plan period, being reported against and published in line with point 2 above.”

Cllr Parker will second the motion.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 42, the above motion, after being proposed and seconded (without speeches), should stand referred to the body within whose terms of reference the subject matter of the motions comes, or the Cabinet or such Committees or Panels that the Council may determine.

The Chairman may allow the motion to be dealt with at this meeting if they consider it urgent, convenient or conducive to the despatch of business.

11. MEETING DATES

To note the following schedule of Council meetings for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year, all commencing at 6.30 pm:-

- 8 July 2024
- 16 September 2024
- 14 October 2024
- 9 December 2024
- 24 February 2025
- 14 April 2025
- 12 May 2025 (Annual Meeting)

12. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

At the conclusion of the Annual Council Meeting, the Annual Meetings of the Council's Committees and Panels will be held

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Agenda Item 1

26 MARCH 2024

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Special meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Tuesday, 26 March 2024.

- * Cllr Neville Penman (Chairman)
- * Cllr David Hawkins (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Alan Alvey
- * Peter Armstrong
Geoffrey Blunden
Hilary Brand
- * Mark Clark
- * Steve Clarke
- * Jill Cleary
- * Keith Craze
- * Kate Crisell
- * Sean Cullen
- * Jack Davies
- * Steve Davies
Philip Dowd
- * Barry Dunning
Jacqui England
- * Allan Glass
David Harrison
- * Matthew Hartmann
- * John Haywood
- * Jeremy Heron
- * Nigel Linford
- * Patrick Mballa
- * Colm McCarthy

Councillors:

- * David Millar
- * Neil Millington
Ian Murray
- * Stephanie Osborne
Alan O'Sullivan
- * Adam Parker
- * Dave Penny
- * Dan Poole
Caroline Rackham
- * Alvin Reid
- * Joe Reilly
- * Janet Richards
- * Barry Rickman
- * Steve Rippon-Swaine
- * John Sleep
- * Michael Thierry
- * Derek Tipp
- * Neil Tungate
Alex Wade
- * Malcolm Wade
- * Christine Ward
- * Phil Woods
- * Richard Young

*Present

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Tanya Coulter, James Carpenter, Tim Guymer, Sue Jennings, Joe Tyler and Matt Wisdom

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Blunden, Brand, Dowd, England, Harrison, Murray, O'Sullivan, Rackham and A Wade.

70 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests by Members.

It was acknowledged that there were a number of councillors who were also members of Hampshire County Council.

71 CALL-IN REQUEST - HAMPSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN (PARTIAL UPDATE) CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The Chairman welcomed Members to the Special Council meeting and invited Cllr Haywood to speak who had the following procedural motion to put to the Council:-

“That Standing Orders be suspended to enable Venetia Rowland and Cllr Anna Wilson to speak at this Special Council meeting, for up to three minutes each, as provided for by the procedure for public participation at meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Panels.”

Cllr J Davies seconded the motion.

The motion was carried unanimously by the Council and Venetia Rowland and Cllr Anna Wilson of Fordingbridge Town Council each addressed the Council in turn.

Venetia Rowland reported that Midgham Farm had received 962 objections as part of the previous Regulation 18 consultation undertaken by Hampshire County Council, which amounted to 42% of the overall responses to the consultation. She highlighted that the plan needed to demonstrate deliverability and viability as part of its overall stated policy. Issues relevant to the site included public rights of way, air quality and health, amenities for local residents, landscape, protected habitats and species, noise and dust, loss of agricultural land, ground water, flood risk, restoration, archaeology, traffic cumulative impacts, and the overall need for the site. She cited concerns about leaving these issues to be addressed at the planning stage. Previous applications in the 1990s were noted as having been withdrawn as the impacts could not effectively be mitigated and it was suggested that the position had not changed.

Cllr Anna Wilson, Fordingbridge Town Councillor highlighted in particular the loss of large areas of green space to strategic planning sites in Fordingbridge and that Midgham remained vital to be retained in the light of that. She was concerned about the impact of such a minerals site on local people and suggested that it was incorrect to term Midgham as an extension of an existing site.

They both encouraged councillors to uphold and enhance their objections to the Midgham Farm site.

Following the public speakers, the Chairman of the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel offered a brief introduction to the item, as Chairman of the Panel that had made the referral to Council. He highlighted that Hampshire County Council was the decision maker in the matter and the District Council was a consultee. To that end, all councillors were offered a briefing on the matter by Hampshire County Council officers, and the Portfolio Holder had sought input into the consultation response from relevant local ward councillors, prior to making the decision.

Cllr S Davies moved the following motion:-

“This Council, as a consultee to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan, is concerned about the continued reliance on the Avon Vally for extraction, and the impacts that this may cause locally. There are strong and heartfelt concerns and objections, and we ask that the Hampshire County Council and the Secretary of State take the concerns raised by the local community into account and carefully consider them during the examination of the proposed plan.

Furthermore, that both Hampshire County Council and the Secretary of State needs to ensure that if, following examination, the Plan does retain the proposed allocations that the development considerations are suitably drafted to ensure that any developments that come forward are subject to appropriate site specific policies and controls to manage development and ongoing operations. To this end whilst the Portfolio Holder has prepared a detailed, technical response, this Council requests that he considers any further concerns raised to Council tonight, before submitting a final response to the consultation.”

Cllr Craze seconded the motion.

Cllr J Davies moved the following amendment to the motion, with the bold text replacing the strikethrough text below:-

*“This Council, as a consultee to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan, is concerned about the continued reliance on the Avon Vally for extraction, and the impacts that this may cause locally. There are strong and heartfelt concerns and objections, ~~and we ask that the Hampshire County Council and the Secretary of State take the concerns raised by the local community into account and carefully consider them during the examination of the proposed plan.~~ **and we oppose the inclusion of the Midgham Farm Quarry site and Ashley Manor Farm site in the Minerals and Waste Plan and advise the Portfolio Holder to reflect this in his response to the consultation.**”*

Furthermore, that both Hampshire County Council and the Secretary of State needs to ensure that if, following examination, the Plan does retain the proposed allocations that the development considerations are suitably drafted to ensure that any developments that come forward are subject to appropriate site specific policies and controls to manage development and ongoing operations. To this end whilst the Portfolio Holder has prepared a detailed, technical response, this Council requests that he considers any further concerns raised to Council tonight, before submitting a final response to the consultation.”

Cllr Millar seconded the amendment.

Members debated the amendment and in doing so, also provided commentary on the parts that did not amend substantive motion.

During the course of the debate, a number of matters were discussed with a wide variety of views expressed. There was particular reference to the concerns expressed by members of the public living in and around the proposed Midgham Farm site, along with observations from those who had experience of the extraction and operation of existing sites. Some Members acknowledged that minerals extraction was an essential resource that helped to meet local housing need.

Put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

The Council went on to debate the substantive motion further. A Member highlighted that the call-in procedure demonstrated the Council’s commitment to revisit decisions and asked specifically to place on record the Council’s thanks to its officers for their advice and support throughout the consideration of this issue.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy committed to reconsidering the decision following the meeting, in light of the Council debate.

In responding to the debate, Cllr S Davies referred Members to Policy 20 within the Plan in supporting appropriate controls and measures. He thanked the Council for agreeing to allow the two public speakers to address the Council on this matter.

Put to the vote, the substantive motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

This Council, as a consultee to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan, is concerned about the continued reliance on the Avon Vally for extraction, and the impacts that this may cause locally. There are strong and heartfelt concerns and objections, and we ask that the Hampshire County Council and the Secretary of State take the concerns raised by the local community into account and carefully consider them during the examination of the proposed plan.

Furthermore, that both Hampshire County Council and the Secretary of State needs to ensure that if, following examination, the Plan does retain the proposed allocations that the development considerations are suitably drafted to ensure that any developments that come forward are subject to appropriate site specific policies and controls to manage development and ongoing operations. To this end whilst the Portfolio Holder has prepared a detailed, technical response, this Council requests that he considers any further concerns raised to Council tonight, before submitting a final response to the consultation.

Note – following the Council meeting, the Portfolio Holder reconsidered the decision in accordance with the Council's procedures and made a further decision on 28 March 2024.

CHAIRMAN

8 APRIL 2024

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 8 April 2024.

- * Cllr Neville Penman (Chairman)
- * Cllr David Hawkins (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * Alan Alvey
- * Peter Armstrong
- * Geoffrey Blunden
- * Hilary Brand
- * Mark Clark
- * Steve Clarke
- * Jill Cleary
- * Keith Craze
- * Kate Crisell
- * Sean Cullen
- Jack Davies
- * Steve Davies
- * Philip Dowd
- * Barry Dunning
- Jacqui England
- Allan Glass
- * David Harrison
- * Matthew Hartmann
- * John Haywood
- * Jeremy Heron
- * Nigel Linford
- * Patrick Mballa
- * Colm McCarthy

Councillors:

- * David Millar
- * Neil Millington
- * Ian Murray
- * Stephanie Osborne
- * Alan O'Sullivan
- * Adam Parker
- * Dave Penny
- * Dan Poole
- * Caroline Rackham
- Alvin Reid
- * Joe Reilly
- * Janet Richards
- * Barry Rickman
- * Steve Rippon-Swaine
- * John Sleep
- Michael Thierry
- * Derek Tipp
- * Neil Tungate
- * Alex Wade
- * Malcolm Wade
- * Christine Ward
- * Phil Woods
- Richard Young

*Present

Officers Attending:

Kate Ryan, Tanya Coulter, James Carpenter, Richard Knott, Joe Tyler and Matt Wisdom.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J Davies, England, Glass, Reid, Thierry and Young.

72 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2024, be confirmed.

Note – A Member highlighted that they were yet to receive information in response to a supplementary question asked at the last Council meeting. The Chief Executive confirmed this would be followed up and actioned.

73 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests by Members.

74 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Former Cllr Bill Dow

The Chairman reported with great sadness on the recent passing of former Cllr Bill Dow.

Bill was first elected to the Council in May 1999 to the Forest North West Ward, serving until May 2019. During his 20 years' service, Bill was a member of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel, the Planning Committee and the General Purposes & Licensing Committee, which he chaired for 5 years from 2002 to 2006, when he became Vice Chairman of the Council.

Bill went on to serve as the Council's Chairman from 2007 to 2008.

Bill also served on many Outside Bodies during his time on the Council. These included the South East Employers' Organisation, the Salisbury District Community Health Council and the Bournemouth International Airport Consultative Committee.

The Chairman represented the Council at Bill's funeral, held on Friday 22 March at the Church of the Holy Ascension in Hyde.

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman expressed sincere condolences to Bill's family and friends and placed on record thanks for the service he had given to this District.

D Day – 80th Anniversary

The Chairman referred to the 80th anniversary of D-Day on 6 June 2024, the largest naval, air and land operation in history.

To mark this occasion and to remember the heroism of those who landed on the shores of the Normandy beaches, the D-Day Flag of Peace would be raised at a ceremony at Appletree Court, in the presence of the new Chairman of the Council, along with the Armed Forces Champion and the Leader of the Council.

It was hoped that those employees who served would attend the ceremony, alongside representatives from HQ Solent Station at Marchwood – duties permitting.

Civic Day

The Chairman reported on his Civic Day, held on 13 March. Guests attended Minstead Trust, one of the Chairman's charities for the year, and Furzey Gardens. Minstead Trust offered a detailed walk around the facilities looking at the work that

they do to support people with learning disabilities and guests also enjoyed a very informative guided walk around Furzey Gardens.

50 Years of NFDC

The Chairman expressed his honour to sit as Chairman as the Council celebrated 50 years since it was formed in 1974.

He highlighted that all the Chairmen throughout the past 50 years had also been very important to the voluntary and charitable organisations across the District. The office of Chairman had attended events to raise the profile of these vital services, raised funds to support their ongoing work in local communities and celebrated their achievements with them and the people they support.

The Chairman considered that it was only right to pause to look back and celebrate what has been achieved, but perhaps more importantly look forward to what the Council planned to deliver, continuing to provide for local communities.

Engagements

The Chairman reported on the following recent engagements:-

24 March

The Town Mayor of New Milton held his civic service at St Magdalene Church on 24 March, which included a collection for Ashley Family Hub, as the Mayor's chosen charity.

27 March

The Chairman attended the presentation of a research document "Engage, Listen, Act" – co-produced by Winchester University and New Forest Mencap, on how to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities in the New Forest and surrounding areas.

3 April

The Chairman attended a Special Meeting of New Milton Town Council, where the Honorary Freedom of the Town was awarded to former town councillor, mayor and District Councillor Goff Beck.

75 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made the following announcements:-

Economic Development Governance Structures

The Leader updated the Council on the newly created governance structures for economic development. Hampshire County Council had taken on the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions for the whole of the Hampshire geography from 1 April 2024. The Leader represented the Council on a newly established joint leaders place board that fed in to the Hampshire Growth and Skills Board. Given that the New Forest was the fourth largest economy in Hampshire and generated some £4.4 billion per annum to the wider economy, and with opportunities such as

the Solent Freeport, it was an important priority for the Leader to continue to represent local priorities that will support a prosperous New Forest.

Community Hub – Testwood

The Leader reported on an initiative to support local communities. Along with the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, and the Chief Executive, she had the privilege of visiting the Community Hub at Testwood Baptist Church. Attendees could see the real difference the volunteers make, not only in the food bank but also in youth initiatives, and sessions reaching out for those managing very challenging circumstances. The Leader recognised there was a real strain on many residents, and she was pleased that the Council's work with the cost of living steering group, the community grants programme and the councillor grants allocated by all councillors, do also go some way to support this important grass roots work.

76 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW

Cllr Alvey introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the Audit Committee meeting held on 22 March 2024. Cllr Hartmann seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the revisions to the Council's Financial Regulations be adopted with effect from 8 April 2024.

77 RESPONSE TO MOTION - HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PLANS TO CLOSE MARCHWOOD AND SOMERLEY RECYCLING CENTRES / LOCAL AUTHORITY FINANCES

Cllr O'Sullivan introduced the report and moved the recommendations from the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 28 March 2024. Cllr Dunning seconded the motion.

A number of members spoke in support of the Council's robust response to the proposals to close Marchwood and Somerley Recycling Centres, noting the potential impact on the District and its residents.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council note the Panel's views on the proposed corporate response to the Hampshire County Council (HCC) Future Services Consultation set out by the Council's Section 151 Officer, including the specific response which objects to the plans to close Marchwood and Somerley Recycling Centres, as submitted to HCC on 28 March 2024 (Appendix 1 of the report); and
- (b) That the Council note that the Panel endorsed, without amendment, the proposed content of the letter to the Government on local authority finances, to be sent by the Leader of the Council, detailed throughout section 4 of the report.

78 REPORT OF CABINET - 3 APRIL 2024

PART I – ITEMS RESOLVED BY CABINET

There were no speakers on the items resolved by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 April 2024.

PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

Item 5 – Updated Corporate Plan 2024-2028

Cllr Cleary introduced the item and moved the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting. In doing so, she highlighted the recent endorsement from the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel, expressing her view that all the work undertaken had culminated in the best corporate plan the Council had ever produced. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

Cllr Richards moved the following amendment and in doing so, highlighted the importance of setting an ambitious plan in respect of the Council's overall activity and commitment to the Climate and Nature Emergency. Cllr Parker seconded the amendment:-

“That Council approve the Corporate Plan 2024-2028 (Appendix 1), updated following public consultation, **subject to:**

the emissions from the Council's vehicle fleet measure within Place Priority 2 being supplemented with a measure of total emissions related to all aspects of the Council's activity, including its supply chain.”

Members speaking for the amendment referred to the Council's Climate and Nature Emergency declaration, and the opportunity to ensure regular, transparent accounting for the Council's activity in this regard. It was suggested that the collection of this sort of data was not uncommon in the corporate world.

Members speaking against the amendment sought further information in relation to the resources required to measure all emissions related to Council activity and its supply chain, in addition to the Council's vehicle fleet.

Some Members referenced the upcoming performance management framework which would set specific, measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and in doing so could revisit the proposal in any case.

In responding to the debate on the amendment, Cllr Richards encouraged the Council to ensure accountability across Council activity, expressing concern that if not included within the plan, it would not hold the importance it needed to drive ownership of responding to the climate and nature emergency.

In responding to the debate on the amendment, the Leader expressed her concern at agreeing to a performance indicator that the Council could not accurately measure. She highlighted that whilst the emissions from the Council's vehicle fleet was measurable, the wider supply chain of Council partners extended outside of the Council's control.

Put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

The Council went on to debate the substantive motion.

Some Members made comments in relation to the Solent Freeport and its prominence within the “prosperity” theme of the Corporate Plan. There were also comments made in relation to how the perception of crime could be quantified and alternative options to measure performance in this area.

The Leader responded to the debate and welcomed regular performance reporting that was accessible to the public.

Put to the vote, the substantive motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

That Council approve the Corporate Plan 2024-2028 (Appendix 1), updated following public consultation.

79 QUESTIONS

Questions were put and answered under Standing Order 22, as follows:-

- From Cllr Harrison to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, on damage to Rumbidge Street car park.
- From Cllr Rackham to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on Southern Water.
- From Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr S Davies, on the use of Solent Mead Care Home site for affordable housing.
- From Cllr M Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole, on child poverty.
- From Cllr Cullen to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on Solent Freeport.
- From Cllr Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp, on Dibden Bay.
- From Cllr M Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp, on Fawley Waterside.
- From Cllr Murray to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole, on the new Community Forum.
- From Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole, on PCSOs and ACSOs.
- From Cllr M Wade to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on Solent Freeport.

Note: A copy of the full questions and replies are attached to these minutes.

80 NOMINATIONS TO THE OFFICES OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman invited Members to propose and second the nominations for the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council received in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Cllr Penman moved that Cllr Hawkins be the Council's nomination for the office of Chairman of the Council for 2024/25. Cllr Cleary seconded the motion.

Cllr M Wade moved that Cllr Harrison be the Council's nomination for the office of Chairman of the Council for 2024/25. Cllr Woods seconded the motion.

Members debated the nominations.

Put to a secret ballot, Cllr Hawkins received the majority of votes.

Cllr Penman moved that Cllr Sleep be the Council's nomination for the office of Vice-Chairman of the Council for 2024/25. Cllr O'Sullivan seconded the motion.

Cllr M Clark moved that Cllr J Davies be the Council's nomination for the office of Vice-Chairman of the Council for 2024/25. Cllr Osborne seconded the motion.

Members debated the nominations.

Put to a secret ballot, Cllr Sleep received the majority of votes.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's Nominations for the Offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council for 2024/25, be as follows:-

Chairman – Cllr Hawkins

Vice-Chairman – Cllr Sleep

81 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

RESOLVED:

That the following membership changes be noted:-

Planning Committee

Cllr Glass to replace Cllr Penny

Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Woods to replace Cllr Millar

CHAIRMAN

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FULL COUNCIL – 8 APRIL 2024 – QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr David Harrison to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoff Blunden

What is the estimated cost of repairing all of the damage to the Rumbridge Street car park in Totton, by permitting the heavy tanker lorries, contracted by Southern Water, to drive onto the car park?

Answer:

Southern Water approached the Council at short notice because of an emergency, to request access to sewers within Rumbridge Street car park. This was to help them mitigate the impact of a burst sewer in the local area. The Council was very happy to co-operate with Southern Water and their contractor restoring local services was clearly in our residents' interest.

As on previous occasions, it was agreed with Southern Water that any damage resulting from their short-term operation from the car park would be repaired at Southern Water's cost. As such, NFDC is not aware of the costs of repair, but does note that the resurfacing and repair works are currently underway.

Note – in response to a supplementary question which highlighted the responsibility to apologise to residents, the Portfolio Holder reiterated his understanding of the challenges faced by Southern Water and that the Council does what it can to support them in such emergency situations.

Question 2

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

Would the Leader join me in a letter to our two local MPs asking them to look into why Southern Water claims they are legally allowed to dump sewage into rivers up to 10 times a year and what can be done to change this?

Answer:

The Government produced a Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan in September 2023 to tackle the impacts of storm overflows. This plan details the targets for water companies to meet regarding the number of releases and where it is permitted up to 2050. I am pleased that new duties in the Environment Act 2021 will now give the Regulator tools to hold water companies to account and take enforcement action where they are not meeting their legal obligations.

Members and Officers from the Council attended a Southern Water Drop in Event in Totton on 21 March, where our concerns were raised relating to water supplies and foul water infrastructure in the district. Discussions also took place around measures being introduced to reduce the use of storm overflows and Southern Water's future investment plans.

This Council will continue to hold Southern Water to account and only last Friday I wrote, with the full backing of our Chief Executive, Kate Ryan, to request Southern Water attend a

member session later this year, with the aim that members from all parties can put resident concerns to their representatives regarding both sewerage discharge, and water supply issues. I will keep Members informed once this meeting has been scheduled.

Question 3

From Cllr Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Steve Davies

Will the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness meet with Hampshire County Council to discuss the possibility of using the Solent Mead Care Home site in Lymington to build much-needed affordable housing?

Answer:

In July last year we were made aware of the County Council's possible plans to close the Solent Mead Care Home in Lymington, subject to consultation. In August our Chief Executive wrote to Hampshire County Council's Chief Executive Carolyn Williamson setting out this Council's interest in acquiring both Solent Mead and Cranleigh Paddock in Lyndhurst for potential affordable housing redevelopment. And in November, as part of the formal public consultation process, Officers again expressed interest in both sites to further our affordable housing ambitions.

Since the County Council made its decision to close Solent Mead in February no further updates have been received, however we will write to the Chief Executive once again setting out our considerable interest in these sites, and I will be pleased to share the response with the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and Councillor Davies.

Note – this question was dealt with in writing, in the absence of Cllr J Davies.

Question 4

From Cllr Malcolm Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Dan Poole

In the 22/23 figures, amongst our New Forest school age children there are 19% on free school meals compared to 18.3% across the county and 18.8% across the South East region. These figures equate to 4,022 children being in poverty. Having looked at the Residents action plan I note there is nothing directly focused on reducing Child Poverty in this district, does this administration feel there is no need for any direct action?

Answer:

We fully recognise there are households in our district who struggle financially, which is why this Council, via the new Corporate Plan, is committed to several key priorities aimed at helping those in our community in the greatest need.

Figures from the DWP show an improvement in local figures with 12.7% of children in the district living in a family whose income was below 60% of average household income, down from 15% the year before and lower than the UK rate of 20.1%. (Source: [DWP Local Authority Data](#))

Whilst this Council is unable to directly influence some of the root causes of poverty there are several initiatives this Council supports.

The Cost-of-Living Steering group continues to raise the profile of such issues and is delivering joint projects with our partners, whilst an extensive Action Plan was presented to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 20 March 2024, and I would refer members to the published report.

We continue to support our Community Grants programme and CIL fund awards, we have hosted a Cost-of-Living Community Forum, and we are wholly supportive of the employment and training creation ambitions generated by the Freeport to improve access to jobs for local residents, and finally, along with our partners we aim together deliver over 800 new low-cost social housing rented properties across the district by the end of the year.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on an increasing number of children going into poverty, the Portfolio Holder reiterated his priorities in this area, including the establishment of the Community Forum, which supported key partnership working.

Question 5

From Cllr Sean Cullen to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary

The Freeport has been in place for around 2 years and NFDC represents the interests of residents across the whole district so it is important that we have a clear aspirational plan for what businesses will move into the port and the impact they will have.

I wonder if the Leader can tell me what type of businesses are being encouraged to be part of the freeport and how they will further the interests of the national park, as they are now requested to do in law.

Answer:

The Full Business Case submitted to government as part of the Freeport bidding process set out the target market sectors for tax sites. The business case envisages a wide range of users at Southampton Water including: automotive handling; port centric logistics; marine manufacturing; high technology businesses including AI; renewable energy; and advanced manufacturing.

Any decision to grant business rates relief to businesses moving onto tax sites ultimately rests with the Council as they are the ratings authority. A reason for not awarding relief could be that a business does not reflect the target sector of the Freeport or does not contribute to one of the three national Freeport objectives, namely supporting national hubs for trade, creating hotbeds of innovation or promoting regeneration. This allows for appropriate check and balances that occupiers benefiting from incentives are meeting the objectives of the Freeport.

The Freeport has recently appointed a Trade and Investment manager who will work with the Council and the Department of Business and Trade to maximise investment into Freeport tax sites. This is a major resource focusing on economic growth in the New Forest.

Whilst businesses choosing to locate in Freeport tax sites benefit from considerable tax incentives, they still have to comply with all appropriate legal requirements.

In relation to the National Park, On 3 April, Cabinet approved a set of priorities in respect of the legacy of the Solent Freeport for the New Forest. Environmental sustainability was identified as a core priority. The report identified that “a successful Freeport should see a significant enhancement of our National Park offer but also connectivity between our Waterside communities and the Park itself.”

Question 6

From Cllr Stephanie Osborne to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp

Will the Portfolio Holder invite representatives from Associated British Ports to come in and share what plans they have for Dibden Bay?

Answer:

I am pleased to confirm that ABP representatives will be attending a briefing session on Tuesday 30 April for all Members at which they will be setting out their proposals for their Freeport sites and taking questions and I would urge those interested to attend.

Question 7

From Cllr Mark Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp

Will the Portfolio Holder please give clear details on the current state of play at the Fawley Waterside development? There has been much speculation in local media about the site being scaled back but these amount to mere rumours. Can the Council confirm that the figure of 1380 new homes is still a target?

Answer:

The Council's understanding of the latest position was reported through written reports to both Place & Sustainability Overview & Scrutiny Panel on 7 March 2024, and subsequently to Cabinet on 3 April 2024.

This stated that Fawley Waterside is one of the biggest brownfield redevelopment schemes in the south of England which has a resolution to grant outline planning permission for a residential led mixed use scheme including approximately 10 hectares of land in the northern part of the site for business and industrial uses.

The S106 which would finalise the planning consent has not been signed by the developer which makes the timing of development uncertain.

New investors have come on board and there is a new management team. Initial discussions with that team have taken place and updated proposals are awaited.

Fawley Waterside remains a site that is allocated for development in the existing adopted Local Plan for 1380 dwellings.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the S106 agreement and timeframes, the Portfolio Holder confirmed a specific time frame had not yet been identified by the new investors at this stage.

Question 8

From Cllr Ian Murray to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Dan Poole

As Vice-Chairman of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, I have, as yet been unable to attend the new Community Forum. Can the Portfolio Holder please update us on its progress?

Answer:

I am extremely pleased to update members with progress of the Forum. Our second event was held only recently on March 27th and focussed on improving Community Resilience across the many different communities of the New Forest.

With nearly 70 people in attendance representing the Council, our key partners and agencies involved in providing an emergency response, and our Towns and Parish Councils, attendees heard what is required to create community plans to prevent and respond to local issues such as flooding or power outages. Now launched, this work stream will continue to support Town and Parish Councils and be facilitated by Officers with responsibility for Emergency Planning. A follow up session will focus on the response to a simulated incident.

Our first Forum was held last October on the subject of Cost of Living and brought together nearly 80 people representing our key voluntary partners from many organisations across the district working with vulnerable people as well as those leading initiatives in our Town and Parish Councils. We received excellent feedback and it was attendees themselves who put forward the request for a Forum on Community Resilience.

Members have already heard how the cost of living work continues to be supported by officers and planning is already underway for a third forum in the Autumn.

Second Questions

Question 9

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Dan Poole

While the police service has increased numbers of newly trained officers, there has continued to be a problem with retention which has led to more than 400 fewer police officers in total for Hampshire. Would NFDC's Portfolio Holder on Community Safety push for additional PCSOs to be recruited in the New Forest and write to the PCC asking for more Officers for our District? And is now the time for NFDC to consider recruiting our own ACSOs to combat ASB and low-level crime, to assist in our Community Safety priorities which Residents care about hugely?

Answer:

Hampshire & IOW's Chief Constable Scott Chiltern, during a recent visit to meet with senior officers and the Leader, presented his new local policing model where specialist officers have been relocated back to local areas of the New Forest. Neighbourhood officers will be joined by patrol officers and CID to meet their aims of collectively supporting local area officers in responding to and preventing crimes.

With that in mind I wish to refer the member to a previous question from Cllr M Wade in April 2023 regarding the role of ACSOs, where this matter was answered previously.

Previously Hampshire County Council and relevant contributing authorities withdrew support for the Accredited Community Support Officer scheme as it was identified that the work of the service overlapped with the role of PCSOs. This model of Police engagement and community reassurance has extended further with the New Forest being supported by 20 full time PCSOs.

As chair of the safer New Forest, Community Safety Strategy and Delivery Group, I was encouraged to see partners from over 35 organisations across the district attend the community partnership event held in Lyndhurst for the development of the Partnership Action Group and to show their commitment to work collaboratively across the district.

With this partnership going from strength to strength and changes to the local policing model combined with our new Corporate Plan, which delivers a clear commitment to reducing the fear of crime, this collective approach focussing on victims and offenders will continue to ensure that the New Forest remains a safe place to live, work and visit.

Question 10

From Cllr Malcolm Wade to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

As the Freeport is a key component on the Council's 2024-2028 Corporate Plan, and is the headline focus for the 'Prosperity' section of the plan. It is fair to say The Cabinet are enthusiastic about the Solent Freeport project and it's seen as a key driver of NFDC's future economic growth and investment plans for the District. However, what scrutiny, and checks and balances are in place to ensure that NFDC Residents and Businesses will genuinely benefit?

Answer:

We are supportive of the Freeport process as it provides considerable benefit to businesses who want to invest in our district which can be a major contributor to our economic growth and to ensuring a supply of highly skilled jobs for our residents. Additionally, the ability of the Freeport to re-invest retained business rates provides an opportunity the New Forest and the region as a whole to identify and fund regeneration priorities.

A report on Freeport priorities went to the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 7 March 2024. Following that opportunity for elected Members to scrutinise the report, on 3 April Cabinet agreed the following priorities against which a successfully delivered Solent Freeport would be judged in relation to the New Forest:

- *Transport and Wider infrastructure*
- *Employment and Skills*
- *Prosperous Communities*
- *Environmental Sustainability*
- *The Development of a Local Delivery Plan*

Decisions in relation to the Freeport are made by the Solent Freeport Board. A sub-committee of the Freeport Board has been established to ensure the appropriate scrutiny and checks and balances are in place. The Leader of the Council sits on that sub-committee and is supported by the Council's S151 officer. In addition, Portsmouth City Council provide

an Accountable Body function to the Freeport and would be expected by government to ensure there is proper scrutiny of Freeport decision making.

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ANNUAL COUNCIL – 13 MAY 2024

ALLOCATION OF SEATS AND APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Council considers the allocation of seats to committees and panels in accordance with the principles set out in the report, and in doing so, reviews Council's agreed position set out in the table at paragraph 4.4 of the report; and
- 1.2 That the Council appoints councillors to individual committees and panels, as identified in Appendix 1 (to follow), for the remainder of the four year period ending May 2027.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is necessary to review the representation of political groups on committees, when the authority holds its Annual Meeting. For this purpose, "committees" includes the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels but excludes the Cabinet.
- 2.2 There are four statutory principles of political balance which have to be applied in filling appointments to committees. These are contained in Section 15(5) of the Act.
- 2.3 The principles that have to be applied are as follows:-
 - (a) that not all seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of the seats on the body are allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group are a majority of the Authority's membership;
 - (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant Authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that Authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Authority; and
 - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the same number of all seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Authority.
- 2.4 Once the Council has determined the allocation of committee places between the political groups, the Council must then appoint the nominees of the political groups to the committees.
- 2.5 Those members who are not members of political groups have no legal entitlement to an allocation of seats on committees. However, once the political groups' entitlement has been reached, the remaining seats may be filled by members not belonging to a political group. Such Members are classed as being non-aligned.
- 2.6 These provisions need not be applied if a different position is agreed without any member of the authority voting against.
- 2.7 It should be noted that, although the legislative position refers to "political" groups, this also includes the Independent Group. Although not affiliated with a political party, the Independent Group have formed a group in accordance with the legislation.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Following the quadrennial District Council elections on 4 May 2023, the political balance of the Council remains unchanged as at May 2024, as follows:-

Conservative Group 26 (54.17%)

Liberal Democrat Group 14 (29.17%)

Independent Group 4 (8.33%)

Green Group 3 (6.25%)

Labour 1 (Non-aligned)

4. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS

- 4.1 There are 84 seats to which appointments should be made under the principles of proportionality.

- 4.2 The application of the percentages outlined at paragraph 3.1 provides for the following allocation of seats to political groups across the overall Council position:-

Conservative Group 46

Liberal Democrat Group 25

Independent Group 7

Green Group 5

Unallocated 1

- 4.3 Having regard to the overall position outlined at paragraph 4.2, the application of the percentages outlined at paragraph 3.1 requires the rounding up or down of calculated figures to give whole numbers on individual committees. The Council should, as far as practicable, ensure fairness on each committee and across the wider allocation in making these adjustments.

- 4.4 In May 2023, the Council resolved the following allocations, which meet the proportionality requirements, aggregating all committee places and allocating fair shares:-

Committee/Panel	Seats	Cons	Lib Dems	Inds	Greens	Non-aligned
Appeals Committee	13	7	4	1	0	1
Audit Committee	9	5	2	1	1	-
General Purposes and Licensing Committee	13	7	4	1	1	-
HR Committee	9	5	3	1	0	-
Planning Committee	13	7	4	1	1	-
Housing and Communities O&S Panel	9	5	3	0	1	-
Place and Sustainability O&S Panel	9	5	2	1	1	-
Resources and Transformation O&S Panel	9	5	3	1	0	-
Total	84	46	25	7	5	1

4.5 In May 2023, the Council also resolved to allocate a seat to the non-aligned Member on the Appeals Committee. The Council's Constitution makes provision for the allocation of seats to Members who are not members of a political group, as nearly as possible in proportion to the number of those members on the Council. As there is one remaining seat that could be allocated to the non-aligned Member, outside of those that should be allocated to the political groups, this provision is satisfied by the allocations above.

4.6 The nominees of the political groups to the committees and panels will be circulated to follow at Appendix 1. It should be noted that if Members seek to make any amendments, this may affect the calculations and subsequently the nominees.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from the report.

Appendix 1 (to follow) – Committee and Panel Memberships

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Background Papers:

Local Government and Housing Act 1989

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COUNCIL – 13 May 2024

REPORT OF CABINET – [1 MAY 2024](#)

PART I – ITEMS RESOLVED BY CABINET

1. HOUSING DELIVERY ACTION PLAN

PORTFOLIO – PLANNING AND ECONOMY

CABINET RESOLUTION:

That Cabinet agree to publish the Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP) for 2024, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

CABINET DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the Housing Delivery Action Plan report. He referred to the complexity and widespread, national challenges surrounding the issue of housing supply, highlighting the factors beyond the control of the Local Authority. The review of the Local Plan would seek to address many of the issues facing housing supply in the District and the Council's proactive approach to development in the area would be supported by the Action Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness spoke to the report and made reference to the affordable housing target. Given the challenges facing the Council, the expected 500 affordable homes would be a very good achievement and future opportunities were in the pipeline to add to this.

The Planning Policy Officer summarised the Action Plan and explained that the plan was a response to the national policy requirements and would work to mitigate the macro-economic conditions and environmental challenges facing the District. The Plan would be reviewed on an annual basis in order to monitor the progress.

A member of the Council asked what the impact of the Action Plan would be on planning applications received by the Council, particularly given how developers cite lack of housing delivery as part of their pitch. The Acting Assistant Director for Place Development recognised the significant challenges facing the Council and explained that this Action Plan would not lend weight to the determination of planning applications but would instead give the Council a framework to proceed toward the overall housing target.

Another member of the Council stated that sewage and green/sustainable energy were two major factors that needed to be considered when building houses for the future. The Acting Assistant Director for Place Development reassured Cabinet that these matters would be considered and feature in some way in the Local Plan review. The Council were working currently with providers at local sites on energy supply and would continue to work to address infrastructure capacity issues in the areas going forward.

A further member referred to the unique nature of the District, its geography and the fact that most residential areas were small villages. The local amenities and facilities must be accounted for when considering strategic sites and areas for development. The Acting Assistant Director for Place Development explained that the Council, and its

Planning Committee, must be mindful to ensure that sites are suitable and deliverable within the local setting. Although not all of the desires and priorities may be achieved when developing sites, the planning process was very much about weighing up priorities and balancing the material aspects of each application. It was reiterated how the Action Plan before Cabinet had no bearing on how the Council would assess applications and that the planning system gives priority to the Local Plan.

Cabinet were informed that the Housing Delivery Action Plan would seek to resolve the various stalled sites across the planning area and work to promote the completion of those sites that had already received planning consent but were yet to finalise the development.

2. BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE REGULATION 19 DRAFT LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

PORTFOLIO – PLANNING AND ECONOMY

CABINET RESOLUTION:

That Cabinet agree the response, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, as the New Forest District Council's representations to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council's Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan consultation.

CABINET DISCUSSION:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan Consultation report and emphasised that the New Forest District Council sympathised with BCP Council in the constraints they faced with development across the conurbation.

The Portfolio Holder explained the one amendment that NFDC requested BCP Council make to their Local Plan. This was to require BCP Council to specifically consider the need to commence a review of its Local Plan if a quantified unmet need is established and confirmed through the New Forest District (outside the National Park) Local Plan Review. This would ensure that appropriate mechanisms were provided for within the Local Plan to enable BCP Council to respond positively to considering how unmet needs should be addressed.

The Acting Assistant Director - Place Development summarised the report and informed Cabinet that this was the final stage of planning preparation of BCP Council's Local Plan review. The plan had taken 5 years to prepare and it highlighted the significant challenges that officers had faced to plan for the next 15-20 years in the conurbation. With a similar coastal geography to the New Forest, the Council recognised the constraints facing BCP Council in their Local Plan. With housing likely to be a priority to the New Forest, the requested amendment to the BCP Local Plan would give regard to the adjoining areas between BCP and the New Forest and would enable earlier review if wider, unmet housing occurred. The consultation response also highlighted the need to work with BCP on future highways and cycle path schemes where there are cross-boundary implications and potential impacts.

Following a question from a non-Cabinet member, the acting Assistant Director for Place Development explained that the issues facing BCP were also the issues faced by many, if not all, coastal Local Authorities along the south coast and that the NFDC Local Plan would continue to review where BCP Council were with their housing supply and work

proactively to address and reconcile this in both a developmental and economic sense across the District.

PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

3. RINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN – EXAMINER’S REPORT

PORTFOLIO – PLANNING AND ECONOMY

RECOMMENDED:

That Cabinet recommend that Council:

- i. note the recommendations made in the Examiner’s Report (Appendix 1) into the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan (Appendix 2 shows the submission plan);
- ii. agree the Examiner’s proposed modifications and the NFDC responses to them as set out in the Decision Statement (Appendix 3);
- iii. agree to make the necessary arrangements for the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan to proceed to referendum (the date of the referendum is anticipated to be mid-July 2024).

CABINET DISCUSSION:

The Leader invited Ringwood Town Councillor Gareth DeBoos to speak on the item. Councillor DeBoos thanked Town Councillors, ex District Councillors, NFDC officers, planning consultants, volunteers and the Local Planning Authorities for their assistance and support on developing a robust and positive plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan - Examiner's Report. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the robustness of the plan and thanked all those involved in its development.

The Senior Policy Planner summarised the report and explained that the plan was a community-lead document which would become part of the District Council’s statutory development plan alongside the Local Plan. It was explained that work was overseen by a steering group of Town Councillors and community representatives, alongside support from planning consultants and NFDC and National Park officers.

The process began in February 2021 and underwent a number of consultations and surveys held by the Town Council. This culminated in the formal consultation that took place between August and September 2023, followed by the independent examination which was set out in the report attached as Appendix 1. Reference was made to section 5 of the report and how it laid out the steps on how the referendum would be held by the Council’s electoral team and would follow the national requirements necessary for such a process.

Many Cabinet and non-Cabinet members thanked all those involved in the development of the plan and congratulations were given on how robust and thorough the plan was. It was acknowledged how few and mild the examiner’s modifications were and it was hoped that the people of Ringwood would support the plan. Encouragement was given to all residents of Ringwood to engage with the referendum and make their thoughts and feelings known through their vote.

A request was made by a non-Cabinet member for a combined, local and national heritage list to be created for all Town and Parish Councils to have. The acting Assistant Director for Place Development confirmed that it was an important opportunity for Local Authorities to list the buildings and features that should be listed locally and nationally as heritage assets and that these should be taken into consideration when weighing up planning applications in the District.

Attachments – Appendix 1 – Background Report to Cabinet

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CABINET – 1 MAY 2024

PORTFOLIO:
PLANNING AND ECONOMY

RINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN – EXAMINER’S REPORT

1. RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet recommends that the Council agree to:

- i. note the recommendations made in the Examiner’s Report (Appendix 1) into the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan (Appendix 2 shows the submission plan);
- ii. agree the Examiner’s proposed modifications and the NFDC responses to them as set out in the Decision Statement (Appendix 3);
- iii. agree to make the necessary arrangements for the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan to proceed to referendum (the date of the referendum is anticipated to be mid-July 2024).

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 This report seeks approval for the modifications recommended by the Examiner of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan (Appendix 1) and agreement that the Neighbourhood Development Plan can proceed to local referendum.
- 2.2 The referendum is a decision by the residents of Ringwood parish to agree, or not, the Neighbourhood Plan as modified. Therefore in practical terms the decision to approve the Neighbourhood Plan proceeding to referendum would also be an endorsement of the document by the Council in its final form.
- 2.3 It should be noted that as the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area falls partly within the New Forest National Park, the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) are going through a similar process for the part of the parish within its planning jurisdiction. Once both authorities have agreed their responses to the Examiner’s Report the revised Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to local referendum.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Neighbourhood plans were introduced by the Localism Act 2011 to give communities direct power to shape the development of their local area. Neighbourhood plans are planning documents that, once adopted, will then become part of the statutory ‘development plan’ for the area alongside the Local Plan. Local planning authorities and planning inspectors considering planning applications or appeals must make their decisions in accordance with the policies of the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan ‘Neighbourhood Area’ was

designated in February 2021 and covers the whole of the Parish. Just over 50% of the Neighbourhood Area is within the New Forest National Park, and the remainder is within the District Council's planning area.

- 3.3 Work on the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan has been overseen locally by a steering group of town councillors and community representatives. The Town Council undertook an initial set of surveys and consultations during 2021 and 2022, and published an initial Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan in February 2023 for public consultation. Following the submission of the draft Neighbourhood Plan to the two local planning authorities in the summer of July 2023, the Plan was subject to a final 6 week public consultation between 18th August and 29th September 2023.
- 3.4 The representations made during this final consultation and various supporting documents (including a Consultation Statement and a Basic Conditions Statement) were submitted to the independent Examiner for consideration on 21 November 2023.
- 3.5 The Examiner is required to assess whether the Neighbourhood Plan meets the 'basic conditions', which are that it should:
- have regard to national policy
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
 - be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan
 - be compatible with EU obligations.
- 3.6 The Examiner's role is also, if required, to recommend modifications where they are necessary to enable the basic conditions tests to be met.
- 3.7 The Council (with the National Park Authority) has had a role in providing advice and assistance to the Town Council in producing its Neighbourhood Plan, as required by paragraph 3 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

4. EXAMINATION

- 4.1 The Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan has now been through its Examination and the independent Examiner's report has been received (22 February 2024). Where necessary the Examiner has recommended modifications to the Plan in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. These are listed at the end of the Examiner's Report (Appendix 1 of this report, pages 21 – 25).
- 4.2 The Examiner's Report concludes that, subject to the modifications set out, the draft Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions. The Examiner's Report also recommends that the Plan, once modified, should proceed to Referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the two planning authorities to decide what action to take in response to the Examiner's recommendations. National guidance indicates that if the local planning authority can make modifications to the plan to meet the basic conditions and allow it to proceed to referendum, they should do so. Modifications will normally follow the Examiner's recommendations and clear justification would be required for departing from the Examiner's recommendations. The modifications and the District Councils proposed

responses are set out in the Councils Decision Statement (Appendix 3).

- 4.3 Ringwood Town Council met in March 2024 to discuss the Examiner's suggested modifications and agreed that the revisions now proposed to the plan are an appropriate response to the Examiners proposed modifications.
- 4.4 The Examiner concluded that the Referendum area does not need to be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates.
- 4.5 It should be noted that now the Examiner's Report has been received there is a 'duty to have regard' to the post-examination Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Therefore it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in Ringwood Parish. If the Referendum result is a 'Yes', and once the Council has formally adopted the NDP, it will become part of the NFDC Local Plan and hold full weight in determining planning applications in Ringwood Parish.

5. NEXT STEPS AND REFERENDUM

- 5.1 Following approval of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and modifications, the Council as 'relevant authority' will:
 - publicise the Plan
 - publish the required notices regarding the date of the referendum and
 - Provide information on how people can vote in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.
- 5.2 The Returning Officer is designated as the Counting Officer and is responsible for all arrangements regarding the referendum within the referendum area.
- 5.3 Government guidance confirms that a person is entitled to vote:
 - if, at the time of the referendum, they meet the eligibility criteria to vote in a local government election for the referendum area;
 - they have an address at which they are registered to vote within the referendum area and
 - are over the age of 18 years on the date of poll.
- 5.4 If the majority of those who vote (i.e. over 50%) are in favour of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, then the Plan must be 'made' (adopted) by both the District Council and the NPA no later than 8 weeks after the referendum date. It then becomes a part of the statutory Development Plan, alongside the adopted Local Plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Communities that draw up a Neighbourhood Plan and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, will benefit from an increase to 25% (from 15%) of Community Infrastructure Levy monies collected in their area from permissions granted after the plan has been made.

7. CRIME & DISORDER, ENVIRONMENTAL, DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Neighbourhood Plan allows the community to influence local development and facilitates local distinctiveness and granularity to take account of the local

environment.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None directly arising.

9. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

9.1 I support the recommendations in the report that the modifications recommended by the Examiner to the Plan be approved and that the Plan should now proceed to a referendum.

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2023)

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – Examiners Report

Appendix 2 – [Ringwood Neighbourhood](#)

(Submission Version, July

Appendix 3 – NFDC Decision Statement



Intelligent Plans
and examinations

Report on the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan 2023 - 2036

An Examination undertaken for New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority with the support of Ringwood Town Council on the July 2023 Submission Draft of the Plan.

Independent Examiner: David Hogger BA MSc MRTPI MCIHT

Date of Report: 22 February 2024

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/RNP) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body: Ringwood Town Council;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the designated area as identified on Plan A on page 6 of the Plan;
- The Plan identifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2023 – 2036; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan 2023 - 2036

- 1.1 The Parish of Ringwood lies in the south-west of Hampshire, and the western boundary is conterminous with the boundary of Dorset. Much of the Parish falls under the jurisdiction of New Forest District Council, with the south-eastern and eastern parts of the Parish lying within the New Forest National Park. The town sits on the River Avon and is surrounded by attractive areas of countryside which provide habitats for a wide range of plants and animals. To the north of the Parish are a number of lakes created by gravel extraction.
- 1.2 The town, whose market charter dates back to 1226, provides a very wide range of facilities and services, not only to residents but also to visitors, particularly in the summer months. Community facilities and services available in Ringwood include retail outlets, employment opportunities, places of worship, schools, meeting halls, allotments and recreation facilities. The town includes many listed buildings and the town centre, which I visited, was first designated a conservation area in 1970 (expanded in 1983).
- 1.3 The Consultation Statement (July 2023) confirms that the process of preparing this Neighbourhood Plan commenced in September 2018.

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- 1.4 The Town Council (via the four Working Groups that were established) employed a number of initiatives, including surveys, workshops, presentations and drop-in sessions. It is particularly heartening to see the various efforts that were made to harness the enthusiasm of younger people, for example by attending a Ringwood School Assembly.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.5 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the RNP by New Forest District Council (NFDC) and the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA), with the agreement of the Ringwood Town Council (RTC).
- 1.6 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector, with extensive experience in the preparation, examination and implementation of development plans and other planning policy documents. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.7 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.8 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
 - Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;

- it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
- it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations').

1.9 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

1.10 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law)¹; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.11 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.²

¹ The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.

² This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 For planning purposes, the area covered by the RNP falls partly within the New Forest District and partly within the New Forest National Park. The Development Plan for the area³, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, are the adopted NFDC Local Plan Part 1 (2016-2036); the New Forest National Park Authority Local Plan 2016 – 2036; saved policies of the NFDC Core Strategy (2009) and the NFDC Local Plan Part 2 (2014).
- 2.2 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).⁴ The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented.

Submitted Documents

- 2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- the Submission Draft of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (July 2023);
 - the Map on page 6 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
 - the Consultation Statement (July 2023);
 - the Basic Conditions Statement (June 2023);
 - the Screening Statements (December 2022) from both NFDC and NFNPA, regarding the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitat Regulations Assessment;
 - the list of other RNP 'Core Documents' prepared, collected and reviewed in the process of preparing the Plan;
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
 - the responses to my questions dated 4 December 2023, from both New Forest District Council and Ringwood Town Council, received on 11 January 2024.⁵

³ As set out in paragraph 3.6 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

⁴ A revised version of the NPPF was published during the examination on 19 December 2023: all references in this report read across to the latest version (further updated on 20 December 2023).

⁵ View at: www.newforest.gov.uk/ringwoodplan

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Site Visit

- 2.4 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 14 December 2023, to familiarise myself with the locality, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum.

Modifications

- 2.6 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The RNP has been prepared and submitted for examination by RTC as the qualifying body for an area that was originally designated by NFDC on 3 February 2021 and the NFNPA on 16 February 2021.
- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

- 3.3 The Plan specifies (on the front cover) the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2023 to 2036.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 The Consultation Statement summarises the approach to consultation undertaken by the Town Council.
- 3.5 Opportunities to contribute towards the preparation of the RNP have been available to all interested parties at the relevant stages, including at both the Regulation 14 stage (6 February 2023 to 19 March 2023) and the Regulation 16 stage (18 August 2023 to 29 September 2023). The Consultation Statement provides, on page 4, a table under the heading 'Dateline of Events' setting out a summary of the events that have taken

place. There is also a summary of the consultation undertaken with NFDC and NFNPA (page 7).

- 3.6 I consider that, overall, the approach towards the preparation of the RNP has been conducted in a fair and inclusive manner. I am satisfied sufficient regard has been had to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement and the process has been procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.7 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

- 3.8 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.⁶

Human Rights

- 3.9 I have seen no evidence that the Plan breaches Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998), and it is not a matter that has been raised by any of the respondents.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

- 4.1 Screening Statements on the Determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) were prepared by NFNPA and NFDC, both dated December 2022. The conclusion reached is that the RNP does not require a full SEA or HRA to be undertaken because the Plan would not have any significant adverse environmental effects and does not allocate 'new' sites for development. I am aware of no adverse comments by the statutory agencies and, having read the documentation, I am satisfied that the Plan is compatible with EU obligations under retained EU law.

Main Issues

- 4.2 I have approached the assessment of compliance with the Basic Conditions of the RNP as two main matters:
- General issues of compliance of the Plan, as a whole; and
 - Specific issues of compliance of the Plan policies.

⁶ See section 61K of the 1990 Act.

General Issues of Compliance of the Plan

National Policy, Sustainable Development and the Development Plan

- 4.3 There are six chapters in the RNP, which are Introduction and Background; The Neighbourhood Area; Planning Policy Context; Community Views on Planning Issues; Vision, Objectives and Land Use Policies; and Implementation and Monitoring.
- 4.4 It is clear to me that NFDC, NFNPA and RTC have co-operated in the preparation of the RNP⁷ and, subject to the detailed comments and modifications that I set out below, I conclude that the RNP has had proper regard to national policy and guidance. I also conclude that subject to the recommendations that I make:
- the RNP is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Development Plan for the area, and that overall, the document provides an appropriate framework that will enable the town of Ringwood to continue to evolve as a community whilst ensuring that the quality of life, particularly for residents, will be retained and enhanced; and
 - that the policies, as recommended to be modified, are supported by appropriate evidence, are sufficiently clear and unambiguous and that they can be applied with confidence.⁸

Specific Issues of Compliance of the Plan's Policies

Foreword (page 4)

- 4.5 The Foreword succinctly summarises why a Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared and the Vision on which the Plan is based.

Introduction and Background (page 6)

- 4.6 Chapter 1 describes the area to which the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) will apply and explains in more depth the approach towards the preparation and implementation of the Plan. This chapter will need to be up-dated before the Plan is 'made' (see paragraph 4.54).

The Neighbourhood Area (page 8)

- 4.7 A description of the Neighbourhood Area is given in Chapter 2. This provides the reader with a clear understanding of the character of the locality, including Ringwood town centre.

⁷ Reflecting, for example, the advice in PPG Reference IDs 41-040-20160211 and 41-009-20190509 and Paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act.

⁸ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

Planning Policy Context (page 10)

4.8 Chapter 3 summarises the relevant national planning policy but is out-of-date because a revised version of the NPPF was published in December 2023. Although changes to the NPPF (as they relate to the RNP) were minimal, it is nevertheless important that references to the NPPF reflect the contents of the most recent edition. This is particularly notable in paragraph 3.2 of the Plan as follows:

- Size, type and tenure of housing (NPPF paragraph 62 now 63);
- Networks of high quality open space and Local Green Spaces (paragraphs 98-103 now 102-107);
- Promoting active travel networks (paragraphs 104 & 106 now 108 & 110);
- Achieving well designed places (paragraphs 126-132 now 131-137);
- Protecting Green Belt land (paragraphs 137-151 now 142-156);
- Planning for climate change (paragraphs 153 & 154 now 158 & 159);
- Planning in designated landscapes (paragraph 176 now 182);
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity (paragraph 179 now 185); and
- Planning positively for heritage (paragraphs 190 & 203 now 196 & 209).

Other references I note include Plan paragraphs 3.3 (NPPF paragraphs 66 & 67 are now 67 & 68), 4.56 (paragraph 133 is now 138), and 5.50 (paragraphs 203 & 204 are now 209 & 210). The Glossary should also be updated in this regard. To that end, I recommend that all references to the NPPF in the RNP relate to the December 2023 version (**PM1**).

4.9 I observe that paragraph 3.10 (page 13) confirms that the indicative housing target for Ringwood can be met from existing allocations but that there may be a need for a review of the Neighbourhood Plan should housing allocations be required to address housing delivery.

4.10 With regard to the New Forest Development Plan, the text on pages 10 to 13 appropriately summarises the current position.

Community Views on Planning Issues (page 15)

4.11 Chapter 4 summarises the approaches taken by the Steering Group towards involving residents and other interested parties in the preparation of the RNP. A more detailed assessment is provided in the accompanying Consultation Statement.

Vision, Objectives and Land Use Policies (page 16)

4.12 The Vision for the area is clear and realistic and there is no reason to doubt that it can be successfully achieved. The stated key objectives reflect the 'Community Vision' behind the Plan, as referred to on page 4. I

did question how objective 4, ensuring that Ringwood does not become a dormitory town, will be achieved.⁹ The Town Council responded by emphasising its objective of making the town centre a destination in its own right – for employment, retail, education, leisure and other services. The Town Council considers that the provision of a wide range of services locally will contribute to preventing Ringwood from becoming a dormitory town and I do not disagree.

Policy R1: A Spatial Plan for Ringwood (page 18)

- 4.13 Policy R1 establishes the Town Council’s overall approach to development in the Parish, with the emphasis being placed on the use of brownfield land; the improvement of the town centre’s vitality and viability; the enhancement of the natural environment; and reducing the harmful effects of traffic congestion. This approach accords with advice in the NPPF regarding sustainability.¹⁰
- 4.14 Concerns were raised¹¹ with regard to transport infrastructure and the management of movement. However, I am satisfied that this issue is adequately addressed in other existing planning documents, including the NFDC Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy 2016-2036; the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036; the Ringwood Town Access Plan Supplementary Planning Document; and the NFDC Parking Standards SPD. I am also aware that the New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is currently being prepared.
- 4.15 There are two references in the policy to ‘gentle densification’ but it may not be clear to the reader exactly what this means. I therefore recommend that an appropriate explanation is given in the Glossary (**PM2**).
- 4.16 I am satisfied that there is a reasonable expectation that brownfield land will become available for development later in the Plan period.¹²
- 4.17 The supporting text in paragraph 5.4 refers to Green Belt but not all the countryside that surrounds the town is in the Green Belt. This is misleading and therefore I recommend that the reference to Green Belt should be deleted (**PM3**). Advice regarding development in the Green Belt can be found in other documentation, for example in Chapter 13 of the NPPF.
- 4.18 As proposed to be modified, I am satisfied that Policy R1, relating to the Spatial Plan, has regard to national policies and meets all the other Basic Conditions.

⁹ My Question 4 to the Town Council.

¹⁰ Chapter 2 of the NPPF.

¹¹ See representations 1 and 7 as set out in the summary of regulation 16 Consultation.

¹² See response from Town Council to my Question 7.

Policy R2: Maintaining a Successful and Prosperous Town Centre (page 19)

4.19 At the time of my visit, the town centre was relatively busy, and I noted the availability of a reasonable range of retail outlets. Chapter 7¹³ of the NPPF confirms that town centres play a key role at the heart of local communities, and I consider that Policy R2 appropriately reflects this national advice. The District Council suggests a strengthening of clause C iv) which I agree is necessary for clarity (**PM4**).

Policy R3: Making better use of Opportunity Areas in the Town Centre (page 21)

4.20 Eight opportunity areas are identified in the RNP and having visited them I consider them all to be justified. In the interests of clarity, however, it would be beneficial to actually name the areas in the policy itself and I recommend accordingly in **PM5**.

4.21 There is currently no reference to the issue of flood risk in the Town Centre Opportunity Areas. This is an important issue in the town and therefore I recommend in **PM6** and **PM7**, that a reference to flood risk is included in relation to Opportunity Area A (Ringwood Market Place) and Opportunity Area G (Ringwood Trading Estate).

Policy R4: Shops and Parades within and outside defined centres (page 24)

4.22 Policy R4 supports the retention and improvement of the local centre at Butlers Lane, Poulner and sets out the approach to retail floorspace outside the defined centres. This approach accords with advice in the NPPF. However, in order to strengthen the policy and provide clarity for the decision maker, I recommend, in **PM8**, a modification to clause D.

4.23 Concern was expressed by the District Council over the term 'robust assessment' in Policy R4 C but I am satisfied that paragraph 5.29 adequately explains what is required.

4.24 Policies R2 to R4 relate to the Town and Local Centres and as modified they sit comfortably with the strategic policies for the area and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy R5: Smaller Housing (page 26)

4.25 Policy R5 establishes the Town Council's approach to smaller housing. However, the policy does not establish what is meant by 'a high proportion' of small dwellings. I note that the accompanying paragraph (5.33) states that the figure is 'greater than 50% of schemes of five or more dwellings'. I consider that this is not helpful to the decision maker and that the policy itself should clearly establish what is required. On that basis I recommend, in **PM9**, that additional clarity is provided in Policy R5.

¹³ Ensuring the viability of town centres.

- 4.26 I raised a number of issues with the Town Council regarding this policy¹⁴ and I am satisfied that proper regard has been given to national policies and advice.
- 4.27 I note that there was a suggestion¹⁵ that there should be a policy relating to rural exception sites. However, I am satisfied that the issue is adequately addressed in Policy HOU5 of the New Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036 and Policy SP28 of the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036, and that there is no justification for repeating the policies in the RNP.¹⁶

Policy R6: First Homes (page 27)

- 4.28 Policy R6 clearly establishes the Town Council's approach to affordable housing and the provision of 'first homes'.
- 4.29 However, the supporting text to the policy, in paragraph 5.39, indicates that priority for first homes (for the first two months of marketing) will be given to people who have a local connection to Ringwood. Firstly, this reads to me as a 'policy' and its inclusion in the supporting text may cause confusion to the decision maker, with regard to its status. As supporting text, it would carry comparatively little weight in the decision-making process. Secondly, there is no 'strategic' policy' in the New Forest District Local Plan on which to 'hang' this 'requirement' and the Town Council's approach is not consistent with the aims of New Forest District Local Plan policies STR1, HOU1 and HOU3. I therefore recommend, in **PM10**, the deletion of paragraph 5.39.
- 4.30 Policies R5 and R6 relate to residential development, and I am satisfied that with the proposed modifications, these policies will meet all the Basic Conditions.

Policy R7: The Ringwood Design Code (page 28)

- 4.31 The quality of design is an important national objective¹⁷ and policy R7 seeks to ensure that new development is compatible (particularly in terms of appearance) with its surroundings. Appendix B to the RNP is the 'Ringwood Design Guidance and Codes' and Appendix C is the 'Ringwood Local Distinctiveness SPD'. These provide valuable background information and together with Policy R7, will ensure that Objective 2 of the RNP (to celebrate Ringwood's historic buildings and townscapes and encourage high quality and sustainable design of new development) will be achieved.

¹⁴ See Town Council's response to my Question 7.

¹⁵ Reg 16 Representation 15.

¹⁶ NPPF, paragraph 16 f).

¹⁷ NPPF Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed and beautiful places.

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Policy R8: Building for a Healthy Life (page 30)

- 4.32 Policy R8 relates to the submission of a Building for a Healthy Life Assessment with all major development proposals. Bearing in mind the requirement to achieve well designed development, I consider such an approach to be appropriate and not unduly onerous.
- 4.33 The policy refers to 'major development'. In the interests of clarity for the decision maker, I consider a reference should be made in the policy to the fact that this relates to development of 10 or more dwellings (**PM11**).
- 4.34 Policies R7 and R8 relate to issues of design. They have regard to national advice and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy R9: Conserving Local Heritage Assets (page 31)

- 4.35 There is a very extensive list of Local Heritage Assets (over 145) identified in Appendix D to the Plan. The NPPF (Chapter 16) seeks to ensure that they are afforded appropriate protection. Paragraph 198 of the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should maintain or have access to a historic environment record which would be used to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment.
- 4.36 I am told by the District Council¹⁸ that it does not have a local list of heritage assets or a procedure for assessing, maintaining or reviewing a local list. It is also clear that the NFNPA has its own independent process for the consideration of local list nominations.¹⁹ On that basis I conclude that there is a lack of consistency with regard to the consideration of heritage assets. I am also concerned that Appendix D includes little substantive evidence with regard to how the identification process has been undertaken with regard to the RNP. I note that the Town Council confirms that consultation with the owners of the listed assets has not happened and that it will not take place until after the RNP is made. This lack of consultation is contrary to the advice contained in Section 2.1 of Historic England's Advice Note 11 - Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment.²⁰
- 4.37 I am further mindful that the PPG (Reference ID: 18a-039-20190723) states that "A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets".

¹⁸ Regulation 16 response in relation to Policy R9.

¹⁹ Policy SP16 (the historic and built environment), New Forest National Park Authority Local Plan 2016 – 2036.

²⁰ View at: [Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment | Historic England](#) Also see advice at: [Local Listing | Historic England](#)

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- 4.38 On that basis, I cannot be confident that all the assets listed in Appendix D are fully justified or that a consistent approach to the matter is being adopted across the New Forest. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, I need to be confident that the policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan and that it has regard to national policies and advice.²¹ I currently do not have that confidence and therefore I recommend, in **PM12**, the deletion of Policy R9, its supporting text in paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D.
- 4.39 Whilst I understand that this will be a disappointment to the Town Council, I am not satisfied that, at present, 'a positive strategy', as required in paragraph 196 of the NPPF, has been appropriately drawn up. I am, however, re-assured by the fact that Policy ENV3 of the NFDC Local Plan Part 1 (Design quality and local distinctiveness) and saved Policy DM1 (Heritage and Conservation) in the NFDC Local Plan Part 2 can both be applied as necessary, thus providing a level of protection to local heritage assets.
- 4.40 I also note that in the response to my Question 3 to NFDC, the Council confirms that 'a similar process (i.e. to that undertaken by the NFNPA) could be undertaken for the NFDC area of Ringwood Parish if there are concerns that the number of assets²² identified in Section 3 of Appendix D is too extensive for them to automatically be deemed local heritage assets'.
- 4.41 There will be consequential changes, for example to the paragraph and policy numbers and these can be considered to be minor and can be made in agreement with NFDC and the NFNPA.²³
- 4.42 Matters of Design and Heritage Assets are addressed in policies R7 to R9. As modified, they accord with national advice and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

[Policy R10: Creating a Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Network \(page 32\)](#)

- 4.43 Policy R10 establishes the approach of the Town Council to creating and maintaining the Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Network and I note that the issue has been progressed with the help of local wildlife experts and landowners. It is important that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural environment and I am confident that Policy R10 will ensure the successful achievement of that objective.

²¹ See Chapter 16 of the NPPF.

²² It should be noted that it is both the number of assets and also the quality of those assets that are of concern.

²³ See paragraph 4.54 below.

Policy R11: Zero Carbon Buildings (page 34)

- 4.44 The need to achieve sustainable and energy efficient development is embedded in national policy, and I am satisfied that Policy R11 appropriately reflects current advice on the issue. For the purpose of accuracy, I recommend a focused change to the title of the Statement referred to at the start of clause E of the policy (**PM13**).

Policy R12: Encouraging Active and Healthy Travel (page 38)

- 4.45 A Sustainable Travel Network has been identified and opportunities for improvements are shown on the Active Travel Policy Map. However, clause A of the policy does not refer specifically to the Policy Map and I consider it would assist the decision maker if such a reference was included. I recommend accordingly in **PM14**.
- 4.46 In the interests of clarity a brief explanation of the Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework should be included in the Glossary, and I recommend accordingly in **PM15**. Although not essential to meet the Basic Conditions, the Town Council may like to consider including a reference to Government guidance on the provision of safe cycling infrastructure as contained within LTN 1/20.
- 4.47 National advice promotes sustainable transport²⁴ and I am satisfied that Policy R12 appropriately reflects that advice.
- 4.48 Matters relating to sustainability are covered by policies R10 to R12. Their implementation will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and the policies, as modified, will comply with all the other Basic Conditions.

Implementation and Monitoring (page 40)

- 4.49 The Implementation, Monitoring and Review of the RNP are very important components of the plan-making process and I am satisfied that Chapter 6 adequately establishes the approach to these matters that will be taken by the Town Council.

The Appendices

- 4.50 There are 5 appendices to the Plan:
- Appendix A: Ringwood Strategic Masterplan;
 - Appendix B: Ringwood Design Guidance and Codes;
 - Appendix C: Ringwood Local Distinctiveness SPD;
 - Appendix D: Local Heritage Assets; and
 - Appendix E: Zero Carbon Buildings Background Note.

²⁴ Chapter 9 of the NPPF.

- 4.51 I have already recommended the deletion of Appendix D in PM12. The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC²⁵ highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required, and these are set out in **PM16** to **PM20**.

Maps and Plans

- 4.52 Some of the plans in the document lack clarity but the Town Council provided me with electronic versions of the Maps which were easier to interpret. If reliance is to be placed on the electronic versions, then it would be helpful if a reference to their significance and how they can be accessed should be included in Chapter 1 (**PM21**).
- 4.53 In the interests of accuracy the built up area boundary at Blashford should be removed from the Policy Map, as well as the strategic site allocation, as they both fall outside the boundary of the RNP (**PM22**).

Minor Amendments

- 4.54 Amendments to the text can be made consequential to the recommended modifications, alongside any other minor non-material changes²⁶, factual up-dates, or corrections if there is agreement between RTC, NFDC and NFNPA.²⁷ For example, there are a number of up-dates required regarding the stage in the evolution of the RNP that has now been reached and other contextual information that is no longer current (e.g. paragraph 3.5 of the Plan).
- 4.55 Hampshire County Council, as both the Highway Authority and landowner, and New Forest District Council, suggest a number of minor changes in their responses.²⁸ I note that NFDC makes a number of 'observations' and 'comments' but only submitted two objections (relating to Policy R6/paragraph 5.39 and to the Local Design Guidance and Code). I have addressed these two specific matters in paragraphs 4.29 and 4.51 above.
- 4.56 Whilst some of the suggested amendments are not necessary to ensure that the Basic Conditions are met, I note that the Town Council has accepted some of them in the interests of improved clarity.²⁹ These relate, for example, to additions to the Glossary; referring to the Healthy Streets approach; approval of schemes by the Highway Authority; reference to the fact that some development may justify a reduction of the 6m private drive width; street lighting; corner treatment; and permeable paving. These can all be treated as minor amendments and, whilst they are

²⁵ Regulation 16, Response 17.

²⁶ PPG Reference ID:41-106-20190509.

²⁷ See, for example, Representation References: SNPS:6 and SNPS:18.

²⁸ See Regulation 16, Responses 16 and 17.

²⁹ See Town Council's response to my Question 21.

beneficial in the interests of improving clarity, they are not essential to meet the Basic Conditions.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether or not the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies, thus ensuring that the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates, and I conclude that the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan (as modified) has no policy or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond that boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Overview

- 5.4 The town of Ringwood enjoys an attractive setting and its character is enhanced by a range of valued features, including the River Avon that flows to the west of the town and the New Forest National Park, which primarily lies to the east and south of the town. There are a relatively high number of community facilities and services in Ringwood and I am confident that the local community will continue to support appropriate local initiatives to improve their quality of life.
- 5.5 Among the objectives of the Town Council is the desire to revitalise the town centre economy; the encouragement of high quality and sustainable design; the maximisation of opportunities for young people; and the regeneration of the town centre. I particularly commend the Town Council's Working Groups, alongside all those that have had an input into the preparation of the Plan. I therefore consider that there is an excellent prospect that the implementation of the policies within the RNP (when

'made') will ensure that all the stated objectives will be successfully achieved.

David Hogger

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications (22)

Notes:

Additions are shown in **bold** and deletions denoted with ~~strikethrough~~.

Page references are those in the submitted Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan.

In the interests of brevity, where whole paragraphs have been deleted, the modification refers to the deletion of all the text.

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./other reference	Modification
PM1	Throughout the document	Refer to the December 2023 version of the NPPF and update paragraph references where they have changed (see paragraph 4.8 my report for an indication in this regard).
PM2	Page 46	Include in the Glossary: Gentle Densification – increasing the density of a proposed housing development to meet housing needs, whilst guarding against detracting from the character of the particular area.
PM3	Page 18 Paragraph 5.4	Delete: (Green Belt) .
PM4	Page 19 Policy R2	Modify clause C iv) to read: The proposed use and associated works would not harm the historic interest and or character of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.
PM5	Page 21 Policy R3	Add a sentence to clause B as follows: The opportunity areas are: Ringwood Market Place; Furlong Drove, Meeting House Lane, Rear of 56 High Street and

		<p>service yard, Northumberland Court;</p> <p>Bus Stops on Meeting House Lane and the Furlong Car Park;</p> <p>Properties to the north of The Close;</p> <p>Carvers Trading Estate;</p> <p>Pedlars Walk Court;</p> <p>Ringwood Trading Estate; and</p> <p>Lynes Lane Court.</p>
PM6	Page 21 Paragraph 5.19	<p>Add the following to paragraph 5.19:</p> <p>The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and as such, a Flood Risk Assessment may be required as part of the planning process for any development coming forward. To be clear, the policy does not allocate this site. Applicants will therefore also need to demonstrate that the sequential test, and where relevant the exception test, has been met.</p>
PM7	Page 23 Paragraph 5.25	<p>Add the following to paragraph 5.25:</p> <p>The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and as such, a Flood Risk Assessment may be required as part of the planning process for any development coming forward. To be clear, the policy does not allocate this site. Applicants will therefore also need to demonstrate that the sequential test, and where relevant the exception test, has been met.</p>
PM8	Page 24 Policy R4	<p>Modify the start of clause D to read:</p> <p>Where evidence suggests clearly demonstrates that a shop does not fulfil a function</p>

PM9	Page 26 Policy R5	Modify Policy R5 to read: Provision should be made for a high proportion of small dwellings, particularly those with one and two bedrooms, in schemes of residential development where this can be achieved without detriment to the amenities and character of the surrounding area and neighbouring properties. The number of small dwellings should be greater than 50% of the total in schemes of five or more dwellings.
PM10	Page 27 Paragraph 5.39	Delete <u>all</u> of paragraph 5.39.
PM11	Page 30 Policy R8	Modify the first sentence of the policy to read: All major development with a residential component of 10 or more dwellings should apply the
PM12	Page 31 Policy R9, paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D	Delete <u>all</u> of Policy R9, paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D.
PM13	Page 34 Policy R11	Modify the start of clause E to read: An Energy A Climate Change Statement will be submitted
PM14	Page 38 Policy R12	Modify the start of clause A to read: The Neighbourhood Plan Policy Map identifies the existing sustainable Travel Network and
PM15	Page 38 Paragraph 5.72	Add to the Glossary a definition of 'Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework' to read: A tool to help planners and designers prioritise interventions in the following order:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Substitute Trips: Replace the need to travel beyond your community; - Shift Modes: For longer trips, use active public and shared forms of transport; - Switch Fuels: For trips that must be made by car, ensure the vehicle is zero emission.
PM16	Page 35 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code	<p>Modify start of guideline iii to read:</p> <p>Street design must incorporate opportunities for landscaping (street trees, gardens and green verges)</p> <p>Modify last part of guideline vi to read:</p> <p>... whilst traffic calming measures which might include like raised tables or crossings, should be introduced along the carriageway an integral part of street design.</p>
PM17	Page 37 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code	Modify guideline iii by inserting and car ports after garages in first sentence.
PM18	Page 39 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code	<p>Add a clause v to the guideline to read:</p> <p>Space to the sides of car parking spaces is often needed for access to rear gardens and/or to outbuildings and for cycle and bin access.</p>
PM19	Pages 39 and 40 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code	Figures 23 (page 39) and 26 (page 40) should be modified because currently they indicate a sub-standard access, impractical planting and inadequate space in front of the garage.
PM20	Page 56 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local	Delete the first sentence of the image caption:

	Design Guidance and Code	The average building height within the town is between 2-3 storeys
PM21	Page 9	Add a new paragraph 2.13 to read: Some of the Plans in this document may be difficult to decipher because of their scale but they are all available electronically on the Town Council's web-site at www.ringwoodnp.org.uk.
PM22	Page 41 Policy Map	Remove the built-up area boundary and the strategic site allocation boundary at Blashford.

RINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2023 – 2036



Published by Ringwood Town Council for Submission under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

A Guide to Reading this Plan

Of necessity, this Neighbourhood Plan is a detailed technical document. The purpose of this page is to explain the structure and help you find your way around the plan.

1. Introduction and Background

This section explains the background to this Neighbourhood Plan and how you can take part in and respond to the consultation.

2. The Neighbourhood Area

This section details many of the features of the designated area.

3. Planning Policy Context

This rather technical section relates this Plan to the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted planning policies of New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority.

4. Community Views on Planning Issues

This section explains the community involvement that has taken place.

5. Vision, Objectives and Land Use Policies

This is the key section. Firstly, it provides a statement on the Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Objectives. It then details Policies which are proposed to address the issues outlined in the Foreword and in Section 4. These Policies are listed on page 5. There are Policy Maps at the back of the plan and additional information in the Appendices to which the policies cross reference.

6. Implementation and Monitoring

This section explains how the Plan will be implemented and future development guided and managed. It suggests projects which might be supported by financial contributions from future approved development schemes. Finally, it deals with a number of issues which although relevant are outside the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan.



Jubilee Gardens



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FOREWORD

Why do we need a Neighbourhood Plan?

To enable our residents to shape the future of our Town and the surrounding Parish, ensuring a Ringwood-centred approach that is inclusive and benefits our local residents, businesses and communities.

With this Plan, we influence the way Ringwood develops - to ensure a strong and sustainable future for our Parish: with better designed, more energy efficient new homes, enhanced green spaces and greater potential for local people to buy their first home.

The Neighbourhood Plan sets out an exciting Community Vision, to create a thriving Town, enhancing the Town Centre to make it a more appealing place for residents, visitors and businesses.

The Plan will further strengthen the heritage of the town and parish establishing a list of locally important buildings and structures. With the Neighbourhood Plan adopted, the Parish also benefits from increased developer contributions for investment in local infrastructure, known as Community Infrastructure Levy.

What is the Community Vision behind the Plan?

As Ringwood prepares to celebrate the 800th Anniversary of its market charter, our Community Vision is to restore and strengthen Ringwood's status as a Chartered Market Town, making it the heart of civic, commercial and community life in the South-west of the New Forest. We will mobilise its rich array of heritage assets, ambitious businesses, cultural and community organisations. We will strive to revitalise the Market Place and High Street, establishing an inviting open-air space in the heart of the town.

How will we deliver the Vision?

Ringwood Town Council working in partnership with local organisations and community leaders, residents, local businesses, site owners and developers - collaborating with New Forest District Council (NFDC), New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) and Hampshire County Council. We will proactively seek funding opportunities to enhance our town.

How can I stay updated and get involved?

Simply send an email to: neighbourhood.plan@ringwood.gov.uk

You will then have the opportunity to receive updates on progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

LIST OF POLICIES

POLICY NO.	POLICY TITLE	PAGE NO.
R1	A Spatial Plan for Ringwood	18
R2	Maintaining a Successful and Prosperous Town Centre	19
R3	Making Better Use of Opportunity Areas in the Town Centre	21
R4	Shops and Parades Within and Outside Defined Local Centres	24
R5	Smaller Housing	26
R6	First Homes	27
R7	The Ringwood Design Code	28
R8	Building for a Healthy Life	30
R9	Conserving Local Heritage Assets	31
R10	Creating a Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Network	32
R11	Zero Carbon Buildings	34
R12	Encouraging Active and Healthy Travel	38

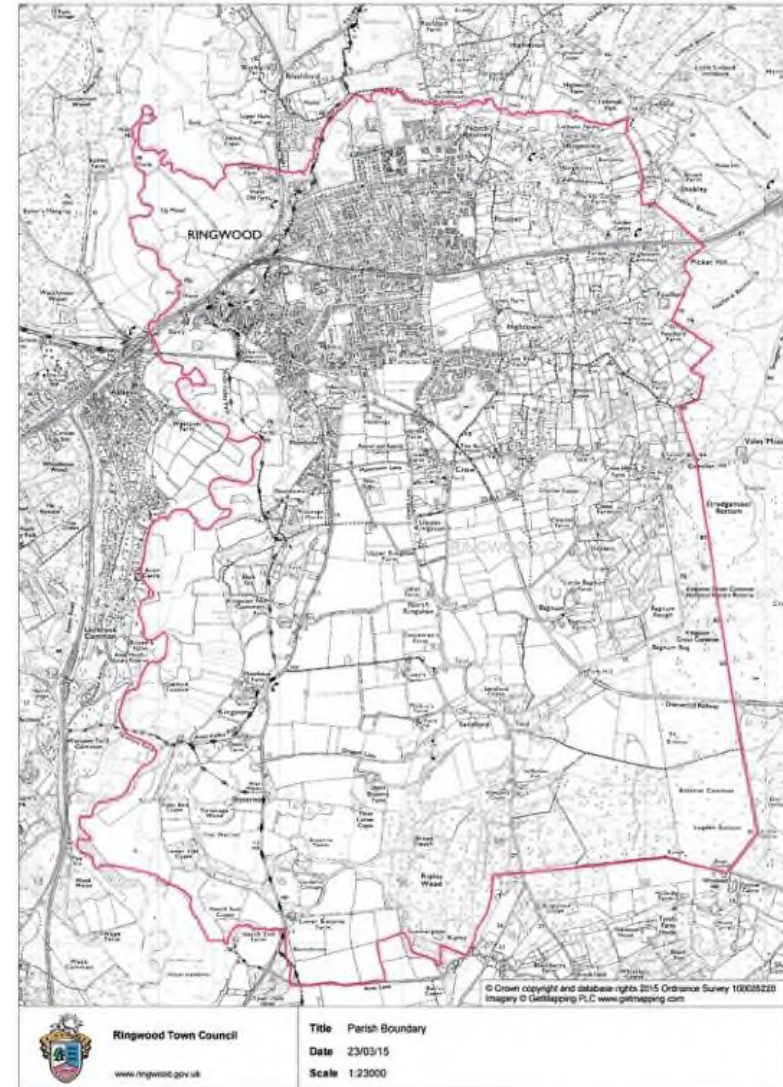
1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Ringwood Town Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the area jointly designated by NFDC and NFNPA in February 2021. The Plan is being prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations of 2012 (as amended).

1.2 The area coincides with the Parish boundary of Ringwood (see Plan A) and is centred on the built-up area of the town which largely falls within the jurisdiction of the District Council. The southern and eastern areas of the Parish fall within the New Forest National Park.

1.3 The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to set out a series of planning policies that will be used to determine planning applications in the area in the period to 2036. Once made the Plan will form part of the development plan for Ringwood, alongside the NFDC Local Plan Part 1 and the NFNPA Local Plan, which cover the same period, and the extant policies of the NFDC Core Strategy (2009) and the NFDC Local Plan Part 2 (2014).

1.4 Neighbourhood Plans provide local communities with the chance to manage the quality, location and type of development of their areas. Once approved at a referendum, the Plan becomes a statutory part of the development plan for the area and will carry significant weight in how planning applications are decided. Plans must therefore contain only land use planning policies that can be used for this purpose. This often means that there are important issues of interest to the local community that cannot be addressed in a Plan if they are not directly related to planning.



Plan A: Designated Ringwood Neighbourhood Area

1.5 Although there is considerable scope for the local community to decide on its planning policies, Neighbourhood Plans must meet some ‘basic conditions’. In essence, these are:

- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State that it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Plan.
- the making of the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area.
- the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach and is otherwise compatible with European/UK obligations.

1.6 In addition, the Town Council will need to demonstrate to an independent examiner that it has successfully engaged with the local community in preparing the Plan. If the examiner is satisfied that it has, and considers the Plan meets the above conditions, then the Plan will go to a referendum of the local electorate. If a simple majority of the turnout votes in favour of the Plan, then it becomes adopted as formal planning policy for the town.

The Pre-Submission Plan

1.7 The Pre-Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan is the opportunity for the Town Council to formally consult on the proposed vision, objectives and policies of the Plan (see details below). It has reviewed the relevant national and local planning policies and assessed how they affect this area. It has also gathered its own evidence and its reports are published separately in the evidence base.

1.8 Both Planning Authorities have confirmed in their final screening opinions of December 2022 that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required of the Neighbourhood Plan as its policy provisions do not have the potential to cause significant environmental effects. They consulted the statutory bodies, which have confirmed their agreement with that opinion.

This accords with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended).

1.9 Both Authorities have also confirmed that no Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan will be necessary, as the Plan contains no proposals that may have harmful effects on any proximate internationally designated nature conservation site. The Plan also accords with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

The Next Steps

1.10 Once the consultation exercise is complete, the Town Council will review the comments made and prepare a final version of the Plan. This will be submitted to New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority to arrange for its independent examination and then the referendum.

Consultation

1.11 If you have comments to make on this plan, please submit them to New Forest District Council, who are administering the formal Regulation 16 stage public consultation. Details on how to respond can be found at: <https://www.newforest.gov.uk/ringwoodplan>.

1.12 Further information on the Plan and its evidence base can be found on the project website at:

<https://ringwoodnp.org.uk>

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2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA



Church of St Peter and St Paul

2.1 The Parish of Ringwood lies on the south-western boundary of the county of Hampshire on the River Avon and on the western edge of the New Forest National Park. Beyond the defined settlement boundary is the South West Hampshire Green Belt. The Parish includes the hamlets of Poulner, Hangersley, Hightown, Crow, Kingston, and Bisterne. Ringwood is also the western gateway to the New Forest National Park, allowing the town to be an ideal touring base.

2.2 The River Avon is a chalk stream of national and international importance for its wildlife communities, particularly aquatic plants and invertebrates, and fish. A range of habitats within the wider Avon Valley are also internationally designated for their wildlife importance for birds.

2.3 Ringwood has a long and fascinating history. Founded by the Anglo-Saxons, it is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 and retains many

features of interest. Its market charter dates to 1226. Historically part of the River Avon was diverted to form the Bickerley Millstream which stills runs around the south of the town centre today. However, the former tannery, mills and breweries that utilised this are no longer in existence.

2.4 Most of the modern area of the town lies on the gravel terrace on the eastern floodplain of the river, the ground only increasing noticeably in height at the eastern fringe of the town as it rises up the escarpment into the National Park, designated in 2005.

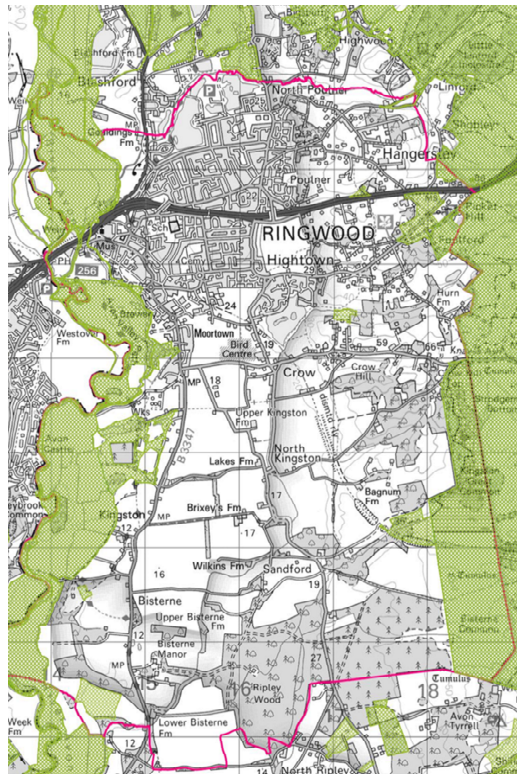
2.5 To the north of the Parish, gravel extraction has created a series of lakes with housing development extending to the water's edge. Historically, to the north-west there was a large lake which is now flood plain crossed by the meandering river and several smaller channels and drains. The flood plain narrows as it passes Ringwood, and this may account for the historic siting of the town, providing an easier crossing point of the river. This crossing point now contains the busy A31 bypass.

2.6 To the south, the valley widens slightly forming the edge to the historic core of the town, contributing to the layout of the town with the road to Christchurch closely following the edge of the flood plain. East of Christchurch Road the edge of the town is less clearly defined; ribbon development along Christchurch Road pushes the suburban area into the countryside. A housing estate south of Crow Lane/Hightown Road also protrudes southwards, with open countryside to the south and west and a large recreation area to the north, leaving it detached from the main area of suburban development. Eastwards, the town abuts a landscape of small enclosures and dispersed settlement which fringes the open heathlands and large woodland blocks of the New Forest.

2.7 Ringwood is well placed on the Avon Valley Path, a 34-mile long-distance walking route that takes you from the Cathedral city of Salisbury all the way to Christchurch Priory on the South Coast. The main road through Ringwood is the A31, which runs west to Dorchester and east to

Southampton via the New Forest. A bypass of the town running directly through the parish from east to west was completed in two stages, the first to the west in the 1930s and the second to the east in the late 1970s. The other significant road is the A338, which goes north to Salisbury and south to Bournemouth.

2.8 The area around the town includes pastoral land and water meadows which give rise to a rich and verdant landscape particularly in summer. There are also areas of arable land in the lower reaches of the Avon Valley.

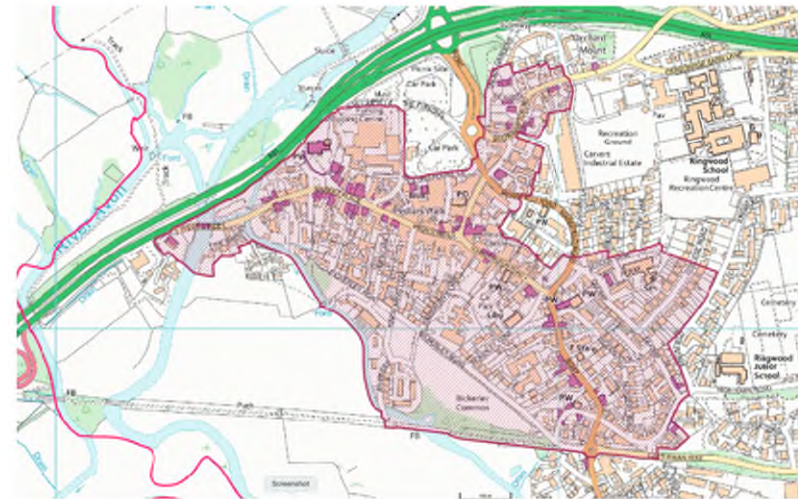


2.9 Ringwood has internationally protected sites to the east, north and west. The map to the left shows the designated areas around Ringwood in hatched green and the parish boundary as a red line. The Avon Valley Ramsar, SPA and SSSI site lies to the west.

2.10 There are also many protected areas around the lakes to the north. Linbrook Lake at the boundary has Ramsar, SPA and SSSI status. Within the boundary, the eastern part of Northfield Lake is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). To the east is The New Forest National Park (NFP).

2.11 Ringwood town centre has a wide range of shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes, including both local independently run businesses and major high street names. The retail area includes the historic Market Place and High Street, together with the privately owned Furlong Centre.

2.12 Today, much of the town centre is protected as a conservation area first designated in 1970 and expanded in 1983 and combined with the Western Escarpment Conservation Area to the north of the A31 and entirely within the National Park is a mark of the special architectural and historic interest of the Parish as a whole. This status results in a prevalence of historic buildings including 114 that are nationally listed. The listed buildings include 4 Grade II* which are the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, the Ringwood Meeting House, Bridge House and the Manor House. Many of the older buildings were first erected as timber frame thatched cottages, later to be re-roofed and faced in masonry or in 3 instances, mathematical tiles.



Ringwood Conservation Area hatched pink with Listed buildings shaded

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3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Ringwood parish lies within New Forest District Council (NFDC) and New Forest National Park (NFNP) planning authority areas.

National Planning Policy

3.2 The most recent version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021 and is an important guide in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are considered particularly relevant to this neighbourhood plan:

- Neighbourhood Planning (§29)
- Size, type and tenure of housing (§62)
- Networks of high quality open space and Local Green Spaces (§98 - §103)
- Promoting active travel networks (§104 and §106)
- Achieving well designed places (§126 - §132)
- Protecting Green Belt land (§137 - §151)
- Planning for climate change (§153 and §154)
- Planning in designated landscapes (§176)
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity (§179)
- Planning positively for heritage (§190 and §203)

3.3 It is important to note that the NPPF provisions for strategic policy setting housing targets for neighbourhood plans to consider delivering (in §66 and §67) cannot apply to settlements inset within the Green Belt. The NPPF provisions on the Green Belt prevent neighbourhood plans allocating conventional housing or other development land (i.e. 'inappropriate' development not exempt by §149 or §150).

3.4 The NPPF is supported by online Planning Practice Guidance, which provides detail on how the NPPF should be implemented. The Government also published its first National Design Guide in autumn 2019 to encourage

better design outcomes from the planning system. The Guide encourages local communities to engage in understanding the character of their areas and, where preparing neighbourhood plans, to prepare design policies specific to their local areas which this Neighbourhood Plan has done. As noted in Section 5 below, the national policy position on how the planning system should be used to tackle climate change continues to evolve.

3.5. A consultation on reforms to national planning policy was launched by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on the 22 December 2022. The consultation closed on the 2nd March 2023. DLUHC are also seeking views on how National Development Management Policies might be developed. Currently, there are no details in Annex 1 of the consultation version of how any transitional arrangements might apply to neighbourhood plans.

The New Forest Development Plan

3.6 The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan, which primarily comprises the policies of the NFDC Local Plan Part 1 2016-2036 and the NFNPA Local Plan 2016-2036 and saved policies of the NFDC Core Strategy (2009) and the NFDC Local Plan Part 2 (2014), as well as separate Minerals and Waste Plans.

3.7 The Government's Environment Improvement Plan 2023 published on 31 January 2023, sets out a range of objectives to deliver the commitments in the 25-Year Environment Plan. While the Plan covers all areas of England, National Parks are identified as playing a key role in the delivery of Government agendas for nature recovery, tackling climate change, thriving communities and inclusive landscapes.

The New Forest District Local Plan Part 1 2016 – 2036

3.8 The Local Plan Part 1 was adopted on the 6th July 2020 and establishes the strategic context for the town (outside the National Park) over the next thirteen years. Strategic policy matters affecting Ringwood are prefixed with STR:

- Achieving Sustainable Development (STR1)
- The settlement hierarchy (STR4)
- Community Services, Infrastructure and Facilities (STR8)
- The release of Green Belt land for SS13 - Moortown Lane (STR5)
- Mitigating the impacts of development on International Nature Conservation sites (ENV1)
- The South West Hampshire Green Belt (ENV2)
- Design quality and local distinctiveness (ENV3)
- Landscape Character and Quality (ENV4)
- Housing on developments to include a broad mix of new homes. (HOU1)
- A target of 50% affordable housing to be delivered. (HOU2)
- Retention of employment sites and consideration of alternative uses (ECON2)
- Primary, secondary and local shopping frontages (ECON6)
- Safe and Sustainable Travel (CCC2)
- Energy and Resource use (IMPL2)

Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management 2014 saved policies

- DM1: Heritage and Conservation
- DM2: Nature conservation, biodiversity and geodiversity
- DM4: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation
- DM9: Green Infrastructure Linkages
- DM19: Small Shops and Pubs

Supplementary planning guidance and Conservation Areas:

- Ringwood Conservation Area

- Ringwood Local Distinctiveness Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2013)
- Shop Front Design Guide SPD
- Housing Design, Density and Character SPD
- Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain - Interim Advice and Information Note (July 2021)
- First Homes Advice Note (July 2022)
- NFDC Draft Planning for Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (March 2023)

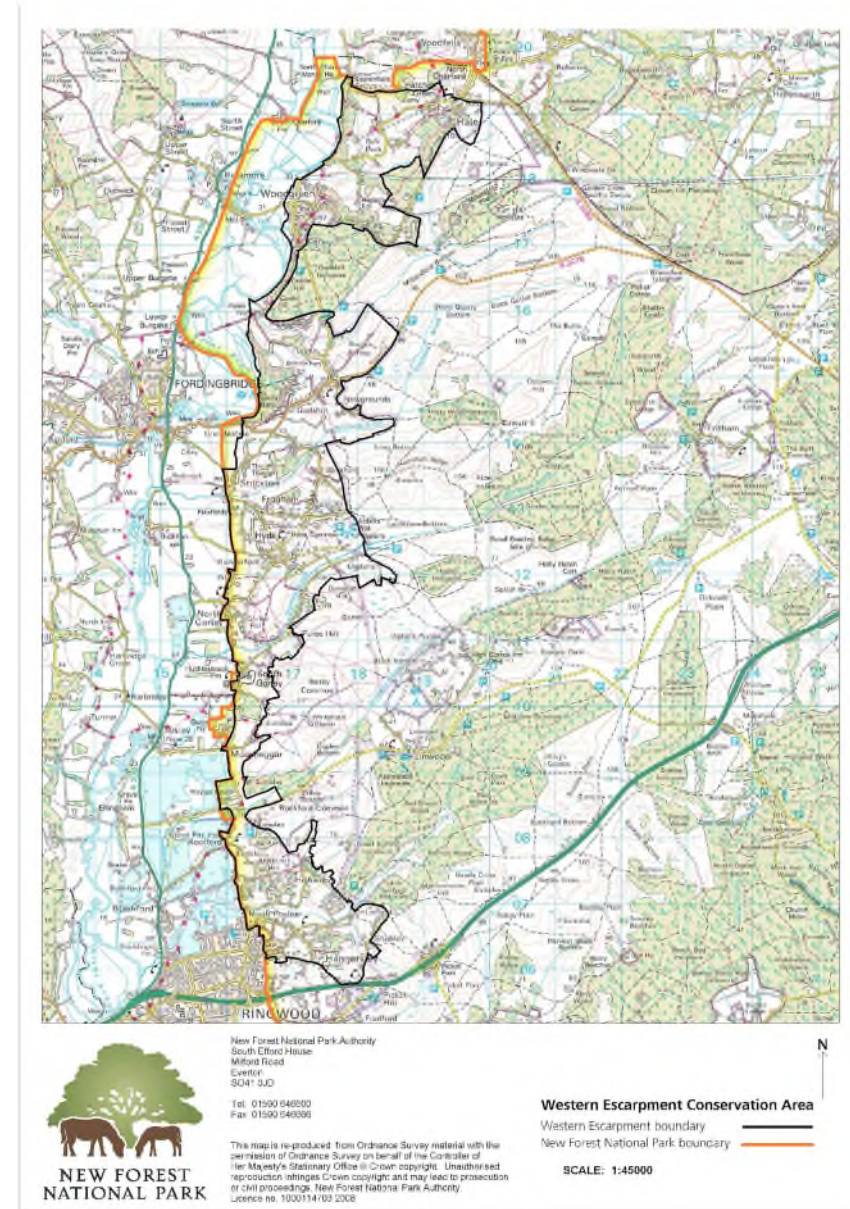
New Forest National Park Local Plan (2016-2036)

3.9 The Local Plan was adopted on the 29th August 2019 and establishes the strategic context for the parish (within the National Park) over the next thirteen years. While not an exhaustive list, the Local Plan includes a number of relevant policies that apply in the rural areas of the parish within the National Park. Strategic Policy matters affecting that part of the parish within the National Park are prefixed with SP:

- Supporting Sustainable Development (SP1)
- General Development principles (DP2)
- Nature Conservation Sites of International Importance (SP5)
- The Natural Environment (SP6)
- Landscape Character (SP7)
- Green Infrastructure (SP9)
- Climate Change (SP11)
- The historic and built environment (SP16)
- Local Distinctiveness (SP17)
- Design Principles (DP18)
- The size of new dwellings (SP21)
- Access (SP55)

Supplementary planning guidance and Conservation Areas:

- Western Escarpment Conservation Area
- Development Standards SPD (Sept 2012)
- Design Guide SPD (Jan 2022)



3.10 The NFDC Local Plan defines the town as one of the eight principal settlements in the District and sets out a strategy comprising the delivery of new dwellings to be built within or close to Ringwood. As required by the NP process, NFDC initially provided us with an indicative housing target for Ringwood of 1300 dwellings for the Local Plan period 2016-36 including the three allocated strategic sites (SS13, SS14 and SS15) with a combined estimated minimum capacity of 850 dwellings. Over this period, it anticipated the rate of new housing development will slow as “development phasing reflects the practical reality of lead-in times required to deliver a near three-fold increase in housing completions” across the District, compared to the preceding Core Strategy. It should be borne in mind that the NFDC indicative housing target for Ringwood to contribute to the fulfilment of the Local Plan part 1 requirement can be met from existing allocations.

3.11 NFDC has not yet resolved to proceed with the Local Plan Part 2 or whether to undertake a full Local Plan Review. In addition (as described in paragraph 3.5 above) there remains uncertainty regarding calculating local housing needs using the standard method given the Government proposals to make the outcome an “advisory starting-point for establishing a housing requirement for the area”. Given this uncertainty, and conscious that Planning Practice Guidance (ID:41-043-20140306) requires the Qualifying Body and NFDC/NFNPA to work constructively together to avoid duplicating planning processes, the NP Steering Group agreed to address housing delivery and allocations under a Neighbourhood Plan review when there is clarity on these matters.

3.12 In fulfilling one of the Plan's objectives, the Housing Working Group has identified and performed an initial assessment of a number of brownfield sites which should be considered as suitable for the development of smaller, less expensive dwellings for future allocation. This assessment work is summarised in the evidence base of the Neighbourhood Plan.

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Plan C: New Forest District Council Local Plan Part 1 – Key Diagram

4. COMMUNITY VIEWS ON PLANNING ISSUES

4.1 The Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan Working Group comprises a cross-section of local people including Town Councillors, local business people, residents and community leaders. At each stage, the Working Group has sought the views of the community.

4.2 During 2021 the following surveys were conducted to gauge the views of the people of Ringwood. These were a combination of on-line surveys, interviews and paper forms:

- Shoppers Survey
- Shopkeepers Survey
- Housing Survey
- Energy Efficient Buildings Survey
- Nature Recovery Survey
- Nominations for Local Listings

4.3 Drop-in events were also held in the Gateway building in 2022 with over 200 people attending. In addition, in 2022, four sessions were held with students from Ringwood School with over 30 students attending. These sessions were specifically designed to gain the views of young people about the future of the town. Across all the surveys and events over 700 residents gave their views.

4.4 The community told us that they loved the history, semi-rural and market town feel of Ringwood. They also defined a vision for the future which is encapsulated by the following:

- a. A more vibrant town centre with character – that stays alive in the evening with restaurants and family pubs
- b. Affordable homes for youngsters and 2-3 bed family homes.
- c. More energy efficient housing

- d. Preservation of green spaces and increased recreational facilities
- e. Maintaining the character of the town whilst also making it more attractive
- f. More for young people to do



4.5 Many people are concerned about the developments on the strategic sites and do not believe that Ringwood has the infrastructure to support this number of new properties. In particular, there were concerns about traffic, schools and access to doctor surgeries. It is recognised that these sites were allocated in the NFDC Local Plan and that the details and impact on infrastructure have not yet been agreed.

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5. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND LAND USE POLICIES

Vision

5.1 The following vision statement has been prepared to guide the Plan's objectives, policies and proposals by the Neighbourhood Plan team:

Objectives

Our Vision for Ringwood.

We will restore and strengthen Ringwood's status as a Chartered Market Town, making it the heart of civic, commercial and community life in the South-west of the New Forest.

This will not be achieved by trying to turn back the clock. We need to make the town centre attractive, appealing and fit for purpose in a new era, reflecting the way we live now.

Ringwood is an historic market town in a beautiful riverside setting and is a gateway to the New Forest with over half of the parish being in the New Forest National Park. We will mobilise its rich array of heritage assets, ambitious businesses, cultural and community organisations. We will revitalise the Market Place and High Street, establishing an inviting open-air space in the heart of the town. We will improve green spaces and create more opportunities to connect with nature across the whole parish.

We will enhance the first impressions of the Town in keeping with the rural setting of the town and to further build a sustainable economy, we will improve connectivity for walking and cycling.

Ringwood will be recognised as a thriving market town with both historic interest and modern-day appeal, it will become an essential part of the New Forest experience for UK and international visitors. The revived town centre will contribute to an enhanced quality of life, and its cosmopolitan appeal will make it an increasingly popular place to live and work, and especially attractive to young people and families.

5.2 The key objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are:

- 1: To make Ringwood more attractive to a wider cross-section of residents and visitors by revitalising the town centre economy.
- 2: To celebrate Ringwood's historic buildings and townscapes and encourage high quality and sustainable design of new development.
- 3: To put people first by encouraging walking and cycling.
- 4: To ensure Ringwood does not become a 'dormitory town'.
- 5: To maximise the opportunities for the young people of Ringwood to live in Ringwood.
- 6: To ensure that the regeneration of Ringwood town centre positively addresses the New Forest Climate and Nature Emergency Declarations.

Land Use Policies

5.3 The following policies relate to the development and use of land in the designated Ringwood Neighbourhood Area. Each policy is numbered, titled and it is shown in bold font. Where necessary, the area to which it will apply is shown on the Policies Map attached to this Plan. After each policy there is some supporting text that explains the purpose of the policy, how it will be applied and, where helpful, how it relates to other development plan policies.

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Ringwood Town Futures Vision credit SPUD and Daisy Kate

Policy R1: A Spatial Plan for Ringwood

A. The focus for new development in the Parish of Ringwood, outside of the National Park will be on reusing brownfield land and on realising other suitable development opportunities within the settlement boundary, as shown on the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan Policy Map. The principles of ‘brownfield first’ and of ‘gentle densification’ in the town will deliver a supply of developable land over the Plan period that will reduce the need for land to be released from the Green Belt for development.

B. The focus on using brownfield land and for gentle densification will contribute to bolstering and sustaining the town centre’s vitality and viability as the primary centre for retail and other town centre uses. Market Place and its environs will retain its special clustering of café/restaurant, public houses and niche retail uses. The local centre at Poulner will continue to help meet the day-to-day needs of the local community in line with ‘20-minute neighbourhood’ principles. Outside the town centre, the residential character of the suburban areas of the town will be sustained and enhanced through sensitively designed high quality infill and plot redevelopment.

C. Beyond the settlement boundary the focus will be on enhancing the natural environment, contributing to nature recovery, protecting and enhancing the National Park landscape and maintaining the essential characteristics of openness and permanence of the Green Belt in accordance with national policies, avoiding inappropriate development.

D. The harmful effects of traffic congestion, especially traffic with an origin and destination outside the town centre, will be tackled through the promotion of other means of moving about the town including the delivery of effective walking and cycling measures to better connect the new communities at Moortown Lane and Hightown Road.

5.4 This policy establishes a coherent spatial plan for the town and its surrounding (Green Belt) countryside that shows how its key component parts – the town centre, suburban areas and undeveloped natural areas– will work together to bolster this sustainable community. It accords with the broader spatial strategy objectives of the NFDC and NFNPA Local Plans.

5.5 Critical to the success of the town will be maintaining its identity as a distinct, self-contained settlement nestled within the Green Belt. The urban fabric of the town offers opportunities for gentle densification, especially in and around the town centre area, but also to reuse previously developed (‘brownfield’) land. Although no significant land has been made available for redevelopment at present, it is likely that brownfield land will become available later in the Plan period and could be addressed in a Neighbourhood Plan review.

5.6 The policy requires proper attention to be given to prioritising and realising such opportunities as they arise, rather than utilize the Green Belt. Not only is this approach more efficient in using a scarce land resource, but it will avoid creating unsustainable patterns of growth, poorly located from established infrastructure and therefore car dependent.

5.7 The evidence collated for the project indicates that the town centre has largely survived the challenges of retailing in the 21st century and of COVID-19 reasonably well in terms of relatively low unit vacancy rates although the works associated with the widening of the A31 have affected footfall. The town centre contains a healthy mix of town uses. Vacancies have increased as independent retailers struggle with this reduced footfall; but in comparison to the national picture, it is still relatively low. The closure of West Street creates less traffic through the Market Place, this provides an opportunity to review how to make best use of this space.

5.8 The parade at Poulner and community, sports and educational uses serve the surrounding residential areas but walking and cycling to these places can be challenging given the rural character of the street network, and the severance created by the A31. The town also suffers from a

disconnect between the parking and public transport arrival points and parts of the primary shopping area. The policy encourages proposals to tackle these problems if the town is to continue to be sustainable.

Policy R2: Maintaining a Successful and Prosperous Town Centre

A. Proposals to maintain the established mix of town centre retail, commercial, community and residential uses within the town centre boundary, as shown on the Town Centre Inset Policy Map, will be supported.

B. Proposals will also be supported which enable the delivery of the Market Place shared space ‘vision’ and other heritage and cultural led regeneration initiatives that improve access from Furlong Drove¹ and Pedlars Walk, and deliver improvements which ‘green’ the town centre.

C. Proposals for a change of use that will result in the loss of an active retail, commercial, business or service use of a ground floor frontage within the Ringwood Conservation Area will be supported where all of the following criteria are met:

- i) the proposed ground floor use falls within the NPPF definition of a main town centre use;**
- ii) the proposed use and any associated physical alterations would maintain an active and publicly accessible ground floor use that enlivens the streetscene;**
- iii) the proposed use would not undermine the character and diversity of that part of the Town Centre; and**
- iv) the proposed use and associated works would not harm the historic interest and character of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.**

¹ Furlong Drove is the original drivers’ route from Gravel Lane through the car park to Market Place.

5.9 Town Centres are sensitive to change and in Ringwood’s case, unique historic characteristics within its built environment make the management of change all the more significant.

5.10 This policy defines the town centre boundary for Ringwood which retains the boundary shown on the Proposals Map for Policy ECON5 of the NFDC Local Plan. There has been no change in circumstance to indicate that the boundary should be modified as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. As Policies ECON5 and ECON6 no longer comply with national planning policy and the Use Class Order 2020, they are replaced by this policy. The effect of the 2020 Order especially has rendered redundant the Policy ECON6 definition of primary and secondary shopping frontages and they are not taken forward in this policy.

5.11 It is recognised that some changes of use do not now require planning permission and new permitted development rights (from August 2021) will enable future changes of use from what are now Class E (commercial, business and service) uses to residential uses. The Town Council hopes that New Forest District Council will protect the essential core of Ringwood’s primary shopping area, as defined in the Policies Map, from unsympathetic and harmful change by making an Article 4 Direction to remove those rights for ground floor use with effect from the point at which the Neighbourhood Plan is made, enabling such changes to remain in planning control. The Town Council will submit a formal request for this following the referendum of this Neighbourhood Plan.

5.12 In the meantime, proposals made in the town centre will require Prior Approval. For that part of the town centre that lies within the Conservation Area, such approval will require the consideration of any harmful effects to the character of the Conservation Area from the loss of such a ground floor use. Although the Neighbourhood Plan policy (as part of the development plan) is not engaged in a Prior Approval determination by way of S38(6) of

the 1990 Planning Act, the Article 4 Report produced by the Design and Heritage working group makes the case to protect the amenity provided by the commercial uses and historic features of buildings. These have a distinct function and character and would therefore be a legitimate reason for refusing approvals that will harm the remaining historical significance of the Ringwood Conservation Area and setting of the large concentration of nationally listed buildings to avoid unsympathetic alterations.

5.13 It is also recognised that some unsympathetic alterations, which harm the attractiveness of the town centre, the setting of the high concentration of nationally listed buildings and wider Conservation Area do not require planning permission. The Town Council hopes that New Forest District Council will protect Ringwood's historic town centre by making an Article 4 Direction to remove those rights and to ensure proper consideration is given to potentially unsympathetic alterations like replacement windows, removal of chimneys and replacement roof finishes. The Town Council will submit a formal request for this following the referendum of this Neighbourhood Plan.

[It is suggested that such an article 4 direction would cover the 'primary shopping area' as defined in the NFDC Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management Ringwood Town Centre Policies Map 12A]

5.14 Ringwood sustains a wide range of retail, office, café/restaurant and public house uses, with two important, large food stores (Sainsburys and Waitrose) anchoring the town centre. There are many dwellings on the upper floors of ground floor uses along the spine of Market Place and High Street. The centre is well served by public transport – most notably the bus stand at Meeting House Lane, and by extensive short and long stay parking

at the Furlong and by other public car parks. It is busy during weekday and weekend daytimes but less so in the evenings.



Market Place 'Vision'

5.15 The Town Council is keen to enhance the capacity and quality of community uses in the town and to enhance the evening economy. The Gateway Building occupies a prominent location and the area has undergone extensive public realm enhancements to deliver a wider range of modern community uses. The policy encourages further proposals to come forward that will also contribute to bolstering the vitality and viability of the town centre at the heart of the community.

Policy R3: Making better use of Opportunity Areas in the Town Centre.

A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies Ringwood Town Centre area for the purpose of supporting regeneration opportunities to deliver retail, cultural, environmental, residential and business investment.

B. Proposals for redevelopment in the eight opportunity areas, as shown on the Town Centre Inset Policy Map, will be encouraged provided they demonstrate how they contribute to the Town Centre Vision and accord with the development principles and opportunities for each area as set out in the Ringwood Strategic Masterplan (see Appendix A).

5.16 This policy establishes specific opportunities set out in the Ringwood Strategic Masterplan Report (AECOM) to contribute to a prosperous town centre to reflect the community consultation. This policy identifies Ringwood Town Centre as an important location within the town within which are clustered a number of town centre uses, i.e. retail, office, café/restaurant, public houses and community facilities.

5.17 The area includes all of the land whose current use is either in an established town centre use or its reuse for a town centre purpose would be suitable in principle. Market Place/High Street is the ‘jewel in the crown’ of the town. As the oldest part of the town, it is lined with buildings of mediaeval origins around thoroughfares that would have served important market and agricultural functions in the past. It complements the Vision in providing small, historic units suited to niche retailers, offices and hospitality businesses. Those businesses mean that it could support a more vibrant day and night-time economy. This could benefit residents of the parish and make the town more attractive for visitors

5.18 It also has residential uses that have, in general terms, been successfully knitted in with its tight plot pattern over centuries. Opportunities for sensitive housing infill still arise on occasions and such

uses are regarded as compatible with the overall mix of uses as long as they do not undermine or replace an active street frontage. This area is well suited to the beneficial reuse of historic buildings to reap the benefits of heritage led regeneration, although policy R2 seeks to prevent the loss of town centre uses on the ground floors (and permitted development rights allowing for such changes of use do not extend to nationally listed buildings) from commercial to residential.

5.19 Ringwood Market Place – Opportunity Area A

The Market Place is currently dominated by parking and narrow pavements, with cafes, restaurants, public houses and shops present in the many historic buildings of the area. The recent closure of West Street to through traffic presents the opportunity for the historic Market Place to be transformed into a lively destination and events area. This area is considered to be particularly suitable for:

- i. Public realm improvements and nearby development that contribute to a thriving Market Place by enhancing the historic setting and preserving the open spatial character;
- ii. Creating a more pedestrian friendly public space with active frontages and improved opportunities for businesses to spill out whilst maintaining vehicular access and appropriate parking.

5.20 Furlong Drive, Meeting House Lane, Rear of 56 High Street and Service Yard, Northumberland Court - Opportunity Area B

Most visitors arrive in Ringwood at the Furlong Car Park. The most direct route to the Market Place from here is to walk down Meeting House Lane, however the historically prominent drove route from the car park no longer connects directly to the Market Place. This area is considered to be particularly suitable for:

- i. Public realm improvements that enhance direct visual and physical connection between the Gateway and the Market Place by, reinstating the historic drove route to the Market Place and High Street;

- ii. Preserving and increasing visible shopping frontages on Meeting House Lane and Northumberland Court;
- iii. High quality redevelopment of the rear of 56, High Street that enhances the setting of the surrounding heritage assets;
- iv. Development in Northumberland Court that mitigates the negative visual impacts of the service yard access.

5.21 Bus Stops on Meeting House Lane and the Furlong Car Park – Opportunity Area C

The Bus Stops and the Car Park are well located in proximity to each other and provide a valuable public and private transport space. However, more could be done to provide better active travel infrastructure and to make the area more attractive. This area is considered to be particularly suitable for:

- i. Public realm improvements that create a coherent facility for public and active forms of travel in an attractive and inclusive setting. Forms of transport to include taxis, buses, national coaches, cycles (including secure electric charging), car share parking spaces. Where possible improvements should include greening and integration of PV panels.

5.22 Properties to the North of The Close – Opportunity Area D

Existing developments to the North Side of the Close (e.g. the BT Building and the building that is currently M&Co) present an unattractive vista to people visiting and travelling through Ringwood. It is an inefficient use of land and fails to mitigate the harm to the urban fabric of the town caused by Mansfield Road. This area is considered to be particularly suitable for:

- i. Development that adopts the principles of gentle densification, incorporate mixed use development which makes efficient use of land and positively addresses frontages on The Close and Mansfield Road;
- ii. Development that includes a high proportion of smaller dwellings.

- iii. Opportunities for road layout changes and improvements to pedestrian and cycle links between the Town Centre and Carvers Recreation Ground should be explored and adopted where possible.

5.23 Carvers Trading Estate – Opportunity Area E

The Carvers Trading Estate is an area of light industrial land adjacent to the Town Centre and Conservation Area. The vehicular entrance is not well suited to high volumes of large delivery vehicles.

This area could more actively contribute to a lively and attractive town. It is considered to be particularly suitable for:

- i. Development that adopts the principles of gentle densification, incorporating mixed use development which makes efficient use of land and positively address frontages to Carvers Recreation Ground and Mansfield Road;
- ii. Development that includes a high proportion of smaller dwellings;
- iii. Road layout changes and improvements to pedestrian and cycle links between the Town Centre and Carvers Recreation Ground;
- iv. Development that takes into account the need to enhance the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

5.24 Pedlars Walk Court, wall by the Inn on the Furlong – Opportunity Area F

On arrival at the main Car Park in Ringwood the routes to the High Street are unclear. The most direct route is to walk between the Meeting House and the Inn on the Furlong. This route is not visually appealing currently. There is the opportunity to improve the sense of arrival into the town by:

- i. Creating active frontages and attractive open vistas which naturally draw visitors through to the High Street and create a spatially more respectful setting for the Grade II* Meeting House.

5.25 Ringwood Trading Estate – Opportunity Area G

Ringwood Trading Estate is an area of light industrial land adjacent to the Town Centre & Conservation Area. Situated on a well-used roundabout it does not currently provide a good first impression of a lively and attractive town. There is the opportunity to improve the sense of arrival into the town by encouraging:

- i. Development that positively addresses frontages on Castleman Way and Christchurch Road;
- ii. Development that includes a high proportion of smaller dwellings;
- iii. Improvements to pedestrian and cycle links between the existing cycle infrastructure and the Bickerley and the Castleman Trail.

5.26 Lynes Lane Court – Opportunity Area H

This courtyard is adjacent to the primary shopping frontage and also provides a route between the High Street and the green spaces of the Bickerley and the Castleman Trail. In common with the other such links the route is not obvious, however Lynes Lane Court does have retail units that encourage people to venture away from the High Street. There is the opportunity to improve this link by supporting:

- i. Public realm improvements that provide an attractive pedestrian friendly open space;
- ii. Alterations that improve the prominence and attractiveness of Lynes Lane as a link between the High Street and Bickerley, for example by the lowering of high walls.

Policy R4: Shops and Parades within and outside defined centres

A. Proposals to maintain and enhance the established mix of local centre uses at Butlers Lane Poulner, as shown on the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan Policy Map, will be encouraged.

B. Development proposals that enhance the community function of shops located outside defined centres will be supported.

C. Where it is proposed to change the use of a shop within or outside a centre that falls within the Local Community Use Class F2(a), the applicant will be expected to accompany their application with a robust assessment of its value to the local community.

D. Where evidence suggests that a shop does not fulfil a function or benefit for the local community, or where a community benefit exists to changing the use of a shop to fulfil another non-residential community use, marketing evidence will not be required.

5.27 This policy acknowledges the locally important shopping parade in Poulner to encourage its ongoing role in serving the local community. There are also numerous individual shops throughout the Parish outside this defined Local Centre. NFDC saved Policy DM19 (Small Shops and Pubs) seeks to ensure that development proposals do not result in the loss of these shops, particularly where there is no alternative provision nearby.

5.28 These individual shops play an even more vital role in their local community by providing convenient access to day-to-day requirements as a core element of a sustainable '20-minute neighbourhood' (a 10-minute walk there, and a 10-minute walk home), and may be the sole accessible store for less mobile residents. Given their importance to the local community, these individual shops and parades will be supported as they play an important role at the heart of our neighbourhoods.



Ringwood High Street

5.29 If the shop fulfils a function or benefit to the local community, development proposals must provide credible and robust evidence which demonstrates the existing use is not commercially sustainable and at least 12 months of active, visible and comprehensive marketing for its current use before an alternative use will be considered.

5.30 The Use Class Order 2020 includes a new Class F2(a) which applies to shops under 280m² selling essential goods which are over 1km from another similar shop. The policy reflects the principles underlying NFDC Local Plan Policy ECON6 but brings it up to date to reflect these changes since the Local Plan was adopted. The period of marketing reflects the requirement in ECON6.

Policy R5: Smaller Housing

Provision should be made for a high proportion of small dwellings, particularly those with one and two bedrooms, in schemes of residential development where this can be achieved without detriment to the amenities and the character of the surrounding area and neighbouring properties.

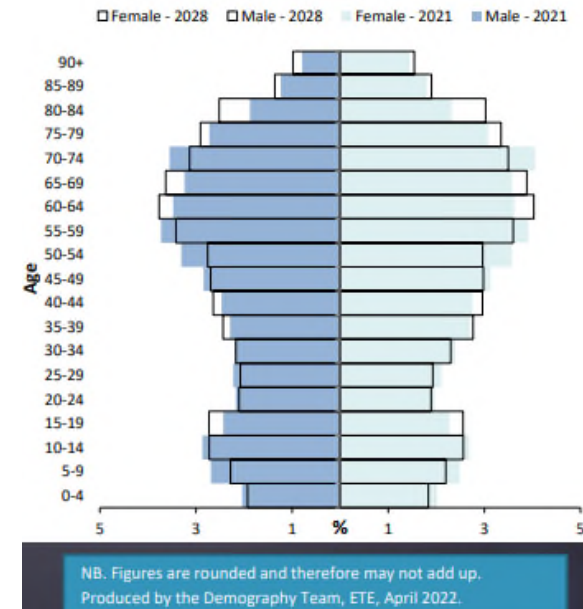
5.31 A Ringwood Housing Survey was conducted on-line in 2021. There were 279 respondents. Of the households that responded over 1/3 had members looking to buy or rent a house in the next year and over 80% of these had local connections. 50% of those looking to buy were looking to pay £350K or less. From the respondents' experience, Ringwood is lacking starter homes (1-2 bed), mid-priced 2-3 beds and council / housing association dwellings. There was a split view on supporting a small development of social/affordable housing on a Green Belt site (42.2% for 46.2% against).

5.32 The aim of this policy is therefore to diversify the local housing stock to prioritise two broad local housing markets - single people and young families new to the housing market and retirees whose opportunity to downsize may be limited - and hence the need to satisfy the increased demand for both smaller and lower cost dwellings to generally improve choice. The existing housing stock in the town consists predominantly of three or four bedroomed properties, and market housing and is amongst the most expensive to buy in the country. The average size of private households in the town (i.e. the number of people occupying a dwelling) is lower than in most other parts of Hampshire and is likely to continue to fall. Similarly, the number of elderly households is projected to increase considerably over the same period.

5.33 In addition, a greater number of smaller units can be delivered on a given site than larger units. The provision of a higher proportion of small

dwellings (i.e., greater than 50% of the total of schemes of five or more dwellings) will ensure an efficient use of scarce land in the town given its environmental and Green Belt constraints.

5.34 The hollowing out of the district's age profile in the 20 to 40 age group is something the Neighbourhood Plan wishes to arrest. There may be various socio-economic factors at work, some of which are beyond the capabilities of a neighbourhood plan. However, to the extent that housing affordability is an issue, it is important that all possible steps are explored, including the longer-term potential for Community Led Housing.



Source: <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/population/Factsheet-NewForest.pdf>

5.35 A survey conducted with a selection of Ringwood Estate Agents showed that 2 or 3-bedroom houses were in most demand with the level of demand increasing as the price lowers. Until recently around 70% of

properties would have been sold to local people but this has now reduced to around 50% pointing to the potential for locals to be less well positioned to buy.

5.36 The provision of a stock of small housing units would also give the elderly an opportunity, if they wish, to vacate their larger dwellings, yet remain resident in the town and provide an opportunity for younger and/or key worker, one and two person households to find suitable accommodation in the area. This is key for the continuing development of vibrancy in our communities and overall sustainability of the town. Better utilisation of the existing housing stock is unlikely to occur unless smaller units are available either by the construction of new, small dwellings or by the conversion of existing properties.

Policy R6: First Homes

Affordable housing will be supported in new development in areas outside of the New Forest National Park as required by Local Plan Policy HOU2. Within that provision, a minimum of 25% of new affordable homes shall be provided as First Homes.

5.37 The NFDC Local Plan Policy HOU2 requires a proportion of affordable units on larger housing sites (50% on sites of more than 10 houses) so it could be considered that there is no need for an additional policy requiring affordable homes in this Neighbourhood Plan. However, the Local Plan was adopted prior to the Governments 'First Home' initiative where a minimum 25% of all new affordable units should be provided as First Homes. These units are likely to be secured through legal (Section 106) agreements to ensure that the discounts remain in perpetuity. NFDC has published an Advice Note on First Homes provision (July 2022).

5.38 'First Homes' are a specific kind of discounted market sale housing and meet the definition of 'affordable housing' for planning purposes. The local housing needs evidence prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan does not

consider 'First Homes' to be currently affordable for those households on average or lower incomes but a couple with joint incomes who fall within the 'First Homes' household income limit of £80,000 per annum may well be able to afford a First Homes discounted price dwelling.



5.39 For those who can, on sites in addition to Local Plan requirements as detailed in the Policy STR5, for the first 2 months of marketing, priority for First Homes will be given to those who have a local connection to Ringwood. The local connection test will be based on the same local connection criteria applied by NFDC but applied within Ringwood parish. This reflects National Policy which allows for a local connection test to be applied within Neighbourhood Plans where there is evidence of need. Currently these are smaller properties available

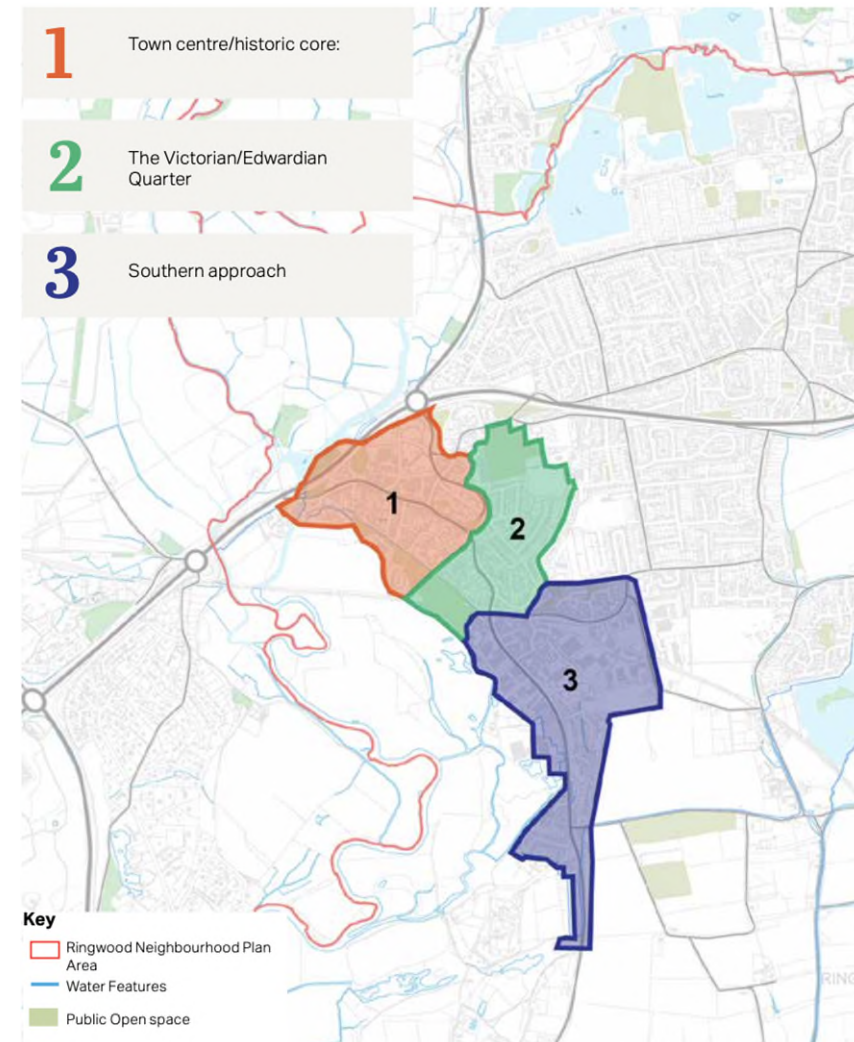
for sale in Ringwood below the First Homes price limit of £250,000 with the 30% discount applied, showing that the open market price for such dwellings is achievable for qualifying applicants.

Policy R7: The Ringwood Design Code

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, residential development proposals must demonstrate high quality design and legible layouts which, where relevant, have taken account of the positive aspects of local character defined in the Ringwood Design Code (Appendix B), and should also:

- (i) Minimise the impact of development on higher ground by careful siting and by comprehensive landscaping;
- (ii) Include on a Landscape Plan the opportunities to create wildlife corridors and deliver biodiversity net gain;
- (iii) Include amenity space having sufficient size, shape and access to sunlight for the provision of recreational benefits to the occupants;
- (iv) Offer highly permeable residential layouts for cyclists and pedestrians moving within and through the development;
- (v) Front boundary treatments should be in keeping with the historic and rural character of Ringwood (DC.03.02 and DC.05.2). Hard boundary treatments up to 1m high will be permitted, where taller boundaries are deemed appropriate (for example, for clear reasons of security or privacy) this should be achieved by planting unless otherwise justified by historic character. Hard boundaries should be permeable to wildlife; and
- (vi) Be respectful of the tranquil setting of the National Park and protective of its dark skies. Lighting should be fully justified and well-designed to shine only where it is needed.

5.40 This policy responds to the Government’s encouragement that neighbourhood plans should set out local design guidance by adding additional local design emphasis to NFDC Policy ENV3 and NFNPA Policy DP18 to provide a compendium of design guidance in the form design guidelines for the parish as a whole, and specific guidance for three character areas – The Town Centre and Historic Core, The Victorian and Edwardian Quarter and the Southern Approach.



Ringwood character area map (The above 3 character areas are based on character areas 1, 2 and 5 of the Ringwood Local Distinctiveness SPD 2013)

5.41 The Code has also brought together in one place a range of guidance published by NFDC and NFNPA since 2003 but only some of which has been

adopted as supplementary planning guidance for development management purposes. The Code is an integral part of the policy but is extensive in distinguishing different areas of the town and is therefore published separately to the Neighbourhood Plan as its Appendix B. To be clear therefore, as the Code has been prepared and consulted on as part of the Plan, its content carries the full weight of the development plan in decision making and is not subordinate or supplementary guidance carrying lesser weight.

5.42 Applicants will therefore be expected to have acknowledged, understood and responded positively to the Code as relevant to the location, scale and nature of their proposals. Where a proposal does not seek to follow the requirements of the Code then the applicant will be obliged to justify why an exception should be made, for example, because a scheme meets the Net Zero Carbon provisions of Policy R11 requiring a design solution that cannot fully comply with the Code.

5.43 In respect of clause (v) of the Policy, this addresses a specific issue in Ringwood which since the Ringwood Local Distinctiveness SPD was published has become more prominent, as it has in many other towns. It is widely recognised that natural more permeable boundaries provide benefits including social cohesion; passive surveillance; more harmonised appearance; biodiversity; flood protection; cooler streets and better air quality.

5.44 The Code should be used by developers in conjunction with The Ringwood Local Distinctiveness SPD, which is attached as Appendix C.

Policy R8: Building for a Healthy Life

All major development with a residential component should apply the Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) design assessment tool (or equivalent methodology) to inform the design proposals, based on a traffic light system of scoring. As a guide, development should seek to achieve a score of no ‘reds’, design out all ‘ambers’ and achieve a majority of ‘greens’.

A Building for a Healthy Life Assessment should be included within the Design and Access Statement and submitted with the application.

5.44 The distinctive local character of the Parish and the importance of high-quality design were raised as important issues by the local community both during discussions about the Neighbourhood Plan as well as in response to proposed major developments in the area.

5.45 High Quality Design is fundamental to the creation of high-quality places. The national Model Design Code H2 (para 187) reinforces this:

“The built environment has a significant impact on people’s health and wellbeing. This relates across the design code with regard to walkable neighbourhoods, access to greenery and recreation, attractive buildings and public spaces, space standards, and strong communities.”

5.46 The NPPF (paragraph 40) encourages ‘any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community...before submitting their applications’. This policy also has regard to paragraph 133 of the NPPF and refines and updates NFDC policy ENV3 to align with paragraph 133 and the way in which the process of engaging the local community and assessing the design of major development proposals is carried out. Importantly, it uses accepted means within the District Council’s established ‘[major applications checklist](#)’ to achieve its aims, rather than create an additional process.

5.47 The use of the BHL design assessment toolkit is of most benefit if used as early as possible in the evolution of significant projects that are likely to be of public interest such as large-scale housing and mixed-use developments. The intent of this policy is that there will be a design assessment and review panel for all major planning applications.

5.48 To inform this policy, the Neighbourhood Plan team has undertaken two BHL assessments of local schemes, one ‘as built’ and one ‘off plan’. In both cases the schemes have been found wanting in design terms containing too many ‘red’ and ‘amber’ assessments on a number of fundamental design matters including:

- poor legibility
- too highways oriented with not enough focus on good street design for residents, cyclists and pedestrians
- poor connection with otherwise reasonably well considered green open spaces.

5.49 The Design and Access Statement should describe in its ‘Community Involvement Statement’ how the knowledge of the local community has been sought, positively considered and responded to in formulating the design of proposals. Where a proposal has not accommodated that knowledge, then the Statement should explain the reasons for not doing so.

Policy R9: Conserving Local Heritage Assets

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies Local Heritage Assets, as listed in Appendix D, by way of their local architectural and historic value.

Development proposals that may affect the significance of a Local Heritage Asset must take that significance into account in demonstrating that the scale of any proposed harm to, or loss of, the heritage asset is justified. The loss of the whole or part of a Local Heritage Asset will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that the new development will proceed within a year of the loss.

5.50 The policy identifies a number of ('non-designated') heritage assets in the parish that, whilst not statutorily listed, have some local heritage value for the purposes of applying NFDC saved Policy DM1 and NFNP Policy SP16 on the historic environment and §203 and §204 of the NPPF. The owners of the heritage assets properties will be notified of the proposed inclusion on this list and their responses will be considered in the Consultation Statement.

5.51 The assets have been identified from a number of sources and have been evaluated against the criteria advocated by Historic England in its 2021 guidance note. A description of the value of each asset is provided in the Appendix D list along with the source. The NFNPA is preparing its own Local Heritage List, which shares the same aims of this policy. Given both have used the same evaluation criteria, it is expected that the assets identified by the NP team that are located within the National Park will be added to the NFNPA list in due course.

Policy R10: Creating a Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Network

A. The Neighbourhood Plan designates a Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Network, as shown on the Nature Recovery Policy Map, for the purpose of promoting ecological connectivity, outdoor recreation and sustainable movement through the parish and into the National Park; helping to mitigate climate change. The Network comprises the town’s variety of green spaces, ancient woodland, trees and hedgerows, water bodies, assets of biodiversity value, children’s play areas and recreational playing fields.

B. Development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Network are required to have full regard to creating, maintaining and improving the Network in the design of their layouts, landscaping schemes and public open space and play provisions. Elsewhere, all proposals should protect and maintain trees and hedgerows; provide for the planting of new trees for flood management and carbon sequestration purposes; and include hedgerows and bulb and wildflower planting where it is compatible with the street scene. The wildlife corridors should also be maintained as dark corridors as far as possible to increase their value for nocturnal species.

C. The Policies Map shows those parts of the designated Network that are known or likely to have biodiversity value either as habitat areas; as hedgerows or lines of trees; or as streams and rivers. For the purpose of calculating Biodiversity Net Gain requirements development proposals located within or adjoining that part of the Network should anticipate achieving at least a medium distinctiveness multiplier score.

D. The Neighbourhood Plan designates Poulner Lakes as shown on the Policies Map, as a Biodiversity Net Gain offsetting site. Proposals for development that will adversely affect the function of the land for that purpose will be resisted.

5.52 Although the built-up area of the town area occupies a significant proportion of the designated neighbourhood area there are still important areas of historic and biodiverse countryside that surround it to the east and south. The town also has many green spaces and other assets throughout that built up area. Together its urban and countryside assets form a coherent green infrastructure network full of biodiversity, recreational and visual value. In turn, that network forms part of a much larger network extending into the National Park and Dorset. This policy therefore serves a number of closely related purposes aimed at protecting and improving the wealth of green infrastructure assets within the town and its surrounding countryside.

5.53 Firstly, Clause A of the policy defines the nature of that network at Ringwood and shows its scale on the Policies Map. It illustrates how extensive and well connected they are to function as effective habitat corridors, particularly between the River Avon corridor and the National Park. Within and on the edge of the town, green spaces such as the Bickerley Village Green, Carvers Recreation Ground, Jubilee Gardens, Dr Little’s Park, The Mount, Forestside Gardens, Poulner Lakes and the lines of street trees and of lengths of mature trees across many gardens are the most significant and extensive assets. However, there are many more extensive areas of green space at Moortown Lane and Hightown, smaller pockets of green space, and field boundary hedgerows in the countryside, that add to the overall biodiversity functionality and integrity of the network. It proposes the establishment of a network which includes two wildlife corridors to the south of the town, one south of Moortown Lane and the other through the Bisterne Estate, based on existing protected areas and connecting features, such as hedgerows.

5.54 Clause B then requires the network to be protected from harmful development and, where possible and relevant, development proposals in its vicinity to reflect its functionality in that location in the design of the scheme, notably the layout and landscape proposals.

5.55 Clause C responds to the biodiversity net gain (BNG) provisions of the Environment Act 2021, which will become a statutory part of plan making and development management in November 2023. The BNG Metric (currently in its 4.0 version) will provide the means for applicants to calculate the baseline biodiversity value of the application site in determining the net gain requirement of their proposals. The Policies Map makes a distinction between those parts of the Network that have, or are likely to have, existing biodiversity value, based on published mapped data and observation, and those that do not. Green infrastructure is multi-functional but some features – for example amenity and formal recreational land – are unlikely to have biodiversity value, or maybe less suited to improving that value by the nature of their use. NFDC already applies 10% BNG to major applications pursuant to Local Plan policy STR1 ‘Achieving sustainable development’, part (iii), with further details in the NFDC interim advice note [‘Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain’](#)

5.56 Clause C also relates to those parts of the Network of biodiversity value. Given it includes all defined Priority Habitats and semi-natural habitats, native hedgerows and trees and natural water bodies, the clause anticipates that the distinctiveness multiplier score (from very low to very high) will be at least medium.

5.57 Creating a vital green link between the Avon Valley and New Forest National Park is a fundamental objective of this policy. But, the Town Council has been keen to respond to the BNG provisions to plan positively for delivering biodiversity net gain (BNG) in the local area. The Parish Nature Recovery Strategy and Guidance report (published in the evidence base) tested the potential of those sites as it also anticipated they may have significant potential for future BNG offsetting projects.

5.58 The Parish Nature Recovery Strategy and Guidance report has been developed in conjunction with local wildlife experts and landowners and has landowner support.

Policy R11: Zero Carbon Buildings

A. All developments should be ‘zero carbon ready’ by design to minimise the amount of energy needed to heat and cool buildings through landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping.

B. Wherever feasible, all buildings should be certified to a Passivhaus or equivalent standard with a space heating demand of less than 15KWh/m²/year. Where schemes that maximise their potential to meet this standard by proposing the use of terraced and/or apartment building forms of plot size, plot coverage and layout that are different to those of the character area within which the proposal is located, this will be supported, provided it can be demonstrated that the scheme will not have a significant harmful effect on the character of the area.

C. All planning permissions granted for new and refurbished buildings should demonstrate that they have been tested to ensure the buildings will perform as predicted prior to occupation.

D. All planning applications for major development² are also required to be accompanied by a Whole Life-Cycle Carbon Emission Assessment, using a recognised methodology, to demonstrate actions taken to reduce embodied carbon resulting from the construction and use of the building over its entire life. Consideration should be given to resource efficiency at the outset and whether existing buildings can be re-used as part of the scheme to capture their embodied carbon.

E. An Energy Statement will be submitted to demonstrate compliance with the policy (except for householder applications). Applicants are directed to the Cotswold Net Zero Toolkit³ for guidance on matters to be addressed at pre-planning and initial design stage. The statement will demonstrate how opportunities to reduce the energy use intensity (EUI)

² Major Development is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF

of buildings over the plan period have been maximised in accordance with the energy hierarchy. Designers shall evaluate the operational energy use using realistic information on the intended use, occupancy and operation of the building to minimise any performance gap.

5.59 Ringwood people surveyed during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan were concerned about climate change and reducing our carbon footprint. There is strong support for new housing to be built to high environmental standards, especially since retrofitting existing properties is so difficult and expensive.

5.60 Analysis of EPC lodgements in 2021 for Ringwood and the New Forest showed that average energy use per lodgement in 2021 in Ringwood Parish was ~7% higher than New Forest Local Authority Area. The ‘energy use excess’ (2021 lodgement data) in Ringwood Parish compared to the average across the New Forest is ~17.1 kWh/m² pa. AECOM Housing Needs Assessment (Jan 2022) indicated that there are 6405 dwellings in Ringwood Parish. Using lodgement data as a proxy for all housing in Ringwood Parish and the figure of 6405 dwellings, then the ‘energy use excess’ of the parish is around 91000 kWh/m² pa. ‘Energy use excess’ in this context is the amount of energy currently used above the average for the New Forest. This indicates that there is a need for new housing stock to be constructed to much improved energy standards and in all likelihood, residents in existing properties are paying far more for their energy costs than otherwise should be the case.

5.61 Further information in support of the policy is set out in Appendix E. The policy is intended to provide information for applicants which reflects current best practice guidance. The policy complements NFDC Policy IMPL2 (non-residential), saved policy DM4 and NFNPA Policy SP1 and SP11

³ Applicants are directed to page 16 of the [Cotswold Net Zero toolkit](#) for guidance on matters to be addressed at pre-planning and initial design stage. The toolkit is made available by the Local Govt. Association under a ‘Creative Common Licence’

(including footnote 25) which share the same overall aim but predate the climate change policy development at national level over recent years, but where supplementary guidance by each planning authority has not yet been taken forward.

5.62 The policy is in five parts, the combination of which is intended to deliver a step change in the energy performance of all new and extended buildings in the town by encouraging and incentivising the use of the Passivhaus or equivalent method of building design. Along with the initial design stage assessment, it is anticipated that designers will demonstrate compliance using a design for performance methodology such as the Passivhaus Planning Package or CIBSE TM54 Operational Energy 'energy forecast' prepared by a suitably qualified consultant. Achieving highly energy efficient buildings through a process of design for performance will make a significant contribution to mitigating climate change in the parish.

5.63 Clause A of the policy requires developers to ensure they address the Government's climate change targets and energy performance at the very initial stages of design. 'Zero Carbon Ready' by design means making spatial decisions on layout and orientation of buildings at the outset to maximise the passive design benefits ('free heat') of a site and avoids leaving this to technical choices and assessment at the Building Regulation stage, by which time the opportunity may have been lost. Applicants are directed to the Net-Zero Toolkit created by Cotswold District Council and two partner councils, WODC and Forest of Dean District Council. The toolkit is available as a resource for private and public sector organisations to use and adopt.

5.64 Its Clause B incentivises all schemes, no matter what their intended use or size other than householder extensions, to use the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) or equivalent design methodology for all buildings. It is acknowledged however that it may not be feasible to do so on some sites or schemes for practical reasons e.g. orientation, topography, shading or cost reasons which should be explained in the Energy Statement.

5.65 In respect of scheme viability, any extra-over cost of delivering 'zero carbon ready' buildings (now less than 5%) will diminish to zero well within the period of this Plan, as per both Government Regulatory Impact Assessments and research by the Passivhaus Trust. The recent NFDC Draft Planning for Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document suggests a 2-6% increase in build costs and further states that UK home buyers are willing to pay a green premium. The principal focus of this policy is to ensure that expensive and unnecessary retrofit costs are not passed down to building occupiers in the future, particularly in an area which has relatively high property value to income ratios. Scheme viability will not therefore be acceptable as a reason for not applying an appropriate design for performance methodology. The compliance outputs of SBEM or other Building Regulations compliance tools are not suitable for energy forecasting estimates.

5.66 The policy acknowledges that there may sometimes be a trade-off between its objectives and local design policy. Although meeting these objectives ought not to compromise a scheme fitting in with the character of a local area, on occasions this may be the case. It therefore allows for some degree of flexibility in meeting the Ringwood Design Code and Design Guidance issued by both Planning Authorities, especially in terms of prevalent building orientation and density.

5.67 Proposals seeking to apply the PHPP must also be able to demonstrate that the Passivhaus standard can be achieved. Prior to commencement a 'pre-construction compliance check' to be completed by a Passivhaus Designer accredited by the Passive House Institute (PHI) will be required and secured by condition. Upon completion a Quality Approved Passivhaus certificate for each building will be required prior to occupation, again secured by condition.

5.68. Where a developer cannot or chooses not to use the Passivhaus or equivalent design for performance methodology clause C will apply. Guarantees for facilities related to energy generation and management should always be provided to the occupant.

5.69 In the absence of guidance covering whole life carbon assessment, Clause D requires major development proposals (i.e. those the NPPF defines as such, currently being 10 or more homes) to be accompanied by a Whole Life Carbon Emissions Assessment, the RICS methodology is preferred⁴. The assessment will enable the design team to understand and respond to the lifetime consequences of their design decisions and to design for adaptability, longevity and disassembly; contributing to resource efficiency (Clause A) and contributing to the 'circular economy'⁵. This requirement will be added to the Local Validation Checklists for outline and full planning applications applying to proposals in the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan area until such a time that there is a district-wide requirement.

5.70 Clause E requires an Energy Statement to be submitted to cover the following:

- an assessment of the proposal to minimise regulated and unregulated emissions, the embodied emissions and the emissions associated with maintenance, repair and replacement of the new building(s), as well as its dismantling, demolition and eventual material disposal
- a calculation of the energy use intensity and carbon emissions covered by the Future Homes Standard and Building Regulations and, separately, the energy demand and carbon emissions from any other part of the development that are not covered by the Future Homes Standard or Building Regulations

- the proposal to reduce carbon emissions beyond the Future Homes Standard and Building Regulations through the energy efficient design of the site, buildings and services
- the proposal to further reduce carbon emissions through the use of zero or low-emission decentralised energy where feasible
- the proposal to further reduce carbon emissions by maximising opportunities to produce and use renewable energy on-site, utilising storage technologies where appropriate
- the proposal for a demand-side response, specifically through installation of smart meters, minimising peak energy demand and promoting short-term energy storage
- an analysis of the expected cost to occupants associated with the proposed energy strategy

5.71 Every new build or redevelopment project in Ringwood provides an opportunity to make a difference and a contribution towards meeting our national climate change targets for 2050. This new information requirement need not be an unreasonable expectation of even the smallest schemes for new buildings.

⁴ <https://www.rics.org/uk/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/building-surveying/whole-life-carbon-assessment-for-the-built-environment/>

⁵ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/design_for_a_circular_economy_web.pdf

Net Zero Operational Carbon

Ten key requirements for new buildings

By 2030 all new buildings must operate at net zero to meet our climate change targets. This means that by 2025 all new buildings will need to be designed to meet these targets. This page sets out the approach to operational carbon that will be necessary to deliver zero carbon buildings. For more information about any of these requirements and how to meet them, please refer to the: UKGBC - Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework; BBP - Design for Performance initiative; RIBA - 2030 Climate Challenge; GH A - Net Zero Housing Project Map; CIBSE - Climate Action Plan; and, LETI - Climate Emergency Design Guide.

Low energy use

- 1** Total Energy Use Intensity (EUI) - Energy use measured at the meter should be equal to or less than:

 - **35 kWh/m²/yr** (GIA) for residential¹

For non-domestic buildings a minimum DEC B (40) rating should be achieved and/or an EUI equal to or less than:

 - **65 kWh/m²/yr** (GIA) for schools¹
 - **70 kWh/m²/yr** (NLA) or **55 kWh/m²/yr** (GIA) for commercial offices^{1,2}
- 2** Building fabric is very important therefore space heating demand should be less than **15 kWh/m²/yr** for all building types.

Measurement and verification

- 3** Annual energy use and renewable energy generation on-site must be reported and independently verified in-use each year for the first 5 years. This can be done on an aggregated and anonymised basis for residential buildings.

Reducing construction impacts

- 4** Embodied carbon should be assessed, reduced and verified post-construction.³



Low carbon energy supply

- 5** Heating and hot water should not be generated using fossil fuels.
- 6** The average annual carbon content of the heat supplied (gCO₂/kWh) should be reported.
- 7** On-site renewable electricity should be maximised.
- 8** Energy demand response and storage measures should be incorporated and the building annual peak energy demand should be reported.

Zero carbon balance

- 9** A carbon balance calculation (on an annual basis) should be undertaken and it should be demonstrated that the building achieves a net zero carbon balance.
- 10** Any energy use not met by on-site renewables should be met by an investment into additional renewable energy capacity off-site OR a minimum 15 year renewable energy power purchase agreement (PPA). A green tariff is not robust enough and does not provide 'additional' renewables.

Notes:

Note 1 - Energy use intensity (EUI) targets
The above targets include all energy uses in the building (regulated and unregulated) as measured at the meter and exclude on-site generation. They have been derived from: predicted energy use modelling for best practice; a review of the best performing buildings in the UK; and a preliminary assessment of the renewable energy supply for UK buildings. They are likely to be revised as more knowledge is available in these three fields. As heating and hot water is not generated by fossil fuels, this assumes an all electric building until other zero carbon fuels exist. kWh targets are the same as kWh/m²yr. Once other zero carbon heating fuels are available this metric will be adopted.

Note 2 - Commercial offices
With a typical net to gross ratio, 70 kWh/m² NLA/yr is equivalent to 55 kWh/m² GIA/yr. Building owners and developers are recommended to target a base building rating of 6 stars using the BBP's Design for Performance process based on HABERS.

Note 3 - Whole life carbon
It is recognised that operational emissions represent only one aspect of net zero carbon in new buildings. Reducing whole life carbon is crucial and will be covered in separate guidance.

Note 4 - Adaptation to climate change
Net zero carbon buildings should also be adapted to climate change. It is essential that the risk of overheating is managed and that cooling is minimised.

Developed in collaboration with:



Developed with the support of:



Policy R12: Encouraging Active and Healthy Travel

A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the existing Sustainable Travel Network and opportunities for improvements, as shown on the Active Travel Policy Map, for the purpose of prioritising active and healthy travel.

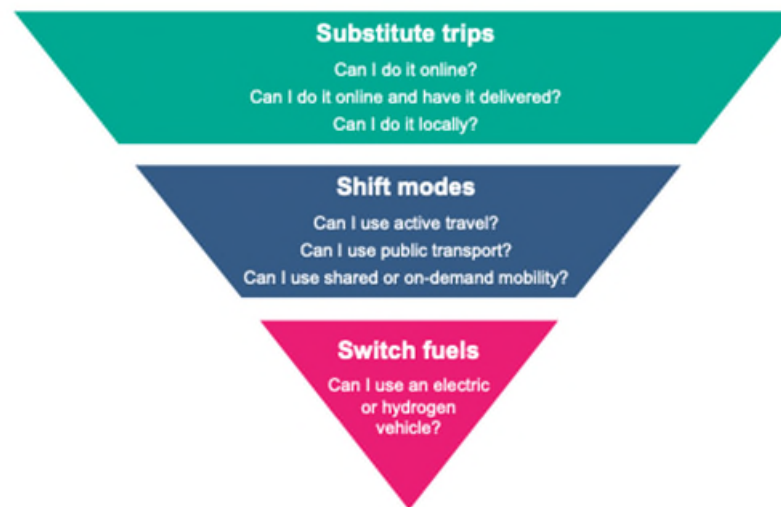
B. Development proposals on land that lies within or adjacent to the Network will be required, where practical, to provide opportunities for a more joined-up Network of walking and cycling routes to the town centre, local schools and community facilities and accessible green space by virtue of their layout, means of access and landscape treatment.

C. Proposals for major development (10 dwellings or above) should adopt the Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility Framework, as illustrated, and demonstrate how they have, in the following priority order:

- (i) sought to minimise the need to travel beyond the parish;**
- (ii) for longer trips, sought to encourage and enable the use of active, public and shared forms of transport; and,**
- (iii) for trips that must be made by car, sought to encourage and enable the use of zero emission vehicles.**

5.72 This policy embraces the principles of the Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework advocated in the Net Zero Transport report published by the Royal Town Planning Institute in 2021 ([Link](#)). The Framework adopts a place-based approach to net zero transport by focusing on solutions that create better places and healthier, happier, more resilient communities. It fits well with Hampshire County Council's draft Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and the emerging New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) which will encourage more local journeys to be undertaken on foot and by bike.

5.73 The SAM Framework objectives are critical to good planning, linking the imperative to reduce transport emissions with wider objectives related to decarbonisation, housing growth and nature recovery. This hierarchical approach (shown below) calls for measures that first focus on the role of place in reducing trips, before considering how to increase the proportion of the remaining trips that are taken by active, public and shared forms of transport.



5.74 The layout design of new development must also apply Manual for Streets best practice principles to create a permeable network of streets and spaces that support connections to local services and facilities in the Parish based on the principle of a '20 Minute Neighbourhood' while also enabling residents to access green space to meet the requirements of Natural England's Accessible Greenspace Standard (ANGSt). The overall aim being to support the physical and mental well-being of our community. For the avoidance of doubt, the network will not support or encourage access to internationally significant nature conservation sites.

5.75 The policy also maps a network of walking and cycling routes through the town to its boundaries where many routes continue to connect the town with the countryside and its neighbouring settlements. The aim of both is to raise awareness of the routes to encourage safe and convenient use, and to identify future opportunities to improve their connectivity, in line with NFDC Policy CCC2: Safe and Sustainable Travel and NFNPA Policies SP 54 'Transport Infrastructure' and SP55 'Access'.

5.76 An initial review of walking and cycling routes to schools was conducted as part of the Town Council's LCWIP work and is included in the evidence base.

6. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan policies will be implemented through the determination of planning applications for development in the Parish by the local planning authorities.

Development Management

6.2 The planning authority will use a combination of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies to inform and determine its planning application decisions. The Town Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications made in Ringwood and it will be made aware of any future planning applications or alterations to those applications by the planning authority. It will seek to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been identified and applied correctly by applicants and by officers in their decision reports.

Local Infrastructure Improvements

6.3 Where opportunities arise through Section 106 agreements (or through the Community Infrastructure Levy) to secure financial contributions to invest in improving local infrastructure, the Town Council propose that the priorities for investment of its share of future Community Infrastructure Levy received from the local planning authority are applied to improvements to the public realm and to community infrastructure such as Castleman Trailway, Carvers Recreation Ground (including replacement facilities for grounds staff and equipment) and the eight Opportunity Areas highlighted in the Ringwood Strategic Master Plan in Appendix A

Other Non-Planning Matters

6.4 During the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, there have been many ideas for improving or addressing current problems in the town that lie outside the scope of the land use planning system to control. The

Town Council has noted these issues and will take them forward through its day-to-day business and in partnership with the local community, the New Forest District Council and National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council and other relevant parties.

These include:

- Market Place/High Street Shared Space proposals
- Other Public Realm improvement projects
- Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Net Gain improvements
- Improvements to green the urban environment and street scene through tree planting and wildflower and bulb planting on public and private land including roadside verges
- Active travel improvements for non-car users, including walking and cycling routes, pedestrian and cycle friendly zones and Safe Routes to Schools, including Poulner Schools and other LCWIP type projects
- Community Led Housing

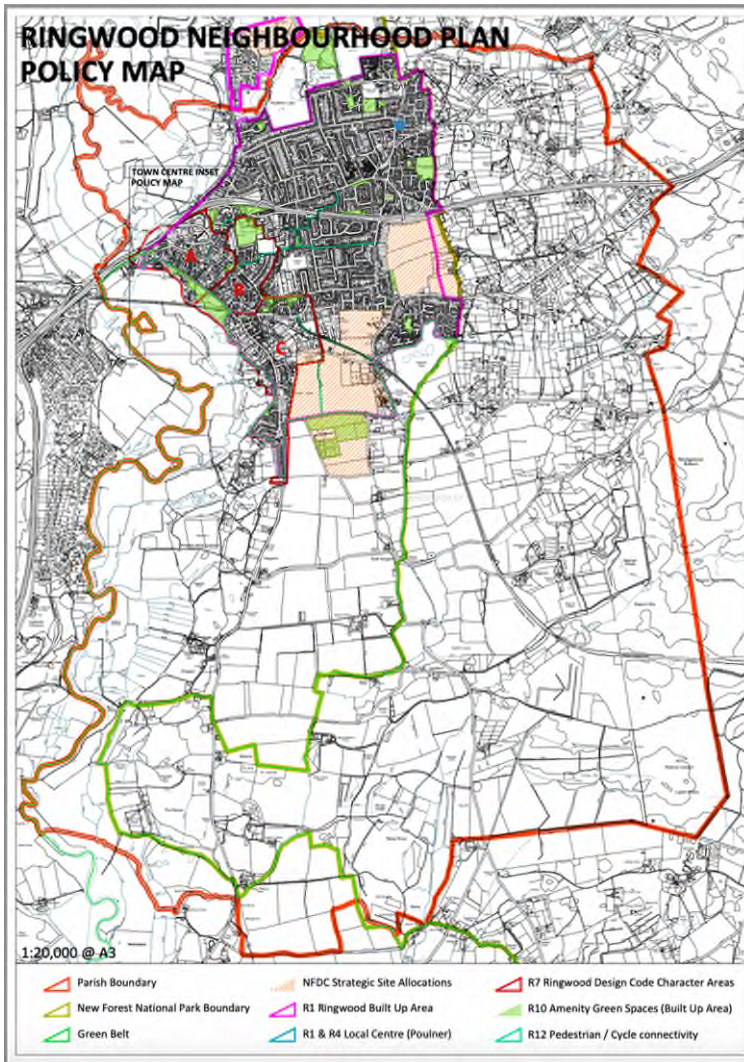
Monitoring and Reviewing the Plan

6.5 The Town Council will endeavour to monitor the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Plan in informing decisions on planning applications and in informing the emerging Local Plans. It will consider a first review of the plan once that Local Plan has been adopted, responding to any policy prompts as necessary. Otherwise, in line with best practice, it will look to review the plan on a five yearly cycle so that its contents remain valid and up-to-date.

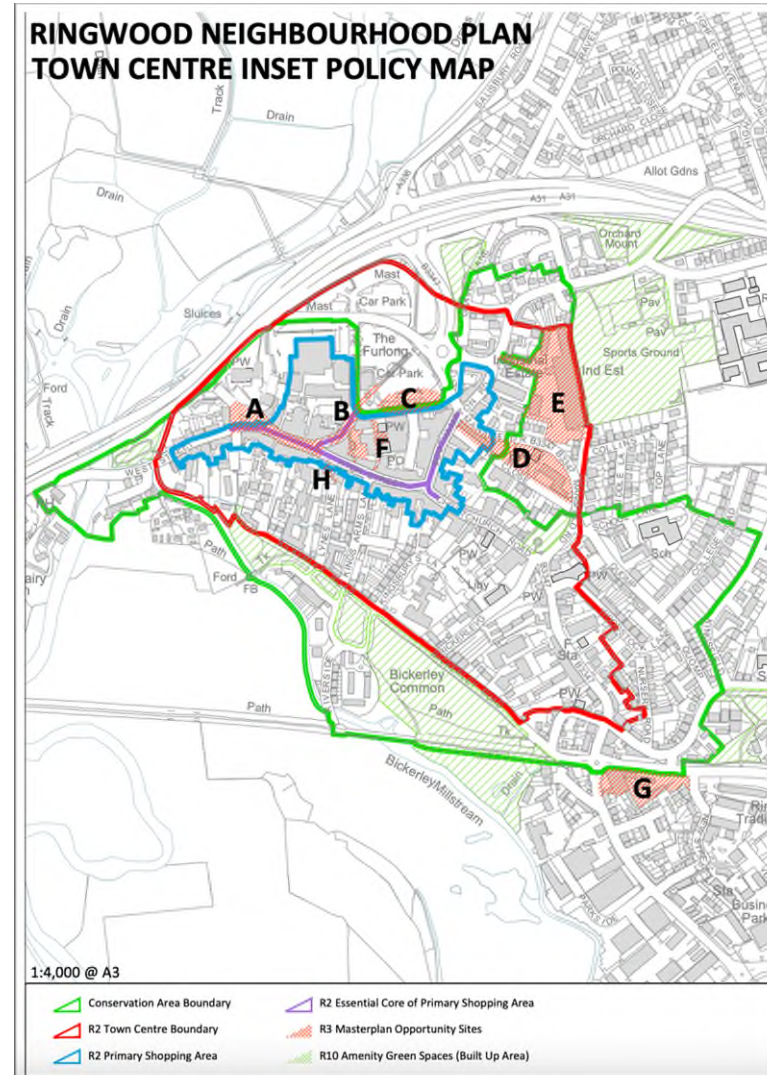
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POLICIES MAP and INSETS

RINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICY MAP

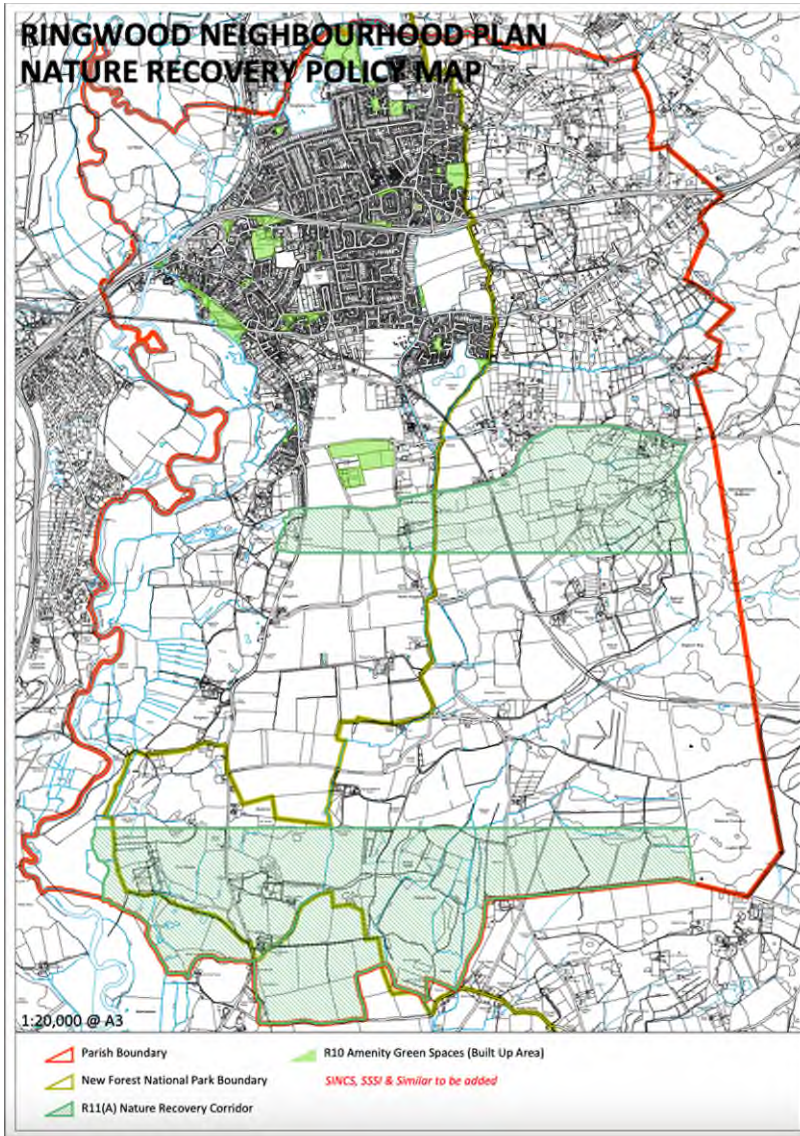


TOWN CENTRE INSET POLICY MAP

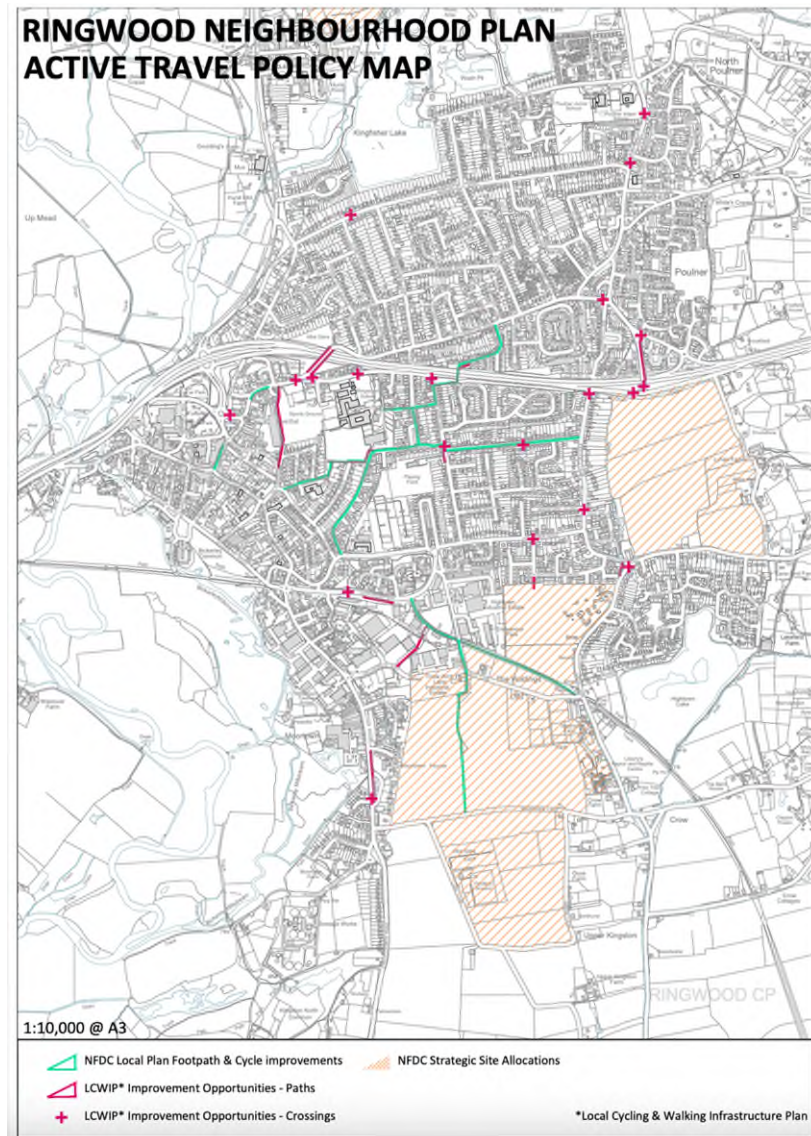


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NATURE RECOVERY POLICY MAP



ACTIVE TRAVEL POLICY MAP



APPENDIX A: RINGWOOD STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN (POLICY R3) (Published separately due to document size)

APPENDIX B: RINGWOOD DESIGN GUIDANCE AND CODES (POLICY R7) (Published separately due to document size)

APPENDIX C: RINGWOOD LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS SPD (POLICY R7) (Published separately due to document size)

APPENDIX D: LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS LIST (POLICY R9) (Published separately due to document size)

APPENDIX E – ZERO CARBON BUILDINGS BACKGROUND NOTE (POLICY R11)

POLICY BACKGROUND

E.01 In respect of the direction of national policy, the UK Parliament declared an environment and climate emergency in May 2019. Both NFDC and the NFNPA have made similar declarations. The Climate Change Act 2008 is the basis for the UK’s approach to tackling and responding to climate change. It requires that emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are reduced and that climate change risks are prepared for. The Act also establishes the framework to deliver on these requirements and commits the UK government by law to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to ‘net zero’ by 2050.

E.02 The Energy White Paper published in December 2020 set out the government’s Vision and 10-point transition plan for how the UK will reach the UK target of ‘net zero’ carbon emissions by 2050. The White Paper confirms the government’s intention to ensure significant strides are made to improve building energy performance to meet this target. This means that by 2030 all new buildings must operate at ‘net zero’, the means by which this can be achieved is described in the diagram overleaf. This approach unequivocally focuses on the energy hierarchy and the role of post occupancy monitoring and verification to ensure buildings perform in the way they are designed.

⁶ Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan Partial Update Inspectors Report 13 Dec 2022 paragraphs 83 – 86. “84. *The WMS 2015 has clearly been overtaken by events and does not reflect Part L of the Building Regulations, the Future Homes Standard,*

E.03 The consultation on the ‘Future Buildings Standard’ announced in January 2021 aims to ‘radically improve’ the energy performance of new buildings, in respect of homes ensuring they are ‘zero carbon ready’ by 2025. This means having high levels of energy efficiency and fabric performance that produce 75 to 80 per cent lower carbon emissions than houses built to current standards, avoiding the need for any further retrofitting to the building fabric while at the same time reducing the occupant’s exposure to future high energy costs.

E.04 Fundamentally, this policy is intended to promote good design practice within the framework of National Planning Policy, it does not set energy standards. The Government has, however, confirmed in its response to the Future Homes Standard consultation that they do not intend to amend the Planning and Energy Act 2008 and as a result the Written Ministerial Statement of 2015 and the setting of energy efficiency standards at the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan level is permissible. This position has been found sound in a recent Local Plan examination⁶ and the policy considered to meet the Basic Conditions at a recent Neighbourhood Plan examination⁷.

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or the legally binding commitment to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.”

⁷ Ivers NP Decision Statement [Link](#) (South Bucks)

GLOSSARY

There are various technical terms used in this document and in the planning process. This glossary provides definitions to a range of such terms.

Affordable housing – Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Article 4 direction – A direction restricting permitted development rights within a specified area. They are often used in conservation areas to provide protection for things like windows, doors, chimneys, etc.

Biodiversity – The degree of variation of life forms within a particular ecosystem. Biodiversity is a measure of the health of an ecosystem. Human activity generally tends to reduce biodiversity, so special measures often need to be taken to offset the impact of development on natural habitats.

Baseline biodiversity value – A snapshot of an area’s biodiversity which acts as a reference for comparing changes.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – An approach to development and/or land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

Brownfield land – Land that has been previously developed.

Building for a Healthy Life – A technique for assessing the quality of housing proposals using 20 criteria including sustainability, urban design and social/community factors.

Carbon sequestration – A natural or artificial process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and held in solid or liquid form.

Change of use – A material change in the use of land or buildings that is of significance for planning purposes e.g. from retail to residential.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their areas. Money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure such as transport schemes, schools and leisure centres.

Conditions – Planning conditions are provisions attached to the granting of planning permission.

Conservation area – An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which is preserved and enhanced by local planning policies and guidance.

Cooler streets – Urban areas kept cooler in summer by designing in shade including trees that also cool the air naturally. So like walking through a wood rather than on a beach

Core strategy – A development plan document forming part of a local authority’s local plan, which sets out a vision and core policies for the development of an area.

Design and access statement – A report accompanying a planning application, which describes design principles of a development such as layout, townscape characteristics, scale, landscape design and appearance.

Development – Legal definition is “the carrying out of building, mining, engineering or other operations in, on, under or over land, and the making of any material change in the use of buildings or other land.”

Development management (previously known as development control) – The

process of administering and making decisions on different kinds of planning application.

Development plan – A document setting out the local planning authority’s policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the area.

Dormitory town – A place where people live but go to work in another town or city.

Extra-over cost - Additional sum of money allowed for items of work, normally used where the work has become slightly different from that agreed.

Evidence base – The evidence upon which a development plan is based, principally the background facts and statistics about an area, and the views of stakeholders.

First Homes – A scheme designed to help first time buyers onto the property ladder, by offering new homes at a discount of at least 30% against the market value and at a price no higher than £250,000.

Flood plain – An area of low-lying ground adjacent to a river, formed mainly of river sediments and prone to flooding.

Green belt – A designated band of land around urban areas, designed to contain urban sprawl.

Green infrastructure – Landscape, biodiversity, trees, allotments, parks, open spaces and other natural assets.

Green space – Those parts of an area which are occupied by natural, designed or agricultural landscape as opposed to built development; open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments, and the like.

Housing associations – Not-for-profit organisations providing homes mainly to those in housing need.

Independent examination – An examination of a proposed neighbourhood plan, carried out by an independent person, set up to consider whether a neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions required.

Infrastructure – Basic services necessary for development to take place e.g. roads, electricity, water, education and health facilities.

Listed buildings – Any building or structure which is included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

Local authority – The administrative body that governs local services such as education, planning and social services.

Local list – A list produced by a local authority to identify buildings and structures of special local interest which are not included in the statutory list of listed buildings.

Local plan - The name for the collection of documents prepared by a local planning authority for the use and development of land and for changes to the transport system. Can contain documents such as development plans and statements of community involvement.

Local planning authority – Local government body responsible for formulating planning policies and controlling development; a district council, metropolitan council, a county council, a unitary authority or national park authority.

Local transport plan – Plans that set out a local authority’s policies on transport on a five yearly basis.

Material considerations – Factors which are relevant in the making of planning decisions, such as sustainability, impact on residential amenity, design and traffic impacts.

Mixed use – The development of a single building or site with two or more complementary uses.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – The government policy document adopted in

March 2012 (and last updated July 2021) intended to make national planning policy and guidance less complex and more accessible. The National Planning Policy Framework introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It gives five guiding principles of sustainable development: living within the planet's means; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

Neighbourhood area – The local area in which a neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order can be introduced.

Neighbourhood plan – A planning document created by a parish or town council, which sets out the vision for the neighbourhood area, and contains policies for the development and use of land in the area. Neighbourhood plans must be subjected to an independent examination to confirm that they meet legal requirements, and then to a local referendum. If approved by a majority vote of the local community, the neighbourhood plan will then form part of the statutory development plan.

Net zero – A target of completely negating the amount of greenhouse gases produced by human activity, to be achieved by reducing emissions and implementing methods of

absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Passivhaus – A standard for energy efficiency in a building designed to result in very low energy usage for heating and lighting.

Passive surveillance – Enhanced visibility when building properties, streets, transport hubs and retail settings to deter some offenders from committing crime.

Permitted development – Certain minor building works that don't need planning permission e.g. a boundary wall below a certain height.

Policy – A concise statement of the principles that a particular kind of development proposal should satisfy in order to obtain planning permission.

Planning obligation – Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, secured by a local planning authority through negotiations with a developer to offset the public cost of permitting a development proposal. Sometimes developers can self-impose obligations to pre-empt objections to planning permission being granted. They cover things like highway improvements or open space provision. See also CIL.

Planning permission – Formal approval granted by a council allowing a proposed development to proceed.

PV panels – Photovoltaic panels, often referred to as solar panels, which produce electricity from sunlight.

Public open space – Open space to which the public has free access.

Public realm – Areas of space usually in town and city centres where the public can circulate freely, including streets, parks and public squares.

Qualifying body – Either a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum, which can initiate the process of neighbourhood planning.

Referendum – A vote by which the eligible population of an electoral area may decide on a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders are made by a referendum of the eligible voters within a neighbourhood area.

Regeneration - Upgrading an area through social, physical and economic improvements.

Retail – The process of selling single or small numbers of items directly and in person to customers. The use category defined as Class

A1 in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

Retrofit – To add (a component or accessory) to something that did not have it when manufactured.

Rural – Areas of land which are generally not urbanised; usually with low population densities and a high proportion of land devoted to agriculture.

Section 106 – see Planning obligation.

Sequential test – A principle for making a planning decision based on developing certain sites or types of land before others, for example, developing brownfield land before greenfield sites, or developing sites within town centres before sites outside town centres.

SSSI - Site of special scientific interest – A protected area designated as being of special interest by virtue of its flora, fauna, geological or geomorphological features. SSSIs are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by the official nature conservation

body for the particular part of the UK in question.

Spatial planning – A wider view of planning, which involves co-ordination and integration across different sectors such as transport and industry. Brings together all policies and programmes which have an impact on the environment in which you work, live or play.

Strategic policy – A policy that is essential for the delivery of a strategy, for example, the overall scale and distribution of housing and employment in an area.

Supplementary planning document – Provides detailed thematic or site-specific guidance explaining or supporting the policies in the local plan.

Sustainable development – An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment or natural resources. Development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Townscape – The pattern and form of urban development; the configuration of built forms, streets and spaces.

Tenure – The terms and conditions under which land or property is held or occupied, e.g. five year leasehold, freehold owner occupation, etc.

Urban – Having the characteristics of a town or a city; an area dominated by built development.

Use class – The legally defined category into which the use of a building or land falls (see Use classes order).

Use classes order – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) is the statutory instrument that defines the categories of use of buildings or land for the purposes of planning legislation. Planning permission must be obtained to change the use of a building or land to another class.

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Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan – Decision Statement (March 2024)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 New Forest District Council has a statutory duty to assist local communities in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders. As the planning authority for the area outside the National Park, the Council is also required to support draft Neighbourhood Plans through the Examination process towards local Referendum.
- 1.2 The draft Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan was submitted for independent Examination on 21st November 2023 and the Examiner's Report was issued on 22nd February 2024. Under the requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the District Council must: (i) decide what action to take in response to each recommendation made in the Examiner's Report; and (ii) publish their decision and the reasons for it in a 'Decision Statement'.
- 1.3 This statement confirms that the modifications proposed by the Examiner's report have been accepted, the draft Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan has been altered as a result of it; and that this plan may now proceed to referendum.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan relates to the area that was designated by New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority in February 2021. This 'Neighbourhood Area' corresponds with the Ringwood Parish boundary and includes land within the remit of both New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority.
- 2.2 Following the submission of the draft Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan to New Forest District Council and the National Park Authority, the Plan was publicised and representations were invited for a 6-week period, closing at the end of July 2023.

- 2.3 David Hogger BA MSc MRTPI MCIHT was appointed by New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority – with the agreement of Ringwood Council - to undertake the examination of the draft Neighbourhood Plan and to prepare a report of the independent examination.
- 2.4 The Examiner’s Report (February 2024) concludes that subject to the modifications set out in Table 1 below, the draft Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions. The Examiner recommends that the Plan, once modified, should proceed to Referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements. The Examiner also concluded that the Referendum area does not need to be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates.
- 3. Decision**
- 3.1 As outlined above, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) require the District Council to outline what action to take in response to the recommendations made in the Examiner’s Report.
- 3.2 New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority and Ringwood Town Council have considered each of the recommendations made in the Examiner’s Report. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the planning authorities (New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority) to decide what modifications should be made to the Neighbourhood Plan. Having considered each of the recommendations made by the Examiner’s report (and the reasons for them), New Forest District Council has decided to accept the modifications to the draft Plan. Table 1 on the following pages outline the alterations to be made to the draft Plan under paragraph 12(6) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act (as applied by Section 38A of 2004 Act) in response to each of the Examiner’s recommendations.

Table 1 – Modifications

Report Ref.	Examiner’s recommended modification	Examiner’s Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
<u>GENERAL</u>			
PM1	Throughout the document. “Refer to the December 2023 version of the NPPF and update paragraph references where they have changed (see paragraph 4.8 my report for an indication in this regard)”.	The references to NPPF paragraphs are now out-of-date because a revised version of the NPPF was published in December 2023. It is important that references to the NPPF reflect the contents of the most recent edition. recommend that all references to the NPPF in the RNP relate to the December 2023 version.	Accept modification. Provides accuracy.
PM2	Include in the Glossary: Gentle Densification – increasing the density of a proposed housing development to meet housing needs, whilst guarding against detracting from the character of the particular area.	There are two references in the policy to ‘gentle densification’ but it may not be clear to the reader exactly what this means. I therefore recommend that an appropriate explanation is given in the Glossary.	Accept modification. This provides a useful explanation of the term.
<u>SECTION 5 – VISION, OBJECTIVES AND LAND USE POLICIES</u>			
PM3	Page 18 Delete: (Green Belt)	Paragraph 5.4 refers to Green Belt but not all the countryside that surrounds the town is in the Green Belt. This is misleading and therefore I recommend that the reference to Green Belt should be deleted.	Accept modification. Reflects the factual position.
PM4	Policy R2, Page 19	The District Council suggests a strengthening of clause C iv) which I agree is necessary for clarity.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
	<p>Modify clause C iv) to read:</p> <p>The proposed use and associated works would not harm the historic interest and or character of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.</p>		
PM5	<p>Policy R3, Page 21</p> <p>Add a sentence to clause B as follows:</p> <p>The opportunity areas are:</p> <p>Ringwood Market Place;</p> <p>Furlong Drove, Meeting House Lane, Rear of 56 High Street and service yard, Northumberland Court;</p> <p>Bus Stops on Meeting House Lane and the Furlong Car Park;</p> <p>Properties to the north of The Close;</p> <p>Carvers Trading Estate;</p> <p>Pedlars Walk Court;</p>	<p>Eight opportunity areas are identified in the RNP and having visited them I consider them all to be justified. In the interests of clarity, however, it would be beneficial to actually name the areas in the policy itself.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Strengthens the policy and provides clarity.</p>

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
	<p>Ringwood Trading Estate; and Lynes Lane Court.</p>		
PM6	<p>Page 21 Paragraph 5.19</p> <p>Add the following to paragraph 5.19: The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and as such, a Flood Risk Assessment may be required as part of the planning process for any development coming forward. To be clear, the policy does not allocate this site. Applicants will therefore also need to demonstrate that the sequential test, and where relevant the exception test, has been met.</p>	<p>There is currently no reference to the issue of flood risk in the Town Centre Opportunity Areas. This is an important issue in the town and therefore I recommend in PM6 and PM7, that a reference to flood risk is included in relation to Opportunity Area A (Ringwood Market Place) and Opportunity Area G (Ringwood Trading Estate).</p>	<p>Accept modification. Aids effectiveness of the plan.</p>
PM7	<p>Page 23 Paragraph 5.25</p> <p>Add the following to paragraph 5.19: The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and as such, a Flood Risk Assessment may be required as part of the planning process for any development coming forward. To be clear, the policy does not allocate this site. Applicants will therefore also need to</p>	<p>There is currently no reference to the issue of flood risk in the Town Centre Opportunity Areas. This is an important issue in the town and therefore I recommend in PM6 and PM7, that a reference to flood risk is included in relation to Opportunity Area A (Ringwood Market Place) and Opportunity Area G (Ringwood Trading Estate).</p>	<p>Accept modification. Aids effectiveness of the plan.</p>

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
	demonstrate that the sequential test, and where relevant the exception test, has been met.		
PM8	<p>Page 24</p> <p>Policy R4</p> <p>Modify the start of clause D to read:</p> <p>Where evidence suggests clearly demonstrates that a shop does not fulfil a function</p>	The approach in policy R4 accords with advice in the NPPF. However, in order to strengthen the policy and provide clarity for the decision maker, I recommend, in PM8, a modification to clause D.	Accept modification. Strengthens policy.
PM9	<p>Page 26</p> <p>Policy R5</p> <p>Modify Policy R5 to read:</p> <p>Provision should be made for a high proportion of small dwellings, particularly those with one and two bedrooms, in schemes of residential development where this can be achieved without detriment to the amenities and character of the surrounding area and neighbouring properties. The number of small dwellings should be greater than 50% of the total in schemes of five or more dwellings.</p>	The policy does not establish what is meant by 'a high proportion' of small dwellings. The accompanying paragraph (5.33) to Policy R5 states that the figure is 'greater than 50% of schemes of five or more dwellings'. I consider that this is not helpful to the decision maker and that the policy itself should clearly establish what is required. On that basis I recommend, in PM9, that additional clarity is provided	Accept modification. Strengthens the policy and provides clarity.

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
PM10	<p>Page 27</p> <p>Paragraph 5.39:</p> <p>Delete all of paragraph 5.39</p>	<p>The paragraph reads to me as a 'policy' and its inclusion in the supporting text may cause confusion to the decision maker, with regard to its status. As supporting text, it would carry comparatively little weight in the decision-making process. Secondly, there is no 'strategic' policy' in the New Forest District Local Plan on which to 'hang' this 'requirement' and the Town Council's approach is not consistent with the aims of New Forest District Local Plan</p>	<p>Accept modification. Provides clarity.</p>
PM11	<p>Modify the first sentence of the policy to read:</p> <p>"All major development with a residential component of 10 or more dwellings should apply the"</p>	<p>In the interests of clarity for the decision maker, I consider a reference should be made in the policy to the fact that this relates to development of 10 or more dwellings.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Provides clarity.</p>
PM12	<p>Page 31</p> <p>Policy R9, paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D:</p> <p>Delete <u>all</u> of Policy R9, paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D.</p>	<p>In order to meet the Basic Conditions, I need to be confident that the policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan and that it has regard to national policies and advice. I currently do not have that confidence and therefore I recommend the deletion of Policy R9, its supporting text in paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D.</p>	<p>Accept modification. To meet Basic Conditions test.</p>

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
PM13	<p>Page 34</p> <p>Policy R11</p> <p>Modify the start of clause E to read: An Energy A Climate Change Statement will be submitted</p>	<p>The need to achieve sustainable and energy efficient development is embedded in national policy, and I am satisfied that Policy R11 appropriately reflects current advice on the issue. For the purpose of accuracy, I commend a focused change to the title of the Statement referred to at the start of clause E of the policy.</p>	<p>Accept modification. For greater clarity.</p>
PM14	<p>Page 38</p> <p>Policy R12</p> <p>Modify the start of clause A to read: The Neighbourhood Plan Policy Map identifies the existing sustainable Travel Network and</p>	<p>A Sustainable Travel Network has been identified and opportunities for improvements are shown on the Active Travel Policy Map. However, clause A of the policy does not refer specifically to the Policy Map and I consider it would assist the decision maker if such a reference was included.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Strengthens the policy and provides clarity.</p>
PM15	<p>Page 38 Paragraph 5.72</p> <p>Add to the Glossary a definition of 'Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework' to read: A tool to help planners and designers prioritise interventions in the following order:</p> <p>- Substitute Trips: Replace the need to travel beyond your community;</p>	<p>In the interests of clarity a brief explanation of the Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework should be included in the Glossary.</p>	<p>Accept modification. For improved clarity.</p>

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
	<p>- Shift Modes: For longer trips, use active public and shared forms of transport;</p> <p>- Switch Fuels: For trips that must be made by car, ensure the vehicle is zero emission.</p>		
<u>Appendix B – Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code</u>			
PM16	<p>Page 35 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code</p> <p>Modify start of guideline iii to read:</p> <p>Street design must incorporate opportunities for landscaping (street trees, gardens and green verges) Modify last part of guideline vi to read: ... whilst traffic calming measures which might include like raised tables or crossings, should be introduced along the carriageway an integral part of street design</p>	<p>The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Provides clarity.</p>
PM17	<p>Page 37 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code:</p> <p>Modify guideline iii by inserting and car ports after garages in first sentence.</p>	<p>The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Provides clarity.</p>

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
PM18	<p>Page 39 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code:</p> <p>Add a clause v to the guideline to read:</p> <p>Space to the sides of car parking spaces is often needed for access to rear gardens and/or to outbuildings and for cycle and bin access.</p>	<p>The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Provides clarity.</p>
PM19	<p>Pages 39 and 40 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code:</p> <p>Figures 23 (page 39) and 26 (page 40) should be modified because currently they indicate a sub-standard access, impractical planting and inadequate space in front of the garage.</p>	<p>The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Provides clarity.</p>
PM20	<p>Page 56 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code :</p> <p>Delete the first sentence of the image caption:</p> <p>The average building height within the town is between 2-3 storeys.</p>	<p>The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Provides clarity.</p>

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	New Forest District Council Decision
PM21	Page 9: Add a new paragraph 2.13 to read: Some of the Plans in this document may be difficult to decipher because of their scale but they are all available electronically on the Town Council's web-site at https://www.ringwood.gov.uk/	Some of the plans in the document lack clarity but the Town Council provided me with electronic versions of the Maps which were easier to interpret. If reliance is to be placed on the electronic versions, then it would be helpful if a reference to their significance and how they can be accessed should be included in Chapter 1.	Accept modification. To aid legibility of the document.
PM22	Page 41 Policy Map: Remove the built-up area boundary and the strategic site allocation boundary at Blashford.	In the interests of accuracy the built up area boundary at Blashford should be removed from the Policy Map, as well as the strategic site allocation, as they both fall outside the boundary of the RNP.	Accept modification. Provides accuracy.

Cont.

New Forest District Council, the National Park Authority and Ringwood Town Council have also identified further minor amendments (in addition to the modifications recommended in the Examiner’s Report). Neither of these affect the ‘Basic Condition’ assessment and are factual updates to reflect the status of the final Neighbourhood Plan that will be going to Referendum. For clarity this ‘Decision Statement’ provides these amendments (as set out in Table 2 below).

Table 2 –

Examiner’s Report Extract	Commentary	NFDC Decision
<p>Minor Amendments:</p> <p>Amendments to the text can be made consequential to the recommended modifications, alongside any other minor non-material changes, factual up-dates, or corrections if there is agreement between RTC, NFDC and NFNPA. For example, there are a number of up-dates required regarding the stage in the evolution of the RNP that has now been reached and other contextual information that is no longer current (e.g. paragraph 3.5 of the Plan).</p>	<p>Amendments to:</p> <p>Front cover: minor amendments to reflect the fact that this is the referendum version of the Plan.</p> <p>Page 2: factual updates will required to reflect the fact that the Plan is now in its final version.</p> <p>Page 3: Contents page: Deletion of reference to Appendix D Local Heritage Assessment, and rename Appendix E to Appendix D</p> <p>Page 5: List of Policies: Delete reference to Policy R9 and policy numbering of the remaining policies (currently R10 – R12) will need to be updated and moved one digit forward.</p> <p>Page 7 - Paras 1.6–1.7: Revised text as follows:</p> <p>1.6 In addition, the Town Council has demonstrated to an independent examiner that it has successfully engaged with the local community in preparing the Plan.</p>	<p>Factual updates required to reflect the changes to the document and the latest position/status of the Plan.</p>

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	<p>1.7 A revised version of the plan reflecting the recommendations from the independent examiner will be the subject of a public referendum on the proposed date of 4th July 2023. This version of the plan, the policy maps and its evidence base can be found on the Ringwood Town Council website https://www.ringwood.gov.uk/</p> <p>Page 7 - Para 1.10: Delete “The Next Steps” and Paragraph 1.10.</p> <p>Page 7 - Para 1.11: Delete “Consultation” and Paragraph 1.11</p> <p>Page 10 - Para 3.5: Delete the whole paragraph</p> <p>Page 13 - Para 3.11: update to reflect the fact that NFDC has now decided to proceed with a full Local Plan Review, and delete reference to para 3.5 which is proposed to be deleted.</p> <p>Page 33: Para 5.55: updates to reflect and reference the latest legal requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>Page 43: Remove reference to Appendix D</p>	
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