

NOTICE OF MEETING

Meeting:	CABINET
Date and Time:	WEDNESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 10.00 AM
Place:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - APPLETREE COURT, BEAULIEU ROAD, LYNDHURST, SO43 7PA
Enquiries to:	Email: democratic@nfdc.gov.uk Karen Wardle Tel: 023 8028 5071

PUBLIC INFORMATION:

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 are welcome to attend this meeting. The seating capacity of our Council Chamber public gallery is limited under fire regulations to 22.

Members of the public can watch this meeting live, or the subsequent recording, on the [Council's website](#). Live-streaming and recording of meetings is not a statutory requirement and whilst every endeavour will be made to broadcast our meetings, this cannot be guaranteed. Recordings remain available to view for a minimum of 12 months.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Members of the public may speak in accordance with the Council's [public participation scheme](#):

- (a) on items within the Cabinet's terms of reference which are not on the public agenda; and/or
- (b) on individual items on the public agenda, when the Chairman calls that item. Speeches may not exceed three minutes.

Anyone wishing to attend the meeting, or speak in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme, should contact the name and number shown above no later than 12.00 noon on Friday, 30 January 2026.

Kate Ryan
Chief Executive

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

AGENDA

Apologies

1. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

2. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025 as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive any public participation in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme.

5. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FEEDBACK VISIT FINAL REPORT
(Pages 5 - 22)

6. LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - APPROVAL OF SPATIAL OPTIONS AND POLICY DIRECTION DOCUMENT (Pages 23 - 298)

7. DRAFT NEW FOREST CREATIVE AND CULTURAL FRAMEWORK
(Pages 299 - 322)

8. CORPORATE PLAN: KEY PERFORMANCE DATA FOR QUARTER 2 2025-2026
(Pages 323 - 352)

9. FINANCIAL MONITORING (BASED ON PERFORMANCE APRIL TO DECEMBER 2025 INCLUSIVE) (Pages 353 - 364)

10. COMMUNITY GRANT FUNDING 2026/27 (Pages 365 - 390)

11. ASSET MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME AND GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27 (Pages 391 - 404)

12. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27 (Pages 405 - 420)

13. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - SCHEME TO APPLY FROM 1 APRIL 2026
(Pages 421 - 424)

To:

Councillors

Jill Cleary (Chairman)
Steve Davies (Vice-Chairman)
Geoffrey Blunden

Councillors

Jeremy Heron
Dan Poole
Derek Tipp

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Cabinet – 4 February 2026

Corporate peer challenge feedback visit final report

Purpose	For Information
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The report presents the Local Government Association’s (LGA) progress update report following the initial December 2024 Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) and associated action plan.</p> <p>The progress review is an integral part of the CPC process and took place on 6 November 2025 with all the original peer team returning after a period of significant change for local government following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper.</p> <p>Peer team feedback included recognition of the many achievements since the original visit and acknowledgment that the council has made good progress against the CPC recommendations. The team noted that staff continue to enjoy working at the council with comments that they feel appreciated.</p>
Recommendation(s)	<p>Cabinet is asked to:</p> <p>1. Note the LGA’s feedback report</p>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	Recommendations support the continuous improvement focus of the corporate peer challenge, including the council’s key strategic priorities within the Corporate Plan.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jill Cleary – Leader of the Council
Strategic Director(s)	Kate Ryan – Chief Executive

Officer Contact	Rebecca Drummond Assistant director – transformation 023 8028 5080 rebecca.drummond@nfdc.gov.uk
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Introduction and background

1. In December 2024 NFDC invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to carry out a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). Over three days, a team of peers from other authorities and representatives from the LGA visited the council to gather evidence, information, and views on the council’s performance.
2. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive with the peer team making ten recommendations for improvement which formed the basis of a CPC action plan reported to Cabinet in March 2025.
3. Integral to the CPC process is a progress review within twelve months of the original visit. This was undertaken on 6 November 2025 by the original peer team and included 16 meetings and speaking to over 40 people to assess progress against the recommendations and approved action plan.
4. A final follow up report assessing the councils progress towards the recommendations is presented at Appendix 1.

Current context

5. The follow up review provided an opportunity to reflect on progress since the original CPC visit and to considered emerging challenges and opportunities.
6. The review was conducted against a backdrop of significant change for local government, with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Hampshire and Solent’s inclusion in the Devolution Priority Programme shaping the council’s strategic context.
7. The report acknowledges that NFDC has engaged proactively in these discussions, with senior leadership playing leading roles, while maintaining focus on internal priorities.

Achievements and success

8. Despite the challenging environment, the peer team acknowledged many significant achievements and good progress against the

recommendations and action plan.

9. The waste-service roll out was recognised as the most significant operational transformation in the organisation's history, supported by the opening of a new depot at Hardley, the culmination of a decade long project.
10. Preparations for the forthcoming housing regulatory inspection have been robust, with improvements in tenant satisfaction, increasing by 3% from the previous year, and revisions to compliance processes.
11. The adoption of the People Strategy and the establishment of a Programme Management Office (PMO) demonstrate a commitment to organisational development and delivery assurance. The review also highlighted improvements in internal communications and staff engagement, which have included the appointment of an Employee Engagement Officer, development of a staff framework, and wellbeing initiatives such as an away space quiet room and planned all-staff celebration in summer 2026.
12. The appointment of a new Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer was welcomed by the peer team, acknowledging greater pressures on strategic management brought by LGR.
13. Transformation remains a central strategic priority for the organisation, with the reviewed transformation strategy gaining approval in August aligned to new LGR objectives and organisation development initiatives such as the Behaviours Framework and Growth and Goals guidance recognised by the report.
14. Climate action progress was highlighted, with a review to the Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan underway and £1.49m secured to upgrade homes to EPC C+ standards. The report encourages the council to remain focused in this area to achieve improved outcomes for the district. It acknowledged that the refresh of the action plan is being supported by a member task and finish group with recommendations expected in April 2026.
15. Member development has strengthened through enhanced training offers, a dedicated SharePoint resource hub, and joint EMT / Cabinet development sessions. Continued focus on officer development has also been recognised with a new cohort of managers undertaking management development training and a leadership team away day in December 2025 focusing on LGR implications.
16. The council's three-year Asset Strategy and Action Plan was approved by Cabinet in July 2025 following scrutiny by the Resources

and Transformation Panel. The CPC review welcomed this approval and the commitment to provide regular Cabinet updates and maintain alignment with strategic priorities. Peers also noted early engagement with town and parish councils and advised careful management of expectations during implementation.

17. The follow up review highlighted and confirmed that all action plan items are either completed or on track, reflecting strong progress.

Areas for continued focus

18. While the council can report positive progress, the CPC follow up review highlighted several areas for continued focus.
19. Ongoing review of the revised Corporate Plan deliverables remains critical, ensuring a renewed awareness and clarity on what is achievable within current capacity and the demands of LGR.
20. Work towards a draft corporate narrative began in May 2025 but postponed reflecting LGR developments. Peers encouraged the council to publish this corporate narrative at an appropriate time to provide a clear message for staff, members, and residents. This will be framed in the context of the new organisation following the Government's decision.
21. The review emphasised the importance of strengthening the overview and scrutiny function, enabling it to act as a constructive 'critical friend' in shaping policy and preparing for regulatory expectations, particularly the forthcoming housing inspection.
22. Finally, the council must maintain momentum on transformation and asset strategy implementation, while managing expectations and ensuring alignment with LGR objectives.
23. The final report will be published on the council's website and these observations and delivery of any remaining original actions will now be progressed through existing arrangements and governance.

Corporate plan priorities

24. The CPC Progress Review considered how the council's Corporate Plan priorities align with current capacity and the challenges of LGR.
25. In response to the recommendation to review priorities a full review of deliverables and adjusted Key Performance Indicator targets was carried out and received appropriate approval.

Options appraisal

26. No alternative options were considered.
27. The council remains committed to maintaining and building on the progress highlighted in the CPC Progress Review report, particularly within the context of LGR.

Consultation undertaken

28. The CPC follow-up visit primarily consisted of a series of focus groups, bringing together a broad range of council staff and elected members.
29. Feedback and evidence gathered through these sessions formed the basis of the final observations and recommendations from the CPC peer team.
30. The report is supported by EMT. The Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered and supported the report at its meeting on 22 January 2026. A member highlighted the role of scrutiny as a critical friend, and the fact that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels were not held by opposition members.

Financial and resource implications

31. There are none arising directly from this report although observations are made regarding capacity needed to deliver priorities and LGR and this will need to be kept under review, supported by the introduction of the PMO.

Legal implications

32. There are none arising directly from this report.

Risk assessment

33. A formal risk assessment is deemed not to be required.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

34. There are none arising directly from this report although the feedback report encourages the council to maintain focus in this area.

Equalities implications

35. Although there are no direct equalities implications from this report the CPC action plan included actions to strengthen our approach to

equalities and diversity through the introduction of equalities assessments within service planning and leadership development.

Crime and disorder implications

36. There are none arising directly from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

37. There are none arising directly from this report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review (6th November 2025)

Background Papers:

Cabinet – 2 April 2025 – Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan
Cabinet - 1 October 2025 – Corporate Peer Challenge Follow-Up Report

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

New Forest District Council

6 November 2025

Feedback



Corporate Peer Challenge



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1. Introduction

New Forest District Council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during December 2024 and published the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the CPC process. Taking place after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the early progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's RAG rated CPC Action Plan.
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date

The LGA would like to thank New Forest District Council (the council) for their commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at New Forest District Council took place (onsite) on 6 November 2025, with the following members of the original CPC team involved:

- Lead officer peer: Jonathan Stephenson, Chief Executive, Brentwood Borough Council and Rochford District Council
- Lead member peer: Cllr William Nunn, Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council
- Member peer: Cllr Sarah Osborne, East Sussex County Council
- Officer peer: Claire Astbury, Head of Housing Strategy and Development, Luton Borough Council
- Officer peer: Jane Wilson, Chief Operating Officer, Cambridge City Council
- Nick Searle, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

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18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

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Chair: Councillor Louise Gittins

Chief Executive: Joanna Killian

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

The Progress Review considered the ten recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge under the following theme headings:

- Vision and priorities
- Member development
- Communication
- Transformation

3. Progress Review – Feedback

Peers returned to the council after a period of significant change for local government following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024. More locally in the New Forest, in February 2025, the government confirmed that Hampshire and the Solent would be one of the six areas part of the Devolution Priority Programme.

On their return to the council, peers welcomed the honesty and willingness to engage from everyone spoken to throughout the progress review. Although it was acknowledged that local government reorganisation (LGR) would bring significant change to the council and the wider Hampshire and Solent sub-region, the council is working effectively to manage the challenges and opportunities of LGR. For example, the Leader and CEX are both proactive players with leading roles in LGR discussions across Hampshire and Solent.

The council submitted a final LGR proposal setting out its desire to keep the New Forest district whole, yet potential boundary changes in other proposals could see the district split and this uncertainty is understandably causing concerns. Nevertheless, LGR is broadly seen as an opportunity for the council to promote the economic growth, development and cultural prospects of the area. Regular updates and engagement with staff on LGR are welcomed, and staff remain committed and positive about working for the council. Overall, from the peers' engagement with staff, it is evident that staff continue to enjoy working at the council, with staff commenting that they feel appreciated.

Amidst this background of substantial change, the council has accomplished many

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things since the peer team were on site. One of the council's biggest achievements has been the ongoing roll-out of waste service changes, which has represented the most significant operational transformation the council has ever undertaken. Other achievements include the opening of the Hardley Depot in March 2025; proactive preparations for the new housing regulatory standards inspection; increases in tenant satisfaction from 81% in 2023/24 to 84% in 2024/25; and the adoption of the People Strategy in April 2025. The council is rightly very proud of these achievements, amongst many others.

Out of the CPC's ten recommendations, the council's RAG rated action plan reported that 100 per cent of actions are completed or in progress and on track. On their return to the council, the peer team felt that the council has made good progress against many of their CPC recommendations.

More detailed feedback on each thematic area is set out below.

3.1. Vision and priorities

- Recommendation 1: Clarify priorities and timelines for delivery
- Recommendation 8: Demonstrate further commitment to carbon reduction with a clear action plan
- Recommendation 9: Continue the good practice in housing and consider applying successful approaches to the wider organisation

Against the context of LGR, the council's Executive Management Team (EMT) undertook a review of its priorities and deliverables. As a result, Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets have been adjusted, and Cabinet subsequently approved the revised Corporate Plan deliverables. The new Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer post and the establishment of the Programme Management Office (PMO), both welcomed by the peer team, will further help with priority rationalisation and delivery assurance. It will also help ensure that staff capacity is managed and resources are aligned accordingly. The peer team recognise these changes are in their early stages of implementation, but show encouraging promise.

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Whilst staff remain clear on the council's priorities, they still feel that there are too many. Peers therefore encourage the council to be clear on what is a priority and what is not deliverable considering the capacity challenges because of LGR. For members, peers encourage them to have a well-defined understanding of the legacy they want to leave as part of LGR, along with an agreed delivery timeframe. Despite there being so much underway as part of LGR, the council must continue to seek effective ways to keep residents updated about the delivery of its wider priorities too.

On carbon reduction, peers heard that the Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan refresh is underway, and this is supported by a newly formed Member Task and Finish Group. This Group has already started its work and will continue to meet over the coming months before issuing recommendations around April 2026. Low carbon development continues to be a key priority for the council. This is evident in the new service planning template, which outlines a commitment to prioritise climate concerns through the completion of a climate risk assessment. The council has also secured £1.49m of funding to upgrade approximately 200 homes to EPC C+ in 2025/26. Furthermore, whilst the Local Plan Review is in the early stages of development, climate change has already been identified as a key issue, with a strong desire to ensure high sustainability standards for new developments.

During the corporate peer challenge in 2024, peers observed good practice in housing and encouraged the council to apply successful approaches to the wider organisation. With the former Strategic Director of Housing recently appointed as Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer, there is a clear opportunity to embed and share successful housing practices across the organisation. This new post also supports the establishment of a PMO which will embed methods, processes and approaches learned from work in housing across the council as a whole.

During the revisit peers were pleased to hear that the council has made good progress in this area. In September 2025, the topic based 'Monthly Meet' staff engagement forum focused on housing and had a spotlight on performance management, as well as on using technology to meet compliance needs and improve performance. The council is now scoping a programme of 15-minute sessions to be

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18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

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delivered quarterly at leadership meetings to ensure the sharing of knowledge with the wider Senior Leadership Team.

3.2. Member development

- Recommendation 3: Design and deliver a robust member and senior officer development programme
- Recommendation 4: Consider ways to strengthen your overview and scrutiny function

Since the peer challenge, the council has strengthened its training offer for all members, with member briefings covering the general responsibilities of a councillor as well as briefings on specific areas of focus, such as waste. Understandably, it was clear to peers that member development has shifted to focus on improving member understanding of the LGR process, with all-member briefings on LGR and specific LGR training for Cabinet members too. On a similar point, the peer team observed that much of the Leader's time is taken up by the demands of LGR; given this, the council is encouraged to consider how the Leader can be better supported in overseeing the delivery of internal priorities.

On member training more broadly, the council has created a dedicated training and development area on the councillor SharePoint site, which provides a single point of access for resources and supports members' continuous development. The feedback on all these changes has been positive, and councillors are now better informed. Looking forward, the peer team encourages all members to maximise external training opportunities, for example from the Local Government Association and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. Peers also encourage those members that might seek election to any new unitary authority to take advantage of training available in order to upskill themselves in service areas that district councils do not currently manage.

The council has also established joint Executive Management Team (EMT) / Cabinet development sessions, with an initial session covering the Local Plan Review.

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Following positive feedback plans are now underway for additional EMT / Cabinet development sessions covering areas such as LGR, housing regulation and community asset transfer.

In relation to officers, the council has continued its leadership and management development programmes. A new management development cohort began in April 2025, and focused on strengthening leadership skills. The Leadership Team have undertaken development initiatives focusing on behaviours, EDI and recognition, and had an away day in December 2025 focusing on LGR and resilience.

As well as enhancing its training offer to all members, the council has undertaken efforts to strengthen its overview and scrutiny function. For example, each Strategic Director is now formally linked to a specific Overview and Scrutiny panel to provide support. Regular meetings between Strategic Directors and the chairs of each Overview and Scrutiny Panel have covered activities such as agenda planning, which has helped ensure a more strategic focus. In addition, both pre-panel briefings and topic specific briefings, such as on Housing Regulation, have helped increase member understanding and have led to more informed discussions. The council is considering rolling out the changes made by the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, for example summary slides and example questions, to the other panels. The peer team welcomes this approach.

Nevertheless, peers felt there is still scope for overview and scrutiny to be further strengthened. Peers see there is potential for overview and scrutiny to act as a 'critical friend' to assist with policy development and regulatory expectations, for example in preparations for the forthcoming inspection by the Regulatory of Social Housing. Peers also welcomed the inclusion of tenant representation in the housing scrutiny group. It is important that this is supported by meaningful engagement and two-way communication with wider tenant representative bodies to support the continued succession planning within this scrutiny.

On a broader point regarding member development, peers noted effective cross-party collaboration, for example on the deferment of the Local Plan and whole council agreement for the council's LGR submission. Peers strongly welcomed this approach and encourage all members to pursue further opportunities for joint working.

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3.3. Communication

- Recommendation 2: Create an overarching corporate narrative and communicate proactively with staff, members and local people
- Recommendation 10: Remember to celebrate your achievements no matter how small or big they are

During the corporate peer challenge, the peer team encouraged the council to create a narrative to 'help staff, members, partners, and residents look towards the future and help them see how they can support the delivery of the corporate plan'. Whilst a draft corporate narrative was presented to EMT in May 2025, the council has postponed its publication. The council explained that this was because the corporate narrative will be revised in the coming months following LGR developments and decisions. Whilst understanding the significant external factors at play, peers continue to encourage the council to consider what it wants to achieve with a corporate narrative as this will determine the most suitable timing for its publication.

The adoption of the People Strategy in 2025 has led to increased efforts to recognise staff achievements. Successes have and continue to be celebrated in team meetings, directorate sessions and staff events, such as a BBQ for waste operatives in October 2025. Other channels are used too, such as internal communications, media releases and the annual performance report. A significant all-staff celebration for summer 2026 is also being planned. Alongside doing more to acknowledge staff achievements, the council has also established a wellbeing quiet room for employees. The peer team welcome these initiatives, but want the council to ensure the approach is applied and promoted consistently across the organisation.

On internal communications specifically, the peer team consistently heard positive feedback that the chief executive effectively communicates with staff, through different channels. Furthermore, improvements have been made to internal communications through the development of a staff framework. The appointment of an Employee Engagement Officer has made a substantial difference, helping to identify staff persona groups and tailor communication channels and messages. Staff personas are now being developed to ensure communications and engagement are

appropriately targeted. The Employee Engagement Plan for LGR also outlines various communication methods to ensure messages are suitably adapted to different teams, making sure they are effective as possible.

3.4. Transformation

- Recommendation 5: Ensure there is collective ownership of the transformation programme by the executive management team
- Recommendation 6: Apply internal policies and practices consistently across the council
- Recommendation 7: Develop an assets strategy and action plan

Since the peer challenge, the focus of council's transformation programme has understandably shifted to LGR preparedness. Despite this shift in focus, the transformation programme continues to have strong commitment from all political groups and staff at all levels. Leadership of the programme remains effective, with the new Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Operating Officer appointment giving it fresh impetus as well as responsibility for delivery.

The council has taken effective steps to ensure that the transformation programme is fully aligned with LGR objectives and delivers long-term outcomes. For example, after reviewing the strategic priorities an updated Transformation Strategy was approved by Cabinet in August 2025; the council has also developed a clear governance structure with directorate board meetings feeding into the monthly LGR and Transformation Board; and the establishment of the PMO will bring together a single set of projects and provide oversight and coordination on the delivery of priorities. It will bring consistency and clarity, and enable the effective use of data to ensure focus stays in the right place.

Staying with the considered and evidence based approach they are establishing will stand the council in good stead through LGR. Peers saw that there is already evidence demonstrating that the council has been using this approach to help focus on what is essential and in best interests of residents with LGR on the horizon. As

with all councils there is a risk that they get pulled off track, but it is encouraging that the council has the tools to mitigate this.

As part of the People Strategy, new organisational development (OD) initiatives have been launched. These initiatives, spearheaded by the appointment of two new OD roles, are showing encouraging promise and playing a key role in ensuring the consistent application of internal policies and practices. For example, the new Behaviours Framework was approved in July 2025. It was soft launched through chief executive staff sessions in July 2025, covered at the Leadership team development day, and training is being implemented across the council. The induction process has also been reviewed. There are now 'induction essentials' videos for new starters and enhanced guidance for managers too. Furthermore, the peer team heard about changes to performance and development, namely the forthcoming launch of 'Growth and Goals' conversations. Every manager is undertaking training and staff will have three conversations a year, replacing the existing format which was described as 'transactional'.

Following consideration at the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel in June 2025, the Cabinet approved the council's three-year Asset Strategy and Action Plan in July 2025. Peers welcomed the council's plans to regularly update Cabinet on progress to maintain focus on political priorities, as well as the desire to maintain close working between Estates colleagues and the Transformation Programme, against the backdrop of LGR preparations. Initial discussions have taken place with town and parish councils to support implementation, although the peer team encourages the careful management of expectations.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank New Forest District Council for undertaking an LGA CPC Progress Review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

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Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Will Brooks (Principal Adviser – South East) is the main point of contact between the authority and the Local Government Association (LGA) and his e-mail address is William.Brooks@local.gov.uk

Cabinet - 4 February 2026

Local Plan Review – Approval of Spatial Options and Policy Direction Document

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report presents the draft Regulation 18 Spatial Options and Policy Direction consultation document for Cabinet approval.</p> <p>The document outlines the council’s emerging spatial strategy and policy direction for the Local Plan Review, following the Issues and Scope consultation held in 2025.</p> <p>The Regulation 18 document sets out 15 Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGO), draft policy themes, and strategic priorities aligned with the Corporate Plan. It incorporates feedback from public engagement, Member Working Group input, and emerging evidence base studies.</p> <p>This report seeks Cabinet approval for the publication for public consultation. The proposed period for consultation is to run from 6 February 2026 to 20 March 2026, using a combination of digital platforms, roadshow events, and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>This consultation is a key milestone in preparing a sound and deliverable Local Plan, ensuring the council maintains an up-to-date planning framework in line with national expectations.</p> <p>Cabinet is also asked to delegate authority for final editorial adjustments prior to publication and note the ongoing publication of the evidence base alongside the Plan.</p>

Recommendations	<p>Cabinet is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the Regulation 18 Spatial Options and Policy Direction document for public consultation; 2. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Place, Operations and Sustainability, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to make any final editorial or formatting changes prior to publication; and 3. Note that there will be an emerging evidence base published alongside the consultation, as referenced in the Regulation 18 document.
Reasons for recommendation	To allow the council to move forward to the next stage of consultation for the Local Plan review
Ward(s)	All wards outside the National Park
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Derek Tipp – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy
Strategic Director(s)	James Carpenter – Strategic Director for Place, Operations and Sustainability
Officer Contact	<p>Tim Guymer Assistant Director for Place Development tim.guymer@nfdc.gov.uk</p> <p>Dean Brunton Service Manager - Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Delivery dean.brunton@nfdc.gov.uk</p> <p>James Smith Planning Policy Team Leader james.smith@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction

1. This report seeks approval to publish the 'Regulation 18 Spatial Options and Policy Direction' consultation document and to undertake public consultation from 6 February to 20 March 2026 in line with the adopted Local Development Scheme. The document, as currently drafted, is at Appendix 1 to this document.
2. In late October 2025, the council temporarily paused consultation on the Local Plan Review until there was clarity about the end date for the government's consultation of proposed Local Government Reorganisation. Following confirmation that this consultation would end on 11 January 2026, a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) was approved in December 2025. This sets out the following programme for preparation of the Local Plan Review:
 - Public Consultation on 'Spatial Options and Policy Direction' ('Regulation 18') – February-March 2026
 - Proposed consultation on the published Local Plan review (regulation 19) - Autumn 2026.
 - Submission of Local Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination – December 2026.

Background

3. As previously reported, the council commenced its Local Plan Review in 2024, with an Issues and Scope consultation, and Call for Sites exercise, taking place in early 2025. A revised Local Development Scheme (work programme) was approved in August 2025, setting out key milestones including Regulation 18 consultation in Winter 2025/26 and Regulation 19 publication in Autumn 2026.
4. This Spatial Options and Policy document builds on feedback received during previous consultations, emerging evidence, together with Officer and Member Working Group input. It is structured around the Corporate Plan themes of People, Place, and Prosperity.
5. The Government's consultation on a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), launched on 16 December 2025 with responses due by 10 March 2026, proposes measures to accelerate housing delivery and economic growth through a stronger presumption in favour of development, higher-density housing near transport hubs, and streamlined biodiversity net gain and viability processes. It also reduces the weight of out-of-date local plans, increasing reliance on national policies and the risk of speculative applications contrary to local objectives. These changes, alongside support for infill and brownfield intensification, pose significant challenges to protecting the New Forest's unique character and environmental sensitivity,

making swift adoption of the Local Plan essential to mitigate the tilted balance of the revised NPPF. If the Local Plan is submitted before December 2026 for examination, it will be examined against the current NPPF, however officers will continue to review the progress of this consultation and will make representations accordingly.

Key Content of the Regulation 18 Spatial Options and Policy Direction Document

6. The Spatial Options and Policy Direction document sets out New Forest District Council's emerging thinking on the Local Plan Review for the area outside the National Park, covering the period 2025–2043. It builds on earlier consultation and outlines a draft vision, revised objectives, and a range of spatial options for growth. The document identifies key challenges including demographic change, environmental constraints, and national policy reforms. It proposes a framework for sustainable development that balances housing need, infrastructure delivery, climate resilience, and protection of the district's unique character.
7. A central focus of the document is the identification of Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs), which include potential new settlements and major extensions to existing towns and villages. These options will be assessed against environmental constraints such as Green Belt, flood risk, and proximity to international nature conservation sites.
8. The document also explores the implications of national planning reforms, including the potential introduction of "Grey Belt" land and the requirement to further the purposes of National Parks and National Landscapes. It explores a proposed spatial strategy that may combine multiple options to meet housing and employment needs in a sustainable way.
9. The document includes emerging policy directions across a wide range of themes, including housing mix and affordability, biodiversity net gain, climate change adaptation, infrastructure planning, and economic development. It considers updated approaches to rural housing, commoning and back-up grazing land, and port-related development, particularly in relation to the Solent Freeport and Solent Gateway 2. The document also aims to embed health and wellbeing, high-quality design, and green and blue infrastructure into future development.

Spatial options for the distribution of growth

10. Even with a combination of all options, it is considered unlikely that the housing need identified through the standard methodology set by government will be capable of being met in the plan period. It should be noted that failure to demonstrate a robust and deliverable strategy for meeting our housing need, without a demonstrable and justified case, does risk the Local Plan being found unsound at examination. This is particularly the case if the Inspector is not persuaded by the adequacy of our supporting evidence.
11. Informed by the interim site assessment work undertaken to date on both larger and smaller sites, officers have identified 15 different Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs) for consultation. The SDGOs have been defined based on sites (or groupings of sites) which have either been promoted to the council by developers or landowners or are areas that have been identified by officers as being of merit at this stage to explore further for their potential strategic growth opportunities. In the context of this Local Plan Review, SDGOs are being defined as areas that may have potential to accommodate 100+ dwellings, as opposed to the smaller sites that cover the range 10-99 dwellings.
12. An initial assessment of the options has been undertaken using the framework set out in the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA). This is a mechanism for considering and communicating the effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to minimising adverse effects and maximising the positives. Is it a requirement for local plans. The Interim SA will be published alongside this Regulation 18 consultation and concludes that all options are associated with both positive and adverse effects and no option stands out as performing well or performing poorly overall.
13. It is important to note that further work will be undertaken to assess these options in more detail in the light of responses to this consultation and other technical studies in the coming months. The final SA Report will be published for consultation alongside the final draft plan later this year, and it must present an appraisal of "the plan and reasonable alternatives" with a particular focus on appraising "significant effects".
14. At this stage it is also important to highlight that these simply represent different options for assessment – they are not proposed site allocations, nor this prevent any other sites not included at this stage to come forward in due course.

Development Need

15. To fulfil the government’s priority of boosting the supply and delivery of housing, the NPPF requires local authorities to calculate the housing need for their area using the government’s ‘standard method’. Using this method, the overall housing need for New Forest District is 1,511, but based on Planning Practice Guidance and local affordability factors, the need for the Local Plan area can be calculated at 1,254 dwellings. However, it should be noted that any deviation from the standard method, including the application of local adjustments, would need to be robustly justified and tested through the Local Plan examination process.
16. As of 1 April 2025, the existing housing supply in the Plan Area considered to be realistically deliverable/developable by 2043 is 6,835 dwellings, as set out in the table below.

Source of supply	Number of dwellings
Strategic Site Allocations	4,959
Other Permitted Large Sites (10+ dwellings)	214
Permitted Small Sites (1-9 Dwellings)	285 (10% discount applied)
Contribution to housing supply from permitted sites for Use Class C2 care homes	114
Non-permitted developable Local Plan Part 2 (2014) allocations	162
Small Site Windfall Allowance	1,101 (Informed by past trends demonstrating reliability of supply)
Total	6,835

17. Based on work undertaken to date, there may be a potential new supply of 6,747 dwellings (if all potential sites are concluded to be suitable, available, achievable and capable of delivering dwellings within the Plan period to 2043) that might be developable in the Plan period. In addition of the existing supply, this could mean a potential total supply of 13,582 dwellings. However, at this stage this potential figure is far from certain and further assessment will be required before any conclusions can be made on the suitability and achievability of potential sites.

18. Nevertheless, even if every potential supply/site source currently identified were to be concluded as suitable, available and achievable in the Plan period, there would still be a significant current projected shortfall of at least 8,910 dwellings between the potential housing supply for the period 2025-2043 and the current standard method housing need over that period. This is before considering any unmet need from the New Forest National Park Authority and neighbouring authorities.
19. Our Economic Needs Assessment identifies a gross employment floorspace need of up to 142,600sqm (which equates to a land take need for around 34ha of employment land) for general employment uses for the period 2025-2043. The indicative employment need is further broken down into a need for up to around 25,790sqm office floorspace (a land take need of around 4.3ha of land) and up to around 116,810sqm industrial floorspace (a land take need of around 29.4ha of land). It is currently considered that it can be possible to meet this need through a combination of existing supply and if some additional allocations as part of SDGOs in appropriate locations are proposed. It is important to note that this need is outside that potentially needed for Port uses.

Public consultation arrangements

20. In line with our adopted Statement of Community Involvement the Regulation 18 consultation will run for 6 weeks from 6 February 2026 to 20 March 2026. We will invite views on all aspects of the plan including the draft vision, spatial options, and policy directions, and will use this input to refine its strategy ahead of the preparation of the final 'Regulation 19' version of the Local Plan which is expected to be published in late 2026.
21. As previously reported, and with particular awareness of the sensitivities of Local Plan preparation, consultation arrangements and key lines of messaging will be confirmed in an updated communications plan. This plan will be prepared by officers across the communications and planning policy team, with regular input from senior managers. Consultation will include engagement with town and parish councils and key stakeholders. Officers are also arranging consultation events at a number of locations offering the public a chance to ask officers questions on the proposals. Officers will once again use specialist digital engagement software (Go Vocal) to seek views on the document.

Corporate plan priorities

22. The Corporate Plan 2024-28 outlines the vision, values, and priorities for the council over the next three years.
23. The vision of the Corporate Plan is to secure a better future by supporting opportunities for the people and communities we serve, protecting our unique and special place and securing a vibrant and prosperous New Forest. This has been organised into the thematic areas of People, Place and Prosperity. The Local Plan aligns with all the objectives of the Corporate Plan and the document proposed for public consultation has been drafted by grouping together the various topics under the headings of the Corporate Plan.

Options appraisal

24. Since work began on the Local Plan review, there has been significant policy changes from the government in relation to the planning system, identifying and addressing housing need and wider devolution and local government reorganisation.
25. While the outcomes of the local government reorganisation are yet to be known, the government has made clear that local authorities must continue to progress their Local Plan reviews to ensure plans remain up-to-date and responsive to local needs. This Local Plan is being prepared in that context, and any future changes to governance arrangements will be considered as part of the ongoing plan-making process. The scope for pausing/slowing work on the Local Plan Review has regularly been explored with a clear message being received by Cabinet to continue at this time.
26. Given the above, the work programme will continue to be kept under review as work progresses on local government reorganisation.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

27. The potential for local government reorganisation, presents a strategic consideration for the Local Plan Review, particularly if a boundary change scenario is pursued by the Government. While the outcomes of LGR remain uncertain, it is important to acknowledge that any future changes to governance structures could affect the spatial coverage, policy direction, and decision-making responsibilities of the Local Plan.
28. Officers will continue to monitor developments and advise on whether the emerging Local Plan remains the most appropriate mechanism for delivering the Council's strategic planning objectives. These risks will be kept under review throughout the plan-making

process and reflected in future updates to the Local Development Scheme.

Consultation undertaken

29. Work on the Local Plan review has been, and continues to be, discussed with relevant officers, including via the Officer Working Group and with Members through the Member Working Group and Cabinet Members.
30. Alongside this, officers have engaged with statutory consultees and infrastructure providers to understand the implications of the emerging spatial options. Further consultation with external stakeholders will continue to take place at the formal consultation stage.
31. With particular regard to engagement to the New Forest National Park Authority, who are preparing their local plan to similar timescales, there is regular officer engagement between the planning policy teams to ensure that the respective plans and evidence base are prepared with appropriate understanding and referencing to each other.

Financial and resource implications

32. Sufficient existing budget provision has been made to cover work on the Local Plan review, including a grant of circa £200k from MHCLG in late 2024 to progress the Local Plan review with an ambition to submit for examination by December 2026.
33. Alongside the Local Plan review, a number of town and parish councils are progressing neighbourhood plans. These plans place a statutory requirement on the council to engage with neighbourhood planning groups and also meet specific deadlines for facilitating consultations and, ultimately, referendum. An additional dedicated officer resource to help facilitate this is currently being put in place.

Legal implications

34. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local authorities to prepare and maintain an up-to-date Local Plan.
35. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduces new duties to further the purposes of National Parks and National Landscapes. The Government has indicated its intention to introduce national Development Management policies, which will be considered as the Local Plan progresses.

Risk assessment

36. None directly arising from this report. However, the Local Plan is identified in the service risk register with a number of key risks identified.
37. Specific risks about not having an up-to-date local plan include that without an up-to-date Local Plan, decision-making may default to national policy (NPPF), weakening the council's ability to resist speculative or inappropriate development.
38. Additionally, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) and the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underpin a new streamlined system. Plans submitted by December 2026 can proceed under the current system whereas plans not submitted by then must be prepared under the new system, potentially starting from scratch with the 30-month timetable.
39. A further risk relates to the preparation of neighbourhood plans and the increased number that are coming forward in the light of both LGR and planning reforms. Officers continue to review this work in relation to resource to ensure that appropriate time is given to align with the local plan work.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

40. The environment is one of the three pillars of sustainable development as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), alongside economic and social objectives. The Local Plan is a key vehicle for delivering the council's climate and nature recovery aspirations, embedding policies that support carbon reduction, climate resilience, and biodiversity enhancement.
41. By proactively planning for environmental outcomes, the council can remain in control of development across its area, ensuring that growth is aligned with high-quality placemaking and long-term sustainability. This is essential not only for meeting statutory and national policy expectations, but also for safeguarding the unique environmental assets of the district.

Equalities implications

42. None directly from this report. However, whilst there is no statutory requirement to produce a formal Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) for the Local Plan, the council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. This requires due regard to be given to the potential impacts of the Local Plan on people with protected characteristics.

43. The NPPF reinforces this expectation by promoting inclusive planning that addresses the needs of all sectors of the community. Preparing an EqIA is therefore considered good practice, helping to demonstrate compliance with legal duties, support inclusive policy development, and reduce the risk of legal challenge during examination.

Crime and disorder implications

44. None directly from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

45. Local Plan engagement, including public consultation, requires the collection and processing of some personal information in a manner compliant with GDPR. Collection of data, and its use, is contained with the [Planning Policy privacy notice](#). How data is collected and used will also be made clear on the Go Vocal platform during the consultation.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

46. There is an inherent tension between the scale of housing growth required to meet identified housing need, through the Government's standard method, and the statutory requirement to further the purposes of the New Forest National Park, particularly where development pressures risk undermining landscape character, biodiversity, and opportunities for quiet enjoyment. This conflict could constrain the ability of the Local Plan to align with the National Park Authority's objectives, especially if mitigation measures are deemed insufficient or incompatible with the Park's special qualities.
47. With respect to the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, a suggested option for some limited additional growth is explored that would be in keeping with the area, with a view to its settlements being able to function in a sustainable manner. The topic of furthering the purposes of the National Landscape in this context is explored in the document and supporting evidence.

Conclusion

48. The Local Plan Review is progressing in line with the adopted timetable and national expectations. The Regulation 18 consultation document provides a clear and structured basis for public engagement and policy development.
49. It is proposed that Cabinet approve the recommendations to allow officers to proceed with consultation from February to March,

enabling the council to maintain momentum and prepare a sound and deliverable Local Plan.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft Regulation 18
Spatial Options and Policy Direction
document

Background Papers:

None.



Spatial Options and Policy Direction

Regulation 18 Local Plan 2025-2043 consultation

New Forest District Council
(outside the National Park)

February 2026 – Cabinet Version

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Foreword

We are pleased to be sharing this next step in shaping the future of our plan area and are now asking for your views on what matters most.

This stage of the Local Plan sets out a preferred policy direction on what you have told us the big issues are - delivering genuinely affordable homes, tackling climate change, improving health and wellbeing, improved infrastructure, climate resilience, and the protection of the New Forest's unique character.

It is not a final set of policies just yet, but your continued feedback will help us shape the full draft we plan to publish for consultation next year.

We are facing a challenging time, with national planning policy changes meaning we need to plan for significantly more housing, alongside a declining population and the need to further the purposes of both the New Forest National Park and Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

New government policy means that this plan will need to be more forward-thinking when it comes to infrastructure, health, and wellbeing. It means delivering new homes that are truly affordable and built to be net-zero in operation. Our plan's policies need to be achievable - capable of being delivered without making development unviable or putting too much strain on what we already have.

We have taken on board what you told us at the issues and scope stage and now want to hear your views on how we are taking these forward

- What are your views on our options for growth?
- What do you think about our preferred policy direction?
- What is missing?
- What should we do differently?

This is your chance to help shape the New Forest as a place for people to live, work and prosper.

Cllr Derek Tipp – Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Economy

Introduction

1. We are developing this new Local Plan to guide New Forest District Council's growth and development in the period 2025 to 2043.
2. The Local Plan plays a key role in shaping the future of the plan area. It sets out a vision and policy framework that determines what type of development is needed, where it should be located, and how it can be delivered in a way that benefits local communities and enhances well-being.
3. This new Local Plan is currently at the Regulation 18 'plan preparation' stage, where we are looking to identify local priorities and explore different policy directions.

Consultation to date

4. So far, we have carried out one round of consultation, in early 2025, with the Issues and Scope consultation (running from 24 February 2025 to 4 April 2025). As well as meetings in person with a number of town and parish councils, other engagement activities included seven public exhibitions attended by approximately 200 members of the public. We also had a number of interactions on social media including via both Facebook and Youtube.

The Purpose of this spatial options and policy direction document

5. This document is not a full draft of the Local Plan. Instead, it outlines the council's current thinking on the plan's overall structure and direction. It builds on the previous consultation, setting out the council's emerging approach to:
 - a draft vision for the plan area to 2043
 - revised objectives for the Local Plan
 - spatial options for development

- emerging policy direction for topic areas including both strategic and non-strategic policies

Background Context

6. Local Plans are planning documents that guide development within a local planning authority area. All local planning authorities are legally required to prepare and maintain an up-to-date Local Plan, reviewing it at least every five years to ensure it remains relevant, responsive, and effective.
7. The primary purpose of a Local Plan is to guide the delivery of sustainable development by setting out a strategic framework for growth, identifying the types and locations of development that are needed, and ensuring that these are supported by the necessary infrastructure. This includes everything from homes and jobs to transport, schools, green spaces, and health facilities.
8. A Local Plan achieves this purpose by establishing a clear set of policies against which planning applications are assessed. Where appropriate, it also allocates specific sites for development. While there is no single required format for a Local Plan, the expectation is that they are focused, accessible, and proportionate to the needs and characteristics of the local area. Government is also looking for Local Plans to be produced in a more accessible digital format with open data available.
9. The Plan will not cover minerals and waste planning as this will be a matter for the Minerals and Waste Local Plan produced by the Hampshire minerals & waste planning authorities, led by **Hampshire County Council**.
10. Throughout this document the phrase 'the Plan Area' is used to refer to the parts of New Forest District outside the National Park (as shown in Figure 1). The Plan Area which is covered by New Forest District Council (NFDC) comprises the yellow area. We are responsible for planning matters in this area, including the production of the Local Plan, Development Management (determining planning applications), Building Control and Planning Enforcement.

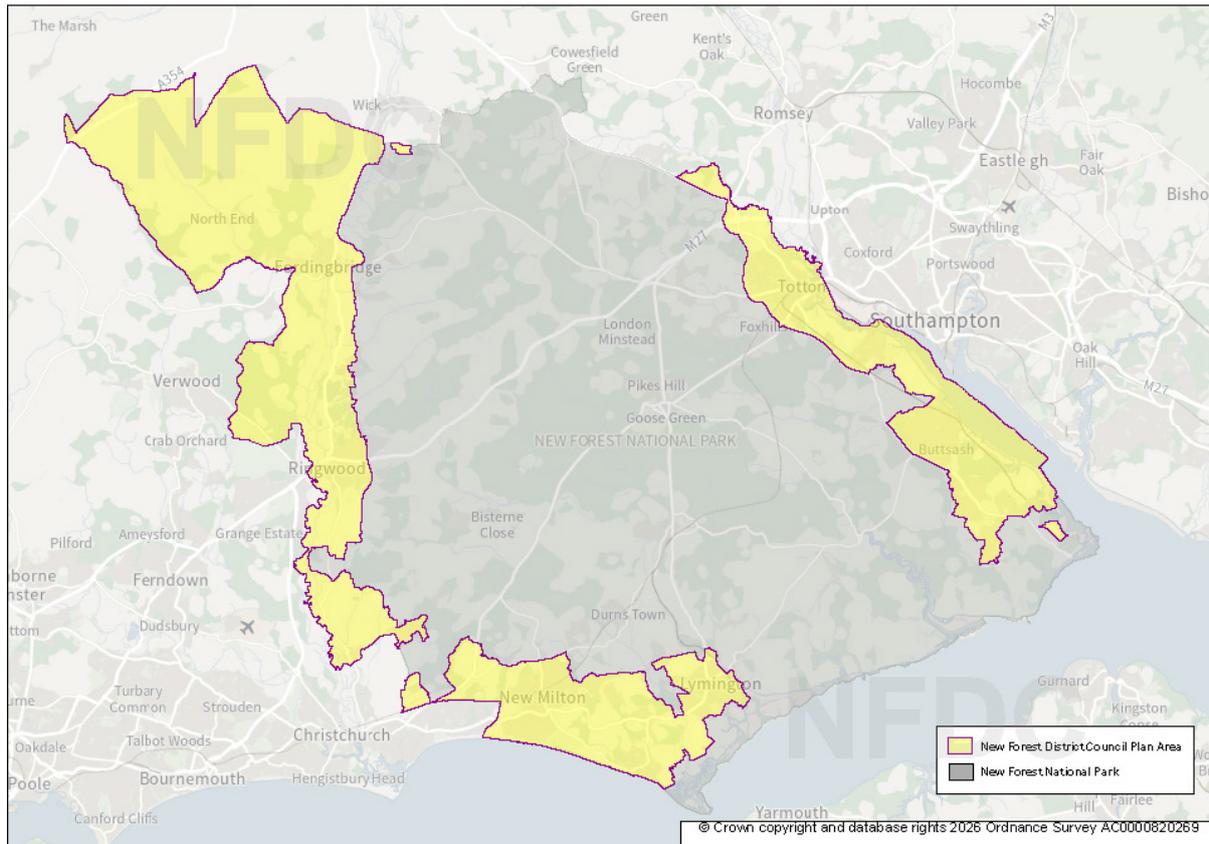


Figure 1 The Plan Area

11. Our Local Plan Area is not all joined together, but comprises three broad sub-areas:

- Totton and the Waterside (the eastern side of the plan area)
- South Coastal Towns and Villages (the southern side of the plan area)
- Avon Valley and Downlands (the western side of plan area)

12. The parts of the district within the New Forest National Park (the grey area on Figure 1) are not covered by our Review. Planning within the National Park is the responsibility of the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) who prepare a separate local plan for their area.

13. We are preparing this draft Local Plan in close consultation and cooperation with the New Forest National Park Authority, which is producing a replacement Local Plan for the New Forest National Park area. Our timetables are similar and key parts of our evidence base are shared or jointly produced.

The current Local Plan

14. Our new Local Plan will replace the existing adopted policies set out in the current Adopted Local Plan, which comprises **Part One (adopted July 2020)** and **Part Two (adopted 2014)**, as well as saved elements of the **Core Strategy (2009)**. The Plan will include policies that address the strategic priorities for the area. Policies will cover a diverse range of topics including climate change, housing, economy, infrastructure, biodiversity, and transport.

Local Government Reorganisation

15. At the time of preparing this spatial options and policy direction document, wider discussions are ongoing for potential devolution and local government review taking place across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

16. A statutory public consultation on proposed changes, including various options for creating unitary councils across Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight, opened on 19 November 2025 and ran until 11 January 2026.

17. A final decision from the Government is expected in early 2026, with shadow unitary authorities potentially forming in 2027 and become fully operational by April 2028.

18. While the outcomes of these discussions and the consultation are not yet confirmed, the Government has made clear that local authorities must continue to progress their Local Plan reviews to ensure plans remain up-to-date and responsive to local needs. This Local Plan is being prepared in that context, and any future changes to governance arrangements will be considered as part of the ongoing plan-making process.

Government consultation on a revised planning framework

19. At the same time as we are consulting on this plan, the Government is also currently consulting on a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out national planning rules. The proposed changes include big reforms to how housing, infrastructure, and climate issues are planned for in the future.
20. However, these changes are still at consultation stage and will not come into effect immediately. The Government has made it clear that councils should keep moving forward under the current planning system rather than wait for the new rules. This is because having an up-to-date Local Plan is essential to make sure development happens in a planned way, with proper public involvement, rather than through speculative applications.
21. For this council, this means that we will continue preparing our Local Plan under the current regulations. The new NPPF will influence future plans, but our current review will be judged against the existing framework. Any references in this plan to the NPPF are to that of the current 2024 version, unless explicitly stated.

Responding to this Consultation

22. This document sets out a range of spatial options and emerging policy directions to help shape the future of the district and we are keen to hear your views. These are not fixed proposals, but rather a starting point for discussion. We genuinely want to hear from residents, businesses, community groups, and stakeholders about what matters to you, what you support, and where you have concerns. Your feedback will help us refine our approach and ensure the Local Plan reflects the priorities and aspirations of our communities.
23. This consultation is running from 6 February 2026 until 20 March 2026, and we look forward to hearing from you.

24. You can respond to the consultation by visiting our website **Local Plan review - New Forest District Council**, from here you will find all the details on how to respond.

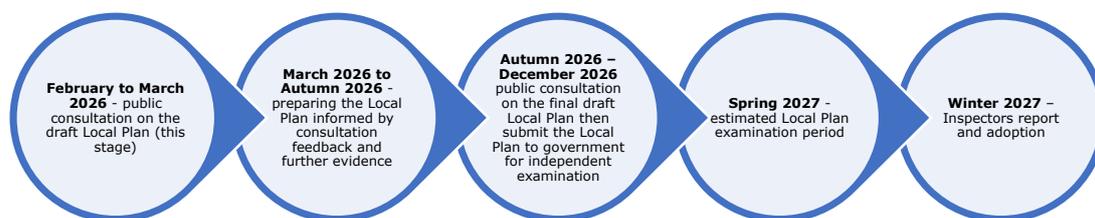
25. If you have any queries, please do contact the team by emailing **policyandplans@nfdc.gov.uk** or calling 023 8028 5345 and selecting option 1.

Timetable and next steps

26. Your comments will help us to refine our options into detailed policies and development site allocations. This will include a full assessment of the infrastructure, facilities and services required to absorb new homes in a sustainable way and to meet the needs of future residents.

27. We intend to consult you again in the Autumn of 2026 on our final draft proposals. The draft Local Plan will then be submitted for public examination by an independent planning inspector appointed by the government. If the Local Plan is found sound it will be adopted by the council. Once adopted it is the legal basis for deciding whether to approve planning applications for development.

28. The timetable is indicative and will be updated as necessary on our website. The key stages of the Local Plan Review are:



- **February to March 2026** - public consultation on the draft Local Plan (this stage)
- **March 2026 to Autumn 2026** - preparing the Local Plan informed by consultation feedback and further evidence

- **Autumn 2026 to December 2026** - public consultation on the final draft Local Plan, then submit the Local Plan to government for independent examination
- **Spring 2027** - estimated Local Plan examination period
- **Winter 2027** – Inspectors report and adoption

Role of other Local Authorities, Agencies, Organisations, and Individuals in the Plan

29. Whilst we have responsibility to produce a local plan, other tiers of local government are also relevant to the process, both as consultees for the review, and also having responsibilities and/or produce plans which we will need to have regard to. This includes Hampshire County Council, town and parish councils as well as neighbouring authorities.

30. More details of consultees and the consultation process can be found in our **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**.

Evidence base

31. We will be preparing a number of companion documents that will support the proposed sites and policies set out in Local Plan. Published versions of these documents will be made available as and when they are finalised to ensure transparency for the work being undertaken.

32. Those documents currently available and published are:

- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (2025)
- Interim Sustainability Appraisal (2026)
- Habitat Regulations Assessment Scoping Report (2025)
- Housing Needs Assessment (2025)
- Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Built Facilities Strategy (2025)
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2025)
- Interim Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2026)
- Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment (2025)

- Landscape Value, Settlement Gaps and Green & Blue Infrastructure in the New Forest Waterside (2024)
- Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy - Rest of district (2025)
- Green Belt Study: Part 1 Methodology and Provisional Findings on Grey Belt (2026)
- Economic Needs Assessment (2025)

33. Other studies currently being prepared include:

- Open Spaces and Play Area Assessment
- Whole Plan Viability Assessment
- Green Belt Study: Part 2 Main Findings
- Landscape Character Assessment (Including settlement character assessments)
- Landscape Sensitivity and capacity
- Greater Horseshoe Bat Study (Avon Valley)
- Local Plan Transport Assessment
- Settlement Hierarchy Study

Glossary of key terms

34. A glossary of key planning terms can be viewed via:

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/services/help/glossary>

Draft Vision and Plan Objectives

Our Draft Vision for New Forest District Council 2043

35. It is essential that the Local Plan is underpinned by a clear and collective vision of where we want our area to be as a place to live, work and visit by 2043.

36. Once agreed, the vision will represent a common goal and commitment and will form the basis of the plan objectives and policies that flow from it.

37. Our draft vision has been drafted on a 'plan area' basis, with further detail on how particular locations are expected to change set out in the policies that follow.

38. It has an economic, social and environmental dimension in line with the definition of sustainable development embedded in national policy and also reflects the six main themes which have underpinned our local plan consultation to date:

- meeting the housing needs of all
- a vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy
- tackling the climate and ecological emergency
- healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities
- an enhanced natural and built environment
- attractive, accessible and thriving places

New Forest District Council 2043 – Our draft Vision

"By 2043, the plan area will be a resilient, inclusive, vibrant and thriving place where communities flourish, nature is protected and enhanced, and development is sustainable, well-connected, and responsive to local needs. The Local Plan will guide growth that supports homes for all, a thriving economy, vibrant town centres, healthy lifestyles, and climate action, while safeguarding the unique landscapes, heritage, and character of the District from the New Forest National Park and coastline to its historic towns and rural communities."

39. Views on the draft vision are welcomed as part of the consultation so that it can be refined and finalised as we look to work up the full draft version of the Local Plan.

Local Plan and Sustainability Objectives

40. A key part of the Local Plan process is that of a Sustainability Appraisal. The Sustainability Appraisal assesses the potential environmental, social, and economic effects of a Local Plan. Its purpose is to ensure that sustainability considerations are integrated into the development of planning policies and proposals. We have identified 13 topics for the Local Plan review to support and achieve sustainable development, which will feed into the Sustainability Appraisal. These are listed in Table 1. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal accompanying this consultation provides further details about how they are being used to appraise site selection and emerging policies.

1. Accessibility (to community infrastructure)
Promote equitable access to housing, services, and community facilities through sustainable, well-connected, and inclusive development.
2. Air Quality
Improve air quality and reduce exposure to air pollution.
3. Biodiversity and green/blue infrastructure
Conserve and enhance biodiversity, strengthen ecological networks, and safeguard and improve the extent and quality of designated sites, priority

habitats and species, and multifunctional green and blue infrastructure within and surrounding the Plan Area, in line with national and local nature recovery aims.
4. Climate change adaptation Support resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk
5. Climate change mitigation Mitigate climate change by supporting decarbonisation, with a focus on both transport and the built environment.
6. Communities Support inclusive, healthy, and resilient communities by addressing the needs of all age groups and social groups, improving access to services, and promoting equality and social cohesion
7. Economy and employment Support a productive, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all.
8. Historic environment Protect, conserve and enhance designated and un-designated heritage assets and their setting within and surrounding the Plan Area.
9. Housing Provide for the full range of housing needs and maximise delivery of affordable housing.
10. Landscape Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape, including the National Park, National Landscapes, and green infrastructure corridors.
11. Soils and resources Protect soil and mineral resources, and manage waste effectively.
12. Transport Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.
13. Water Protect and enhance water quality and resources, ensuring sustainable water management to support current and future needs while reducing pollution risks.

Table 1 Local Plan Sustainability Framework

Supporting Themes for the NFDC Local Plan Vision (2025–2043)

41. The sustainability objectives encompass a wide spectrum of important issues and more detailed questions that the Local Plan Review will address. Amongst these there are a smaller number of themes that present a particular challenge or will require a judgement to be made between potentially conflicting high priorities. Together, these themes translate the sustainability objectives into a clear spatial and strategic direction for the Local Plan, guiding decisions that balance competing priorities and deliver sustainable development across the Plan Area.

People – Supporting Inclusive, Healthy, and Resilient Communities

- affordable and accessible housing for all generations, especially young people and families, to address demographic challenges and prevent displacement.
- health and wellbeing embedded in planning, with improved access to GPs, dentists, and leisure facilities, and integration of active travel and green spaces.
- community cohesion through support for neighbourhood planning, community hubs, and inclusive public spaces that foster social interaction and reduce isolation.
- education and skills provision aligned with growth, including early years, schools, and adult learning opportunities, especially in areas of new development.

Place – Protecting and Enhancing the District’s Unique Character

- safeguarding the New Forest National Park and Cranborne Chase National Landscape, with sensitive development that respects their setting and ecological value.
- heritage protection, including conservation area reviews and policies that support the sustainable reuse of historic assets.

- high-quality design and placemaking, ensuring new development contributes positively to local character, accessibility, and environmental performance.
- green infrastructure and open space provision that is well-connected, inclusive, and multifunctional—supporting recreation, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
- safeguarding the wider landscape character and quality across the Plan Area, including areas outside the National Park and National Landscape, ensuring that all development respects local distinctiveness, visual sensitivity, and the findings of the Landscape Sensitivity Study.

Prosperity – Enabling a Thriving and Diverse Local Economy

- town centre regeneration and support for high streets through improved public realm, and promotion of local enterprise.
- employment and innovation, including support for marine, port, and rural sectors, and maximising opportunities from the Solent Freeport.
- digital and transport connectivity, ensuring all communities have access to reliable broadband and sustainable transport options.
- tourism and culture, with policies that balance visitor economy growth with protection of local communities and sensitive environments.

Climate and Nature – Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency

- net zero by 2050, with policies promoting energy-efficient buildings, renewable energy generation, and low-carbon infrastructure.
- nature recovery and biodiversity net gain, including wildlife corridors, green buffers, and strategic habitat enhancement.
- flood risk and coastal resilience, with nature-based solutions, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and protection of groundwater and river systems.
- tree planting and green design, integrated into urban and rural development to support climate adaptation and community wellbeing.

Connectivity and Inclusion – Linking People, Places, and Opportunities

- integrated transport networks, with improved bus services, reinstated ferry and rail links, and active travel infrastructure across the District.
- accessible development, ensuring new housing and services are located near employment, education, healthcare and access to green space.
- equitable infrastructure investment, with planning policies ensuring timely delivery of utilities, schools, and healthcare aligned with growth.
- Digital inclusion, supporting mobile and broadband connectivity, especially in rural and underserved areas.

Table 2 demonstrates how these themes link to the relevant sustainability appraisal objectives.

Theme	Relevant Sustainability Objectives/Framework	How the theme supports the Objectives/Framework
People – Supporting Inclusive, Healthy, and Resilient Communities	1. Accessibility (to community infrastructure) 6. Communities 9. Housing	Supports housing for all generations, access to services, health and wellbeing, education, and community cohesion.
Place – Protecting and Enhancing the District’s Unique Character	2. Air Quality 3. Biodiversity and green/blue infrastructure 8. Historic Environment 10. Landscape	Focuses on safeguarding landscapes, heritage, design quality, and green infrastructure.
Prosperity – Enabling a Thriving and Diverse Local Economy	1. Accessibility (to community infrastructure) 4. Climate Change adaptation 7. Economy and Employment 11. Soils and Resources	Promotes employment, innovation, town centre vitality, sustainable natural resources, and sustainable tourism.
Climate and Nature – Tackling the	1. Air Quality 3. Biodiversity and green/blue infrastructure	Support resilience, address net zero, support decarbonisation, nature

Theme	Relevant Sustainability Objectives/Framework	How the theme supports the Objectives/Framework
Climate and Ecological Emergency	4. Climate Change adaptation 5. Climate Change mitigation 11. Soils and Resources 12. Transport 13. Water	recovery, flood resilience, transport, and resilient design.
Connectivity and Inclusion – Linking People, Places, and Opportunities	2. Accessibility (to community infrastructure) 6. Communities 7. Economy and Employment 12. Transport	Supports integrated transport, digital access, equitable infrastructure, and inclusive development.

Table 2 The links between the Local Plan themes and Sustainability Appraisal objectives/framework

Strategic Policy Areas

42. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that we must create planning policies that reflect what their area needs most. These policies should be based on an assessment of local housing needs and should support the wider goals for the area. We propose to include strategic policies on the following topics as part of our local plan review and make clear which are strategic and which are more specifically aligned to Development Management policies.

43. At this stage, some policies are more developed than others and some require further evidence to be completed before we can suggest an option.

- Spatial Strategy
- Homes for all
- Natural Environment
- Green Belt
- High Quality Design, Landscape and Placemaking

- Climate Change and Community Safety
- Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity
- Planning for and Delivering Infrastructure
- Sustainable Transport
- Open Space, Recreation and Play
- Historic Environment

Consultation questions

- 1) Does our draft vision align with how you would like the District (outside the National Park) to be as a place to live, work, and visit?
- 2) Do you think we have chosen the right priorities for the Local Plan?
- 3) Do you have any comments on the published evidence based studies that support our Local Plan?

Introduction

44. The overarching spatial strategy will be central to delivering the vision and aims for the Plan Area for the proposed Plan period 2025-2043. It will also inform the preparation of neighbourhood plans. In setting out the planning strategy for directing growth, our development strategy for the area will recognise our environmental constraints, the availability of land for development, the viability of development and the need to balance such matters against supporting the local economy and seeking to appropriately address local housing need, including for affordable housing.

45. Central to the current government's reforms is the desire to boost housing supply and delivery, and the requirement for Local Plans to make every possible effort to meet their housing need. The **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF paragraph 16) 2024 sets out that plans should:

-
- a) be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development
-

b) be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable

c) be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees

d) contain policies that are clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals; e) be accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation and

f) serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area (including policies in this Framework, where relevant).

46. Strategic policies setting out the strategy for the area are fundamental plan-making requirements of the NPPF and the council has a duty to plan for the future needs of the community.

47. The spatial strategy is therefore at the heart of the Local Plan. It will be crucial to setting out a positive framework for addressing housing needs as well as addressing other economic, social and environmental priorities, and serve as a platform for communities to shape their local area.

Planning context of the area

Strategic context

48. New Forest District is in southwest Hampshire, bordered by Southampton to the east and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to the west. At its heart lies the New Forest National Park, which is managed by a separate planning authority. The District includes three main areas around the edges of the National Park: the Avon Valley and Downlands, the South Coastal Towns, and the Waterside. These areas make up about a third of the District's land but are home to over 80% of its population. Most people live in the towns of Totton, Hythe, Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood and Fordingbridge, along with many smaller villages and rural communities. The area is known for its mix of countryside, coast, and dispersed towns and villages.

49. There are a number of key strategic cross-boundary matters that the council is working with neighbouring authorities to address, namely housing need and distribution; the mitigation of recreational impacts of development on the New Forest and Solent international nature conservation sites; and employment need and distribution.

What are our constraints to development?

50. Our Plan Area is significantly affected by major physical and environmental designations and constraints. In '**Footnote 7**' the NPPF makes it clear that these areas are intrinsically undevelopable. Approximately 57% of the Plan Area (i.e. outside of the National Park), is affected by constraints the NPPF lists in footnote 7 as providing a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type, or distribution of development in the Plan Area. These constraints include nature conservation designations (of both international and national importance); Green Belt; areas at risk of flooding or erosion; and National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

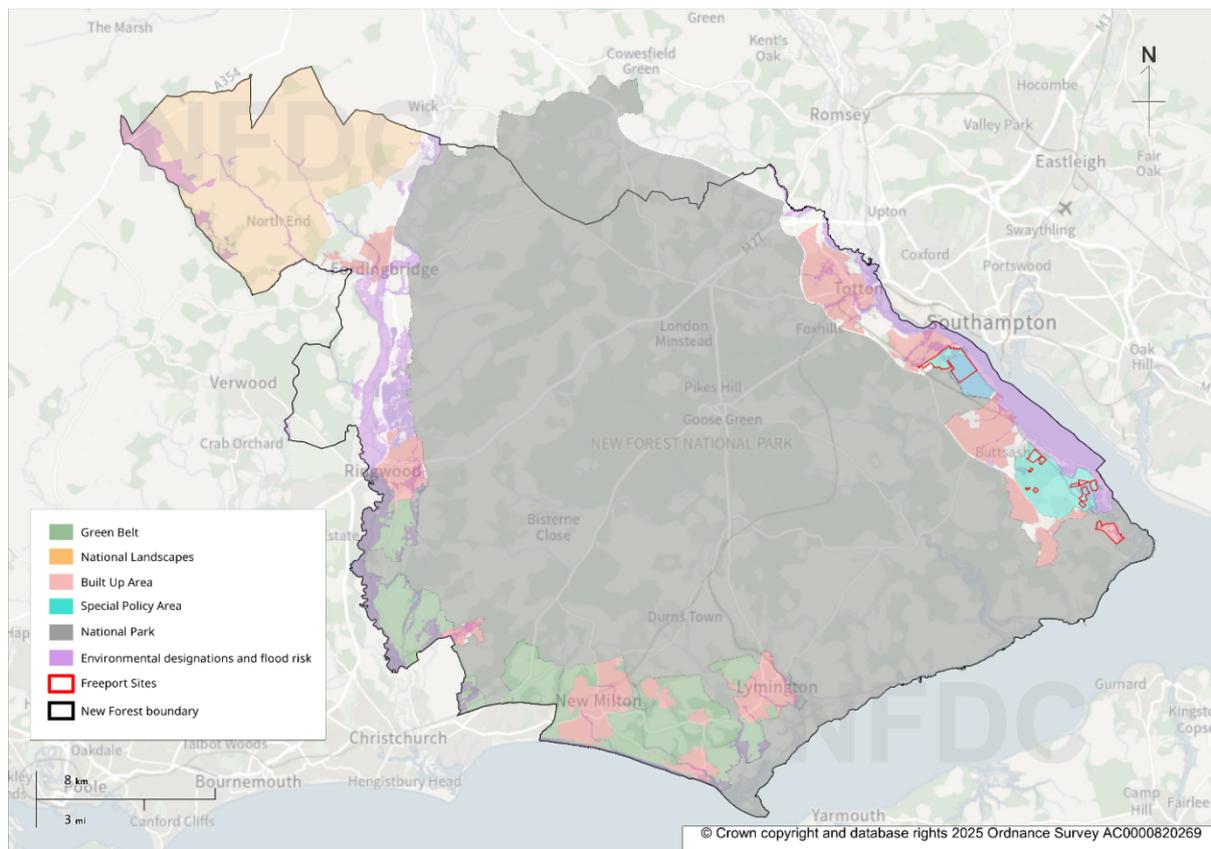


Figure 2 Constraints affecting the Plan Area.

51. The significant extent and ecological sensitivity of international nature conservation sites in and adjoining the Plan Area (including those within the New Forest National Park) makes accommodating significant new development a major challenge. All development in the Plan Area must meet the requirements of the **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017** and is required to mitigate any impact it could have on international conservation sites both within, and close to, the Plan Area. Potential impacts that development will be required to mitigate include:

- effects on plants and species due to traffic emissions on roads through the New Forest
- water quality impacts from increased discharge of phosphates or nitrates to the River Avon or to the Solent and Southampton Water respectively

- recreational disturbance in the Solent and New Forest arising from an increased population.

52. The requirement for all residential development to mitigate its impacts on international nature conservation sites also affects the quantum of housing that individual sites can deliver. This is particularly the case on sites of 50 or more dwellings, where on-site provision of Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace (ANRG) is required under the adopted mitigation strategy. While this can limit the maximum number of dwellings a site can accommodate, it also presents opportunities for enhanced place-making. On-site ANRG provision can support the creation of sensitively designed settings that promote healthy lifestyles, deliver biodiversity gains, and help integrate development into the landscape in a way that reduces its potential harm. These benefits can make otherwise challenging sites more acceptable and contribute positively to the character and sustainability of new communities, while ensuring compliance with the Habitat Regulations.

53. A further challenge to identifying and delivering housing in the Plan Area is that the vast majority of the Plan Area is within either a Minerals Consultation Zone or Minerals Safeguarding Area. Prior extraction of minerals may significantly delay or prevent the delivery of housing until such time as those important mineral reserves are worked.

54. There is also a need to secure continued investment in infrastructure to ensure that the necessary infrastructure to accommodate additional housing delivery is in place. The council will continue to work in partnership with all infrastructure and service providers, to make sure that it understands the existing and projected future capacity of the infrastructure serving the plan area, and whether there are existing deficiencies which are likely to be a significant constraint to new development.

Demographics

55. The New Forest's population makes planning more complicated. In 2021, there were around 175,800 people living in the area (including the National Park and the wider Plan Area), with slightly more men than women. This is 700 fewer people than in 2011, a small drop of 0.4%. Meanwhile, Hampshire's population grew by 6.3%, and the UK's by 6.6%. This means New Forest is one of only 25 places in the UK where the population has gone down. Due to this, the Local Plan needs to help address and reverse this trend as much as possible.

56. Figure 3 has been prepared by Hampshire County Council using Census Data and presents the District's percentage population change between 2001 and 2021. While the map highlights areas of decline, particularly in the Waterside sub-area and parts of the District within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, it is important to note that percentage changes can be exaggerated in small rural parishes where even a modest numerical change may appear significant.

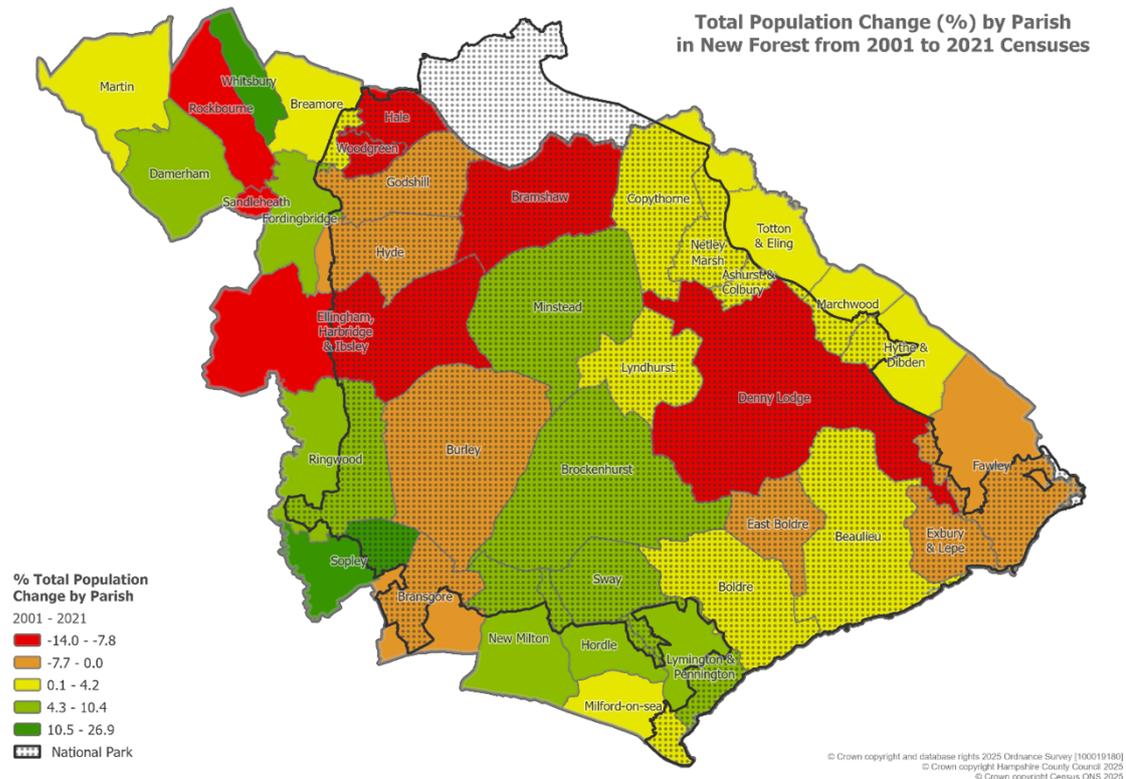


Figure 3 District's percentage population change between the period 2001 to 2021

57. The New Forest has an ageing population and a decreasing working age population. The population begins to rapidly increase in age, compared with the national profile, around the 50-54 cohort in the Waterside and Avon Valley sub-areas, but later in the Coastal area where it is around 55-59. There is a marked peak in the Southern Coastal area in the 70-74 cohort indicating the popularity of the area for retirement. Totton and the Waterside has a younger age profile with a notable peak in the 10-14 cohort, which is also evident in the Avon Valley and Downlands. All areas see a significant deficit amongst the 15-44 cohorts compared with the national profile. Figure 4 shows the population profile in each of the Plan Areas three sub-areas. Parish-level data has been collated by Hampshire County Council.

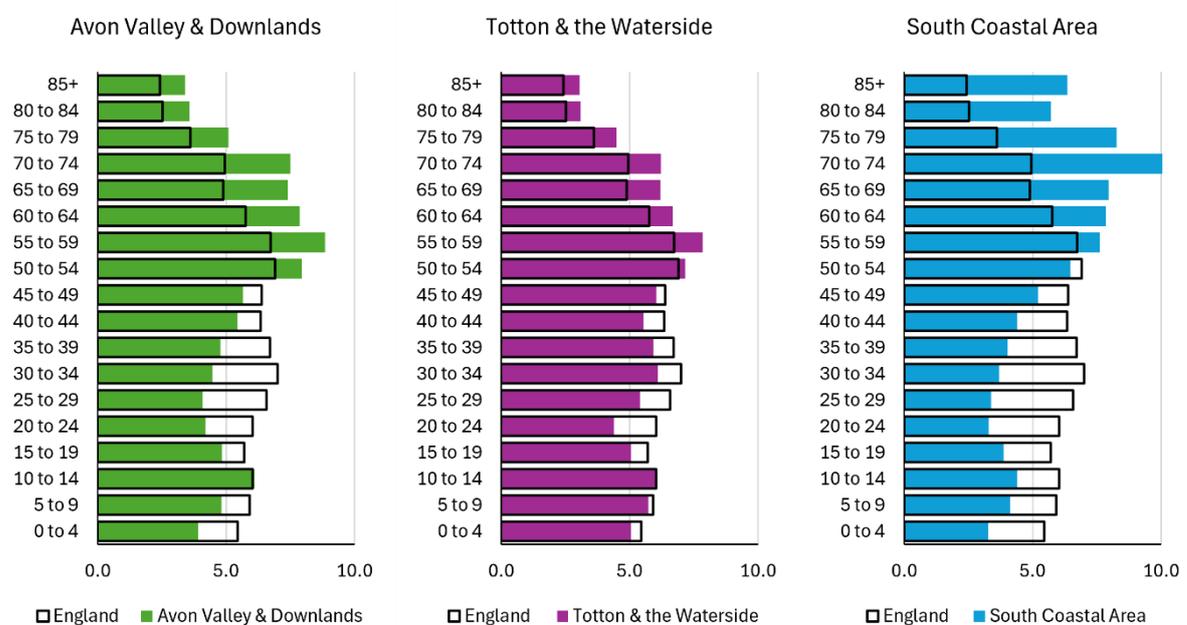


Figure 4 Population profile in each of the Plan Areas three sub-areas

58. The New Forest has an older population compared to the rest of the region and the country. Around 37% of people living in the District are aged 60 or over, which is much higher than the national average of 24%. Although changes to the retirement age mean people are working longer, many still choose to move to the area when they retire. As a result, the number of people aged 65 and over is expected to keep rising.

59. At the same time, the proportion of people of working age (16–64) is expected to fall — from 55% in 2018 to 51% by 2043. This is well below the national average, which is projected to be 61% in 2043 (down from 62.5% in 2018). This growing gap has implications for the local economy and the demand for health and social care services.

60. The average age of residents in the New Forest is now 51, up from 47 in 2011. This is one of the highest in the Southeast and well above the national average of 40. Younger adults, especially those aged 20 to 44, are under-represented in the District. Life expectancy in the New Forest is also higher than both the regional and national averages for men and women.

61. Figure 5 shows the age and gender breakdown of the population on Census Day in 2021. It also includes a comparison with the national picture for England (shown as a black outline), which highlights how the District’s population is more weighted towards older age groups. On Census Day, the District had about 84,500 men (48.1%) and 91,300 women (51.9%).

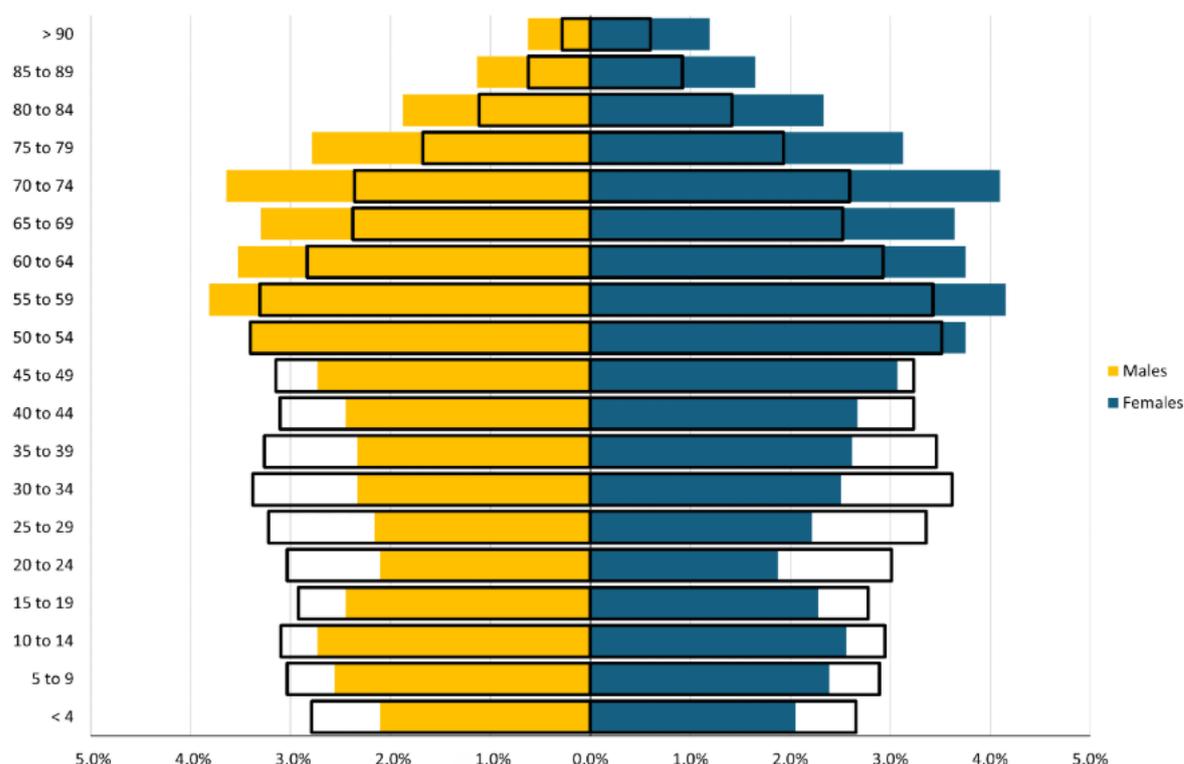


Figure 5 Age and sex structure of the population on Census Day in 2021

Furthering the purposes of the National Park / National Landscape

Aim and Objectives

62. The Plan Area houses most of the population of the New Forest District as a whole and largely surrounds the New Forest National Park. The relationship between the Plan Area and the surrounding countryside, including the National Park and Cranborne Chase National Landscape, is a distinctive feature and one of the main attractions for residents and businesses seeking a green and natural environment in which to live and work.
63. Due to the geographical nature of the Plan Area and the National Park, preserving our shared natural assets, including nationally and internationally significant nature conservation areas, is of great importance. Infrastructure, including transport links, is shared and interdependent between the National Park, the National Landscape and the Plan Area. Due to this geography, and to protect the National Park and National Landscape, most new housing and development to meet the District's needs will likely be focused within the Plan Area. This approach reflects both national planning policy (including **paragraphs 189 and 190 of the NPPF**) and local priorities to safeguard the unique environment.
64. The NPPF explains the importance of protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, biodiversity, and soils. Policy direction must recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the benefits of natural capital and ecosystem services, including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, trees, and woodland. The Local Plan review should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national, and locally designated sites, allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, and take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure.
65. Great weight is given in national policy to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection.

66. The policy direction must aim to create high-quality, beautiful, and sustainable buildings and places. Good design is of vital importance in sustainable development and community acceptance. The preparation of design guides or codes are one way in which site options and policy approaches can be tailored to local circumstances. Such codes can provide the tools and processes for assessing and improving design quality.

What you told us

67. As part of the previous Issues and Scope consultation, respondents were clear that the protection of the unique context of the New Forest is key. Suggestions on how this could be achieved included introducing a physical buffer between the National Park and new development, tourism initiatives with low environmental impacts, increased green connectivity between the National Park and settlements, reduction in car usage, and joint working with the National Park Authority to develop policies.

68. In terms of the location of new development, respondents considered that the council should resist pressures to develop greenfield land, and that brownfield and urban infill sites should be prioritised and utilised first, thereby keeping development away from the National Park boundaries.

69. New development within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape area was not felt appropriate or should be very limited, sensitively placed, and thoughtfully designed to align with the character of the National Landscape. A smaller number of respondents felt that the National Park should not be a reason to avoid meeting growth needs, and that it is possible to accommodate sustainable development is around the fringes.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

70. **The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA)** places a duty on statutory bodies to 'seek to further the purposes' of National Parks and National Landscapes. This replaces a previous duty to 'have regard' to those purposes. The duty is intended to facilitate improved outcomes for England's protected landscapes, which are in line with their statutory purposes.

71. The statutory purposes of National Parks outline the key reasons for their designation and describe the overall focus for their management. These are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the national park by the public.

Policy direction

72. Due to the obligation to further the statutory purposes, there is a need for robust mitigation to be applied to ensure the enhancement of protected landscapes.

73. For National Parks, conflicts occasionally arise between the first statutory purpose of conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and the second purpose of public enjoyment of the special qualities. Where this is the case, the Sandford Principle is applied to ensure that greater weight is given to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the national park. The Sandford Principle states that when conservation and public enjoyment in National Parks conflict and cannot be reconciled, conservation must take priority. Protecting nature is especially important in the New Forest National Park because much of its land holds international recognition and designation for environmental value and nature conservation.

74. In relation to the New Forest National Park, the proposed policy approach will consider the relevant information contained and relevant objectives / actions from the **New Forest National Park Partnership Plan**. This includes five theme-based agendas for action which have also been used to inform the council's **Green & Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Technical Study**. The statutory purposes of the New Forest National Park, in conjunction with its local objectives, have informed the identification of the priority projects in the GBI study. The council therefore needs to provide a clear policy approach for the implementation of the key priority projects alongside emerging growth points and site allocations.

75. In relation to the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, a similar approach is proposed. In the case of Cranborne Chase the purpose is to 'conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Area'. This combines the landform, geology, plants, animals and landscape features including the rich history of human settlement over the centuries. Where the GBI study identifies projects that would help with this purpose we will seek to encourage those schemes or incorporate them into our growth options, as appropriate.
76. Existing adopted Local Plan policy refers to safeguarding the protected landscapes and their settings. The existing approach seeks to locate new development sensitively and given the requirement to meet assessed need, our approach may require additional elements which address the possibility of new satellite development or even new villages. To address this, we propose to update the policy approach to ensure that development is directed to environmentally appropriate sites that achieve a high standard of design which maintain and enhance local character and amenity. In the case of new settlement areas, where character must necessarily change, the proposed policy approach is that sites must deliver an environmental net gain appropriate to their landscape setting (see Placemaking section below).
77. Proposals for development within or affecting the Cranborne Chase National Landscape or the New Forest National Park will need to demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in the relevant Management Plans for these areas. We will also ensure that the strengthened purpose for both the National Park and National Landscape is reflected in our policy approach, and a potential policy strategic approach could be:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach: Protection of the New Forest National Park and Cranborne Chase National Landscape

A potential policy approach is to ensure that development proposals demonstrate that they seek to further the purposes of the New Forest National Park and Cranborne Chase National Landscape. This approach would seek to ensure that development proposals:

- conserve and enhance the landscape character, scenic beauty, and tranquillity of the New Forest National Park conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public
- conserve and enhance the character, quality and natural beauty of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Area.
- respect the area's historic environment, biodiversity, and ecological networks
- avoid or mitigate light pollution and support the Cranborne Chase National Landscape's designation as an International Dark Sky Reserve
- are of high-quality design that reflects local vernacular and landscape sensitivity
- do not constitute major development unless exceptional circumstances and public interest can be clearly demonstrated, in accordance with national policy
- Recognise and respond to the wider landscape context beyond designated boundaries, including the findings of local landscape character and sensitivity studies, to ensure development respects and reinforces the distinctive qualities of the setting

Consultation questions

- 4) Protected nature areas, Green Belt, flood risk, and National Landscapes all help shape decisions about development. How should decisions the Local Plan balance these factors when deciding where and how much new building should happen?
- 5) How should the Local Plan help protect and support the New Forest National Park and Cranborne Chase National Landscape? Do you agree with the way we plan to do this?

What development do we need to plan for?

Housing need

78.To fulfil the government's priority of boosting the supply and delivery of housing, the NPPF requires local authorities to calculate the housing need for their area using the government's 'standard method'. The standard method housing need figure is calculated by the following steps as set out in the published **Planning Practice Guidance** (PPG) at Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 2a-004-20241212:

Step 1 seeks to grow the housing stock in each local authority area by a flat 0.8% growth per annum. This sets the baseline.

Step 2 is an affordability uplift to the baseline which uses an average of the last five years' affordability ratios. For each 1% the average ratio is above 5, the housing stock baseline is increased by 0.95%, with the calculation being as follows: Adjustment Factor = $(\text{Affordability Ratio} - 5) / 5 \times 0.95$

79.The current (as of August 2025) standard method local housing need for the New Forest District (including the National Park) is 1,511 dwellings per annum. However, it is important to note that this figure of 1,511 dwellings per annum covers the entire District (including the area of the New Forest National Park for which New Forest District Council is not the local planning authority) as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) data used to calculate the standard method is only available by local authority area and is not available by plan area geography.

80.The PPG states, at Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 68-023- 20190722, that where strategic policy-making authorities do not align with local authority boundaries, or the data required for the model are not available, such as in national parks, an alternative approach may have to be used. New Forest consists of two local planning authorities, namely New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA).

81. The PPG is clear that such alternatives should take into consideration the best available evidence on the amount of existing housing stock within their planning authority boundary, local house prices, earnings and housing affordability. As a result, the locally determined alternative must be as consistent with the standard method as possible. The alternative approach will be scrutinised when examining the Local Plan. The local housing need figure should be considered through the plan-making process and the housing requirement established in local plans.
82. As set out in our Housing Market Assessment (Iceni, 2025), it has been calculated that 83% of the dwelling stock in the local authority area is within the New Forest District (outside the National Park) Plan Area. No affordability ratio data is readily accessible for the Plan Area and therefore the average affordability ratio as calculated through the standard method is used and is unchanged. Following the standard method steps, this gives a housing need for the Plan Area of 1,254 dwellings per annum. This approach generates a need figure for the Plan Area specifically and is considered consistent with the PPG. However, it should be noted that any deviation from the standard method, including the application of local adjustments, would need to be robustly justified and tested through the Local Plan examination process.
83. Therefore, the housing need figure based on the standard method specifically for the Plan Area could be 1,254 dwellings per annum, which would equate to an overall housing need of 22,572 dwellings over the current proposed plan period of 2025 to 2043. This is more than double the current adopted Local Plan 2016-2036 housing requirement of 10,420 dwellings.

Towards a housing target

84. Addressing future housing needs is one of the greatest challenges for the Local Plan, and the scale of change required to increase delivery across our area is significant. The Local Plan needs to provide for the right number of homes, of the right type and in the right locations. As part of the overall scale of provision, there is also a need to ensure that the needs of different household groups are met, including for affordable housing and for those with specialist needs.

85. We fully acknowledge the need for a significant increase in the delivery of housing across the country, and the benefits this will have in growth of the wider national economy. Increasing overall housing delivery is a key priority for the current government, which aims to deliver a total of 1.5 million homes between 2024 and 2029.

86. A housing need of 1,254 new homes per year would represent a substantial uplift in delivery rates across the district and presents considerable challenges, particularly in light of the environmental, infrastructure, and policy constraints affecting the area. As shown in Figure 6, the standard method is approximately six times the recent average of 246 homes delivered annually, and nearly double the highest single year of delivery recorded in the past 35 years. These figures highlight the scale of change required, even before factoring in any unmet need from the New Forest National Park Authority and neighbouring authorities.

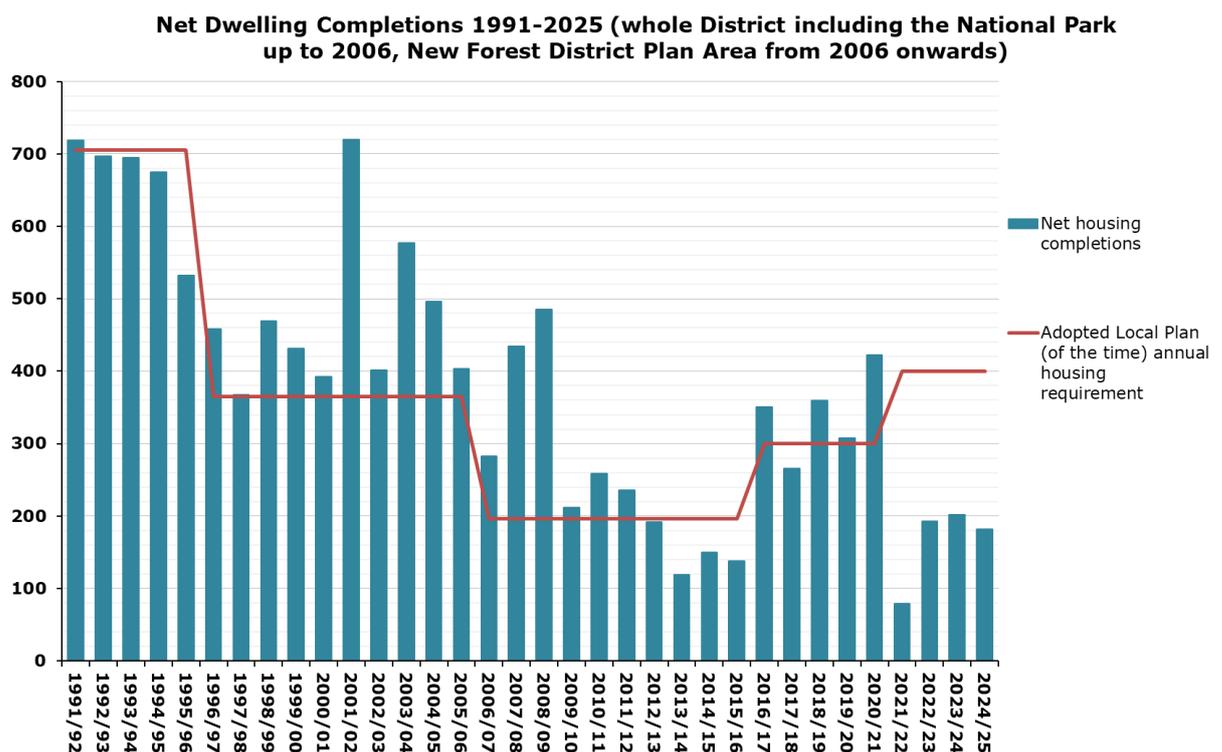


Figure 6 Net housing completions 1991/92-2024/25 (whole District including the National Park up to 2005/06, New Forest District (outside the National Park) Plan Area from 2006/07 onwards)

87. Our Local Plan will seek to ensure that a supply of land for housing over the plan period is made available by drawing on several sources and identifying the housing capacity realistically deliverable within the proposed Plan period from such sources. These include:

- Remaining allocations and commitments – sites which are allocated in the previous local plan and are being rolled forward through the new Local Plan and sites where permission has been granted but the development not yet built
- Small site windfall allowance – sites that have not been permitted or specifically allocated for development and unexpectedly become available for development during the Plan period. The allowance is based on clear trend-based evidence demonstrating reliability of supply
- New site allocations in the new Local Plan – due to the scale of housing need, new site allocations will be necessary. Sites will be selected based on the findings of a comprehensive site identification and assessment process (known as a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)) of both brownfield and greenfield land in the Plan Area; Sustainability Appraisal; and engagement with infrastructure providers

[Existing housing supply as of 1 April 2025](#)

88. Table 2 shows the land supply position as of 1 April 2025 for the period 2025 to 2043.

Source of supply	Number of dwellings
Strategic Site Allocations	4,959
Other Permitted Large Sites (10+ dwellings)	214
Permitted Small Sites (1-9 Dwellings)	285 (10% discount applied)
Contribution to housing supply from permitted sites for Use Class C2 care homes	114

Source of supply	Number of dwellings
Non-permissioned developable Local Plan Part 2 (2014) allocations	162
Small Site Windfall Allowance	1,101 (Informed by past trends demonstrating reliability of supply)
Total	6,835

Table 2 Existing sources of supply 2025-2043

89. A review has been undertaken of all the large sites (sites of 10 or more dwellings) within the existing sources of supply in order to ensure that there is a reasonable prospect of there being at least some housing delivery on the sites by the end of the Plan period (currently proposed to be 2043).

90. Following this review, a number of sites have been excluded from the overall total housing supply figures. This is because, based on the current information available, it is either not known whether there is a realistic prospect of the site being delivered by 2043 or it is considered likely that housing development is no longer achievable on the site.

91. Of these 2,320 dwellings, 1,510 dwellings were originally anticipated at the following two sites 1,380 dwellings are from the former Fawley Power Station site (Policy SS 4) and 130 dwellings are from the Land at Caird Avenue (Saved policies NMT4-NMT6) which are now unlikely to come forward for residential development. Further information on existing sites currently excluded from the current housing supply is set out in the interim HELAA.

92. The potential total contribution from the other sites, if they become available/achievable, currently not forming part of the housing supply is therefore relatively modest (around 810 dwellings) and is not sufficient to address housing needs.

Potential future housing supply up to 2043

93. Based on the housing need for the Plan Area potentially being 22,572 dwellings over the period 2025 to 2043 (1,254 dwellings per annum), after taking account of the existing supply (set out in Table 2), there is a potential residual housing need of 15,737 dwellings.

94. Given the scale of residual need for new homes in the short, medium and long term, we are likely to need to plan for a mixture of sites: major new growth areas and smaller sites. The key will be to select such sites in the right locations.

95. Based on the interim site assessment work that has been undertaken to date, Table 3 sets out the sources of potential future housing supply in the Plan Area to cover the proposed Local Plan period of 2025-2043. More information on the potential sources of future supply is set out in the interim HELAA.

96. The potential sources of future supply are divided into the following categories:

- potential Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs)
- other potential development sites outside the defined built-up areas identified for further consideration
- potential development sites within the defined built-up areas

97. All sites identified in these potential supply categories will be considered further through the Local Plan review process and will be subject to more detailed testing and assessment to establish whether they are suitable, available and achievable in the Plan period. They are not proposed allocations, and their identification in this document does not in any way confirm that they will be allocated in the Local Plan review or be granted planning permission for development. The potential capacity figures do not indicate council support for planning applications for sites which are unallocated, nor that the indicated capacity would be acceptable.

98. The potential supply identified is subject to change (either by way of sites being added, sites being removed, or indicative estimated capacities and/or delivery projections being revised) as more detailed assessment work is undertaken to inform the next stage of the Local Plan review.

99. In row A, the figure is an initial estimate of the number of dwellings that may be deliverable from each potential SDGO in the Plan period. These Plan period initial delivery estimates are high-level and informed by studies undertaken nationally on build-out rates and lead-in times for major large-scale development sites. They are an initial high-level estimate only and much further work will be needed in order to demonstrate the deliverability/developability of any potential site in the Plan period.

	Source of potential new supply	Estimate of potential number of dwellings in the period 2025-2043
A	Potential supply from Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs) identified for testing	5,850
B	Potential supply from other sites outside the defined built-up areas (identified/assessed through the interim HELAA)	680
C	Potential supply from sites within the defined built-up areas (identified/assessed through the interim HELAA)	217
D	Initial estimate of total potential new supply all potential sites are taken forward and concluded to be suitable, available, achievable and capable of delivering dwellings within the Plan period to 2043 (A+B+C)	6,747
E	Total existing supply (see Table 2)	6,835
F	Initial estimate of what the total potential supply 2025-2043 might be from all sources (D+E)	13,582
G	Standard Method housing need figure 2025-2043	22,572

	Source of potential new supply	Estimate of potential number of dwellings in the period 2025-2043
H	Initial estimate of possible housing supply shortfall against Standard Method housing need figure 2025-2043 (F-G)	8,910

Table 3 Total potential sources of supply 2025-2043

100. We will ‘leave no stone unturned’ in seeking to address the housing need in a manner that is sustainable and compatible with the environmental sensitivity of the Plan Area. However, despite our efforts to identify potential sources of future supply, Table 3 shows that even if every potential supply/site source currently identified were to be concluded as suitable, available and achievable in the Plan period, there would still be a significant current projected shortfall of at least 8,910 dwellings between the potential housing supply for the period 2025-2043 and the current standard method housing need over that period.

101. The accompanying Sustainability Appraisal has assessed further broad locations for their potential for development, notably in the northeast and southwest of the Plan Area, that have not been taken forward as potential growth options in this plan. As identified in the Sustainability Appraisal, these have not been taken forward as options due to environmental constraints and other deliverability related constraints. This is to ensure that the Local Plan focuses on realistic, sustainable growth options that can potentially be delivered within the plan period whilst safeguarding environmental assets and meeting infrastructure requirements.

102. Based on the evidence so far, it is very likely that there is not enough land available in the Plan Area to meet the housing need calculated using the Government's standard method. The shortfall is expected to be significant. This means the Local Plan will need to set a housing target that reflects what can realistically be delivered within the Plan Area during the plan period. We will continue working with neighbouring authorities to address any unmet need and will also assess the environmental and economic implications of different growth levels.

103. In relation to neighbourhood plans, the NPPF (paragraphs 69 and 70) sets out that within the overall housing requirement, strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations. Where it is not possible to provide a requirement figure for a neighbourhood area, the local planning authority should provide an indicative figure, if requested to do so by the neighbourhood planning body. We will take these NPPF requirements into account as we work toward establishing an appropriate and robust housing target for the Local Plan review.

Other development needs

104. While the delivery of an appropriate level of housing is one of the key aims of this Local Plan, planning for other land uses such as commercial/industrial floorspace, community and leisure facilities, schools, health facilities, gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation, open space, Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace and land suitable for nature recovery is also within the scope of this Local Plan. As such, we will need to plan for these needs as well.

Employment

105. Our Economic Needs Assessment identifies a gross employment floorspace need of up to around 142,600sqm (equating to a need for around 34ha of employment development land) for the period 2025-2043. This need figure includes an allowance as a 'safety margin' to provide a degree of contingency for any delays in sites coming forward for development and an additional buffer to enable the reprovision of floorspace that is currently anticipated to be lost over the course of the Plan period.

106. The projected general employment floorspace need is separate from the potential indicative demand for port uses which is assessed separately by the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment.

Freeport

107. The Solent Freeport was officially designated in December 2022. Within the Plan Area there are four Freeport tax sites: Fawley Waterside, Fawley refinery complex, Marchwood Port and Solent Gateway 2 (formerly known as the Marchwood Strategic Land Reserve). Marchwood Port is also a Freeport customs site. The **Solent Freeport Business Case** identifies that the initiative has the potential to unlock significant investment, create thousands of new jobs and enhance the region's credentials as a global gateway into the UK.

108. The Solent Freeport is a major economic intervention with expected significant future impact on the New Forest. Whilst planning applications for nationally significant development proposals would be likely to be determined by the government, there are likely to be implications for the area (economically, socially and environmentally) beyond the Freeport site boundaries. A new strategic policy setting out the council's priorities in relation to the Freeport is therefore needed in this Local Plan review.

Retail

109. Further work is still required in order to establish the need for retail and other main town centre uses in the Plan Area over the proposed Plan period 2025-2043.

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation

110. Our Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) has identified a need for 22 pitches emerging from the 33 households that met the 2024 Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS) planning definition. There is also a need for 7 pitches emerging from the 8 undetermined households (those households where it is not currently clear whether they meet the 2024 PPTS definition). The GTAA also identified a need for 4 plots for travelling showpeople emerging from the 9 households that met the 2024 PPTS planning definition.

Sustainable Spatial Strategy

Aim and Objectives

111. The overarching spatial strategy will be central to delivering the vision and aims for the Plan area to 2043 and will inform the preparation of neighbourhood plans. In setting out the long-term planning strategy for directing growth, our spatial strategy for the area will recognise our significant environmental constraints, the availability and achievability of land for development, the viability of development and the need to balance such matters against supporting the local economy and seeking to address local housing need, including for affordable housing.

What you told us

112. In the previous Issues and Scope consultation, there was a general call for brownfield and infill sites to be prioritised for development. The need for the settlement hierarchy to inform growth distribution was also noted, in addition to the need to reach a balance between growth in larger towns and also allowing expansion of smaller settlements. Some respondents felt that development should be scaled to be appropriate to the size and nature of the existing settlement. Others felt that sites of all sizes should be considered and that opportunities for significant extension of main settlements should be taken.

113. Concerns were raised regarding overdevelopment, with some respondents noting the need to maintain clear separation between distinct communities. Higher density development in larger towns was also suggested, though limited to ensure the character of towns is not diminished. Ensuring adequate infrastructure and service provision was also suggested as a primary focus.

Spatial options for the distribution of growth

114. We have identified a number of broad spatial options for distributing and accommodating development growth within the plan area. All options will be assessed against our objectives and themes and consultation responses, prior to selecting the preferred spatial strategy. These options are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The most appropriate spatial strategy is likely to involve a combination of two or more options or be a hybrid of all of them. The options are:

- Option 1: Development focussed on the towns and villages at a scale consistent with the current adopted **settlement hierarchy**
- Option 2: Large expansion of the towns
- Option 3: Large expansion of both the towns and main villages
- Option 4: New settlement(s)
- Option 5: Larger-scale development at the small rural villages including in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape

115. These 5 spatial options are set out below with commentary on the likely positive and negative impacts for each one. This includes an initial assessment under the framework set out in the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and SA Scoping Report which are published alongside this Regulation 18 consultation.

116. SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to minimising adverse effects and maximising the positives. Is it a requirement for local plans.

117. The Interim SA aims to cover the councils work to date, provide an appraisal of the current options and set out the next steps. It is important to be clear that the SA appraisal of spatial options is very high level at this stage, such that there is a need to make significant assumptions around site selection as well as scheme masterplanning, and infrastructure delivery. The Interim SA concludes that all options are associated with both positive and adverse effects and no option stands out as performing well or performing poorly overall. The options below are appraised in much more detail in the Interim SA published alongside this Regulation 18 document. It is important to note that further work will be undertaken to assess these options in more detail in the light of responses to this consultation and other technical studies in the coming months. For full details of option appraisals and discussion regarding the findings for specific topics see the full Interim SA which contains further details of the appraisal on the options.

118. The final SA Report will be published for consultation alongside the final draft plan later this year, and it must present an appraisal of “the plan and reasonable alternatives” with a particular focus on appraising “significant effects”.

Option 1: Development focussed on the towns and villages at a scale consistent with the current adopted settlement hierarchy

119. Under this option development would be focussed on the towns (tier 1 settlements) and villages (tier 2 and tier 3 settlements) within the Plan Area in a manner that is consistent with what is envisaged within the current adopted settlement hierarchy Policy STR4.

120. This means that large-scale development (which the current settlement hierarchy policy defines as development sites of 50 or more dwellings or 2,500 square metres or more floorspace of non-residential development (gross internal area)) would be focussed on appropriate locations within and adjoining the towns. Appropriate locations within and adjoining the main villages would accommodate additional medium-scale development (sites 10-49 homes or 500-2,500 square metres floorspace). Option 1 includes the possibility of small-scale development (sites of 1-9 dwellings) at appropriate locations in the small rural villages in the Plan Area at a scale that is consistent with the current adopted settlement hierarchy.
121. This option would also look to optimise the use of brownfield land and identify additional achievable opportunities for development within the defined built-up areas, including potentially increasing density where appropriate. Based on assessment work undertaken to date, Option 1 could potentially contribute 1,927 dwellings in the proposed Plan period 2025-2043 (if all potential sites in the Option are taken forward and concluded to be suitable, available, achievable and capable of delivering dwellings within the Plan period to 2043) in addition to the existing supply of 6,835 dwellings.
122. The Interim SA highlights that in regard to the low level of housing delivery Option 1 performs relatively well in terms of both biodiversity and landscape and performs among the best of the 5 options on these topics, but with uncertain effects in relation to water and land/soils. However, significant negative effects are attributed to housing provision because this option represents a low growth scenario, whilst neutral effects are identified in relation to the historic environment, communities, and air quality. Positive effects are attributed to the provision of locally arising needs in relation to employment and the economy.

Option 2: Large expansion of the towns

123. This option looks at potential new large expansions (development site options of 500 or more dwellings) to the towns in the Plan Area. Based on assessment work undertaken to date, Option 2 could potentially contribute 2,500 dwellings in the proposed Plan period 2025-2043 (if all potential sites in the Option are taken forward and concluded to be suitable, available, achievable and capable of delivering dwellings within the Plan period to 2043) in addition to the potential future supply identified under Option 1 (1,927 dwellings) and to the existing supply of 6,835 dwellings.
124. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal concludes that Option 2 is associated with both opportunities and risks. While it may result in significant negative effects on biodiversity and some negative effects on climate change, landscape, and transport (albeit of uncertain significance at this stage), it also offers positive effects in relation to community provision and the economy. Large scale growth locations can be masterplanned with green and blue infrastructure as a priority objective (in addition to Biodiversity Net Gain requirements) and might also be able to deliver targeted offsite measures.
125. These impacts are subject to further detailed assessment and potential mitigation. The inclusion of a wider range of growth locations, including those with good accessibility and infrastructure potential, may help to support inclusive communities and employment opportunities. Neutral effects are identified in relation to air quality, and the historic environment. The option is considered to have potential to deliver a balanced spatial strategy, subject to further detailed assessment of site-specific impacts and mitigation measures.
126. Overall, Option 2 performs better than Option 1 in terms of housing provision, reflecting a proactive approach to addressing local housing needs. However, it is recognised that even with this level of expansion, significant levels of unmet need would remain.

Option 3: Large expansion of both the towns and main villages

127. This option looks at potential new large expansions to both the towns (development site options of 500 or more dwellings) and main villages (development site options of 50 or more dwellings) in the Plan Area. Based on assessment work undertaken to date, Option 3 could potentially contribute 4,120 dwellings in the proposed Plan period 2025-2043 (if all potential sites in the Option are taken forward and concluded to be suitable, available, achievable and capable of delivering dwellings within the Plan period to 2043) in addition to the potential future supply identified under Option 1 (1,927 dwellings) and to the existing supply of 6,835 dwellings.
128. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal concludes that Option 3, which involves a higher level of housing delivery through large expansion of both towns and villages, presents a mix of sustainability outcomes. While it may result in some negative effects in relation to climate change, landscape, and transport (currently assessed as limited or uncertain in significance), and significant effects on biodiversity, these impacts are subject to further detailed assessment and potential mitigation. Large scale growth locations can be masterplanned with green and blue infrastructure as a priority objective (in addition to Biodiversity Net Gain requirements) and might also be able to deliver targeted offsite measures.
129. As with other options, there are also uncertain effects in relation to water and land/soils. However, the broader distribution of growth across the Plan Area offers opportunities to support inclusive communities and local service provision, and is expected to have positive effects on employment and the economy due to the scale of growth. Neutral effects are identified in relation to housing, air quality, and the historic environment.

130. Overall, Option 3 performs better than Options 1 and 2 in terms of housing provision, again reflecting a proactive approach to addressing housing need. However, the Interim SA recognises that even with this level of expansion, significant unmet need would remain, particularly given the lead-in times required for larger strategic sites. These sites often involve complex masterplanning and infrastructure coordination, which may limit their full delivery within the Plan period. Nonetheless, Option 3 represents a comprehensive and ambitious growth strategy that would seek to maximise the benefits of plan-led development while balancing environmental and infrastructure considerations.

Option 4: New settlement(s)

131. This option would explore the possibility of creating one or more sustainable new settlements in the Plan Area. Through work undertaken to date, one broad area has been identified across the Plan Area where the potential may exist to create a sustainable new settlement. If the potential area for a new settlement in the Option is taken forward and concluded to be suitable, available, achievable and capable of delivering dwellings within the Plan period to 2043), this spatial option could potentially contribute 700 dwellings in the proposed Plan period 2025-2043 in addition to the potential future supply identified under Option 1 (1,927 dwellings) and to the existing supply of 6,835 dwellings.

132. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal finds that Option 4, which focuses on the delivery a new settlement, presents a growth scenario with a range of sustainability implications. While some negative effects are identified in relation to climate change, landscape, and transport (currently assessed as limited or uncertain in significance), and significant effects on biodiversity, these impacts are subject to further investigation and potential mitigation. Large scale growth locations can be masterplanned with green and blue infrastructure as a priority objective (in addition to Biodiversity Net Gain requirements), and might also be able to deliver targeted offsite measures. As with other options, there are uncertain effects in relation to water and land/soils. However, Option 4 would be expected to deliver positive outcomes for community provision and the economy, given the scale and strategic nature of growth. Neutral effects are identified in relation to air quality, housing, and the historic environment.

133. Option 4 performs reasonably well in terms of housing provision. However, the Interim SA also recognises that even with this level of expansion, unmet housing need would remain. Nonetheless this option would offer the opportunity for a comprehensive masterplanning approach to growth that can support infrastructure delivery, placemaking, and long-term sustainability. While it is recognised that unmet need would remain, and that larger strategic sites may not deliver in full within the Plan period due to lead-in times for planning and infrastructure, this option nonetheless represents a forward-looking strategy that could help meet future housing needs and unlock wider benefits. Further work would be needed to assess delivery trajectories and ensure that new settlements contribute effectively to the overall housing supply.

[Option 5: Larger-scale development at the small rural villages including in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape](#)

134. This option would explore the possibility of larger-scale development by looking at whether there is potential to identify development sites of 10 or more dwellings at the small rural villages including in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

135. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal makes its conclusions on the basis that Option 5 represents a modest level of growth at smaller rural villages including within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. While some negative effects are identified in relation to the national landscape, climate change, and transport (currently assessed as limited or uncertain in significance), and significant effects on biodiversity, these impacts are subject to further assessment and may be mitigated through careful site selection and good design. As with other options, uncertain effects are noted in relation to water and land/soils. However, the wider distribution of growth may offer opportunities to support rural communities, maintain village services, and contribute positively to local employment and the economy. Neutral effects are identified in relation to air quality, housing, and the historic environment.

136. While it is recognised that unmet housing need would remain, assessing this option through the Sustainability Appraisal demonstrates a clear commitment to exploring all reasonable opportunities for sustainable growth. It also may offer potential benefits in terms of supporting the vitality of smaller settlements and addressing demographic challenges in rural areas.

The approach to balancing brownfield and greenfield land

137. We will look to optimise the use of brownfield land and work is being undertaken (described in the interim HELAA) to identify additional achievable opportunities for development and redevelopment within existing built-up areas. However, a “brownfield-only” spatial option is not a reasonable or justifiable option for the Local Plan review to pursue. This is because there is a limited supply of available brownfield sites in the Plan Area and would result in a considerable housing shortfall against housing need. **The NPPF (paragraph 72)** is clear that local planning authorities should do all that they can to address housing need and plan for a mix of sites.

138. Additionally, brownfield sites can be more complex and costly to develop due to the potential need for existing uses to cease or be relocated, more complex land assembly, potential costs associated with demolition of existing buildings and/or remediation of land contamination from a previous use. This has implications for both the timescales of delivery of housing and for securing affordable housing. Due to their location and nature and development costs, brownfield sites are more often not able to provide a full mix of house types, sizes and tenures.

139. To achieve a balanced strategy in the Local Plan review, a mix of greenfield sites and brownfield sites and a mix of site sizes is therefore essential. Housing needs cannot be appropriately addressed on existing brownfield sites alone. Therefore, in order to boost housing supply and delivery and provide for a balanced range of house types, tenures and sizes, new greenfield allocations of a variety of sizes are likely to be required in addition to seeking to identify development/redevelopment opportunities within existing built-up areas.

Policy Direction

A Spatial Development Strategy Approach

140. A potential approach is set out below:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach to a Spatial Development Strategy for new development

This policy will set the development strategy approach through which the council will support the delivery of new housing, employment development, and other uses, as appropriate, for each of the three sub-areas. The preferred spatial development strategy approach for achieving this is yet to be decided. The preferred approach will be selected based on the evidence and informed by consultation feedback. The objective will be to set out a strategy that addresses the needs of our diverse area in a sustainable way, that responds to the issues in the Plan Area and reflects the sources of land supply.

Other potential core elements of the spatial development strategy approach will be an underlying aim to deliver new housing, employment opportunities, and other appropriate uses in a way that:

- reduces our impact on our changing climate and focuses on climate adaptation, thereby maximising our resilience to the effects of climate change
- protects the natural environment by improving biodiversity and by avoiding and mitigating as required the direct and indirect impacts of development on the integrity of the New Forest, Solent, River Avon and other international nature conservation sites, and on other areas, species or habitats of nature conservation value
- safeguards and seeks to further the purposes of both the National Park and Cranborne Chase National Landscape, ensuring that development does not have an unacceptable impact on the special qualities and purposes of those designated landscapes
- achieves high standards of design and sensitivity to character, landscape, setting and heritage whilst ensuring an effective use of land
- locates homes, jobs, services and facilities close to each other and in locations where active and sustainable travel modes (i.e., public transport, walking and cycling) can be maximised
- provides a mix of types of homes by size, tenure and cost to help to address the full spectrum of local housing needs at all stages of life
- supports growth in locations where the capacity of existing infrastructure can be utilised, and/or that provide opportunities for new and/or improved infrastructure
- Supports sustainable economic growth within the Plan Area and enables rural communities to thrive, recognising their essential role in managing and sustaining the rural landscape. Development should contribute to the long-term stewardship of the countryside, support land-based and nature-based economies, and reinforce the findings of local landscape character and sensitivity studies. This includes ensuring that development respects the wider landscape context beyond designated boundaries and actively contributes to the resilience and vitality of rural areas.

Settlement hierarchy

141. The settlements in the Plan Area can be identified as belonging to one of three main tiers of settlement, as published in the **settlement hierarchy** from our existing Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1:

- i. Towns: Fordingbridge, Hythe Village, Lymington, Marchwood, New Milton, Ringwood, and Totton.
- ii. Main Villages: Ashford, Blackfield, Bransgore, Everton, Fawley, Hardley, Holbury, Hordle, Langley, Milford-on-Sea, and Sandleheath.
- iii. Small Rural Villages: Breamore, Damerham, Ellingham, Harbridge, Ibsley, Martin, Rockbourne, Sopley and Whitsbury.

142. At the top of the existing hierarchy are the settlements that fulfil the most functions, and which are viewed as the most sustainable. The smaller settlements with fewer functions are towards the bottom of the hierarchy. The towns and villages covered by this Plan are set out in Figure 7. In the current adopted settlement hierarchy, Strategic Site 4: the former Fawley Power Station is treated as equivalent to a main village.

143. It is important to note that the current adopted settlement hierarchy does not explicitly reference every suburb, village or hamlet in the Plan Area. This is particularly the case with places such as Barton-on-Sea, Calmore, Dibden Purlieu, Pennington and Poulner which were historically separate settlements but that some time ago have become merged with the wider towns of New Milton, Totton, Hythe, Lymington and Ringwood respectively. For the purposes of the current adopted settlement hierarchy, settlement areas like these have been treated as part of the wider towns in which they sit rather than listed as separate settlements.

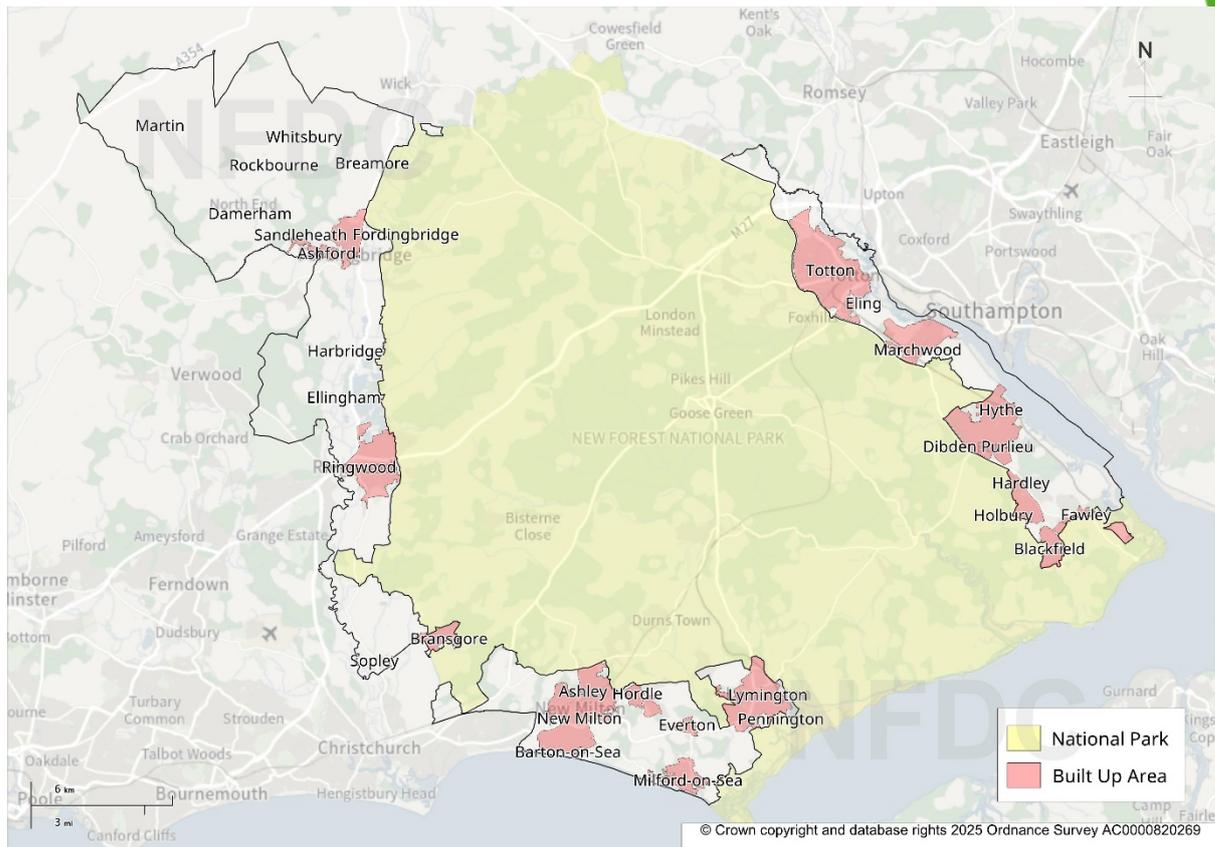


Figure 7 The settlements covered by our plan

What you told us

144. The majority of respondents were broadly in agreement with the existing settlement hierarchy, though the possibility of review was welcomed. It was felt by some that whilst the hierarchy as is, was appropriate, this should not be used to determine the location of new development.

145. It was noted by some that as some settlements had expanded, their status should be reviewed. Concerns were raised by a small number of respondents that some settlements have previously been wrongly assigned their status as the infrastructure available in such areas does not reflect the status given. Of those respondents who felt that the settlement hierarchy is not appropriate, some felt that further categories were needed, whereas others felt that it needed to be reviewed in the context of the capacity of local facilities, services and infrastructure.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

146. While national policy does not set out specific advice for how to prepare and produce a settlement hierarchy, it does highlight the important role of a local plan in promoting sustainable locations for development. This means that the Local Plan review must consider the most appropriate locations for development growth. The prime factors to be taken into account are accessibility to jobs, services and amenities, public transport, and the range of services that a community can access.

147. A review of the adopted settlement hierarchy is being undertaken to inform the Local Plan review based on current availability of, or accessibility to, a range of facilities, services and opportunities.

Policy Direction

Settlement hierarchy

148. This policy will group together similar settlements into categories reflecting their particular characteristics, scale and sustainability. The policy will provide the framework for decisions about the appropriate scale and location of new built development within the Plan Area.

149. The proposed approach is as follows:

Proposed strategic approach to the Settlement Hierarchy

The starting point will be the existing adopted settlement hierarchy in **Policy STR4** of the adopted Local Plan. This is being reviewed to ensure that the categorisation of settlements within each tier remains appropriate.

It is possible that some changes to the settlement hierarchy (and appropriate scales of development at each tier) may be proposed in the next version of the Local Plan informed by the findings of the review of the existing hierarchy.

Changes to the hierarchy may also be proposed depending on which sites are appropriate to propose as allocations and depending on whether any SDGOs are proposed to be allocated.

The key objective is to ensure development over the plan period is directed to areas where the infrastructure and facilities can support sustainable growth or where it can be provided to support sustainable growth. The settlement hierarchy for the Local Plan review will reflect this and will also reflect future potential future changes to settlements as a consequence of growth.

150. Alternative approaches that were considered but not proposed to be taken forward included having no settlement hierarchy and not providing a framework for decisions about the appropriate scale and location of new built development within the Plan Area. This is not considered a justifiable option as it could lead to unsustainable levels of development taking place in areas that are not served well by services, facilities or public transport.

[Built-up area boundaries and development in the countryside](#)

151. Defined built-up area boundaries mark the point at which policies for the built-up areas of settlements give way to policies for the countryside. This is necessary to provide certainty for development proposals and to ensure that the countryside is protected from gradual encroachment, but in particular they help guard against incremental growth in unsustainable locations.

152. This policy will define the built-up areas of settlements for planning purposes. The existing defined built-up area boundaries will be reviewed to reflect/incorporate proposed new allocations for development as appropriate and any other changes to the built-up area boundaries considered to be necessary.

153. Consideration has been given to whether a defined built-up area boundary should be established for each of the settlements identified within the Small Rural Villages tier of the hierarchy. However, this is not considered an appropriate approach because this could create pressure for development in unsustainable locations that do not benefit from existing infrastructure and service provision. Overdevelopment would have adverse impacts on rural historic character and landscape setting. The proposed approach is therefore to continue with criteria-based policies which better accommodate appropriate small scale windfall development and rural housing needs. This offers a flexible approach in directing development to the most sustainable locations whilst protecting the special character of these small rural communities.

154. Within the defined built-up area boundaries, a range of policies within the Local Plan will indicate the types of development that may be suitable, for example residential development or commercial development. Outside of the defined built-up areas, the primary objectives are to conserve and enhance the countryside and natural environment, whilst allowing appropriate development that has to be in the countryside.

155. Our proposed approach is as follows:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach: Built-up area boundaries and development in the countryside

Built-up area boundaries are defined lines on the Policies Map that distinguish the built form of settlements from the surrounding countryside.

Within built-up area boundaries, development is generally supported in principle, subject to compliance with other policies in the Local Plan.

Outside of the defined built-up areas, the primary objectives are to conserve and enhance the countryside and natural environment. We therefore propose to limit development to:

- development which has an operational need for a countryside location, such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry or outdoor recreation
- proposals for the reuse of existing rural buildings for employment, tourist accommodation, community use or housing

- the extension or suitable replacement of existing buildings (including residential properties) that is proportionate in scale to the existing building and appropriate to the site, location and the setting
- new residential accommodation which is in accordance with the Local Plan policy on rural housing exception sites or for agricultural or forestry workers dwellings
- appropriate small-scale development for commercial/community use that is in accordance with Local Plan policy on the rural economy
- small-scale tourist accommodation appropriate to the site, location and the setting

In all cases, any development or redevelopment proposed should be of an appropriate design, scale and appearance and should not have an adverse effect on the natural environment, biodiversity, landscape or the rural character of the area, or local amenity by reason of visual impact, traffic and other activity generated or any other impacts. It should also not compromise the openness or character of the countryside or lead to settlement coalescence.

156. Alternative approaches that have been considered but are subsequently not proposed to be taken forward include setting out a policy with a more flexible and permissive approach to larger scale new development outside of defined built-up areas. This is not considered a reasonable approach as it is not considered proportionate to the nature of the Plan Area and would result in a higher risk of unacceptable harm to the character of rural areas and the countryside and to the natural environment. Another alternative not proposed to be taken forward is to set out an approach that prohibits any new development outside of defined built-up area boundaries. This is also not considered to be a reasonable approach to propose as it would not be consistent with the NPPF and would not support the social and economic needs of rural communities.

157. The proposed policy approach is therefore considered the most appropriate to achieve the right balance between supporting and sustaining the social and economic needs of rural communities whilst maintaining the environmental qualities of the countryside.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

158. Interim Sustainability Appraisal

159. Interim Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Consultation questions

- 6) Do you agree with the broad spatial options for distributing and accommodating development growth within the plan area?
- 7) Do you agree with the approach taken to our spatial development strategy?
- 8) It is likely that a combination of options will be needed to meet local housing needs. What combination do you think is the most appropriate and why?
- 9) Do you agree with our proposed approach to the settlement hierarchy?
- 10) What are your views on the potential approach to defined built-up areas and development in the countryside?

Strategic Development Growth Options

What are strategic development growth options

160. Paragraph 77 of the NPPF sets out that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes). Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way.
161. Informed by the interim site assessment work undertaken to date, we have identified 15 different Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs) for consultation. The SDGOs have been defined based on sites (or groupings of sites) which have either been promoted to the Council by developers or landowners or are areas that have been identified by the Council as potential strategic growth opportunities to help address housing and other development needs. In the context of this Local Plan review, SDGOs are being defined as areas that may have potential to accommodate 100+ dwellings.
162. At this stage, these are simply options for consideration, not proposed site allocations. We are seeking your views on these potential Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs) to help shape the next steps.

163. The broad SDGO areas are shown on the above map.

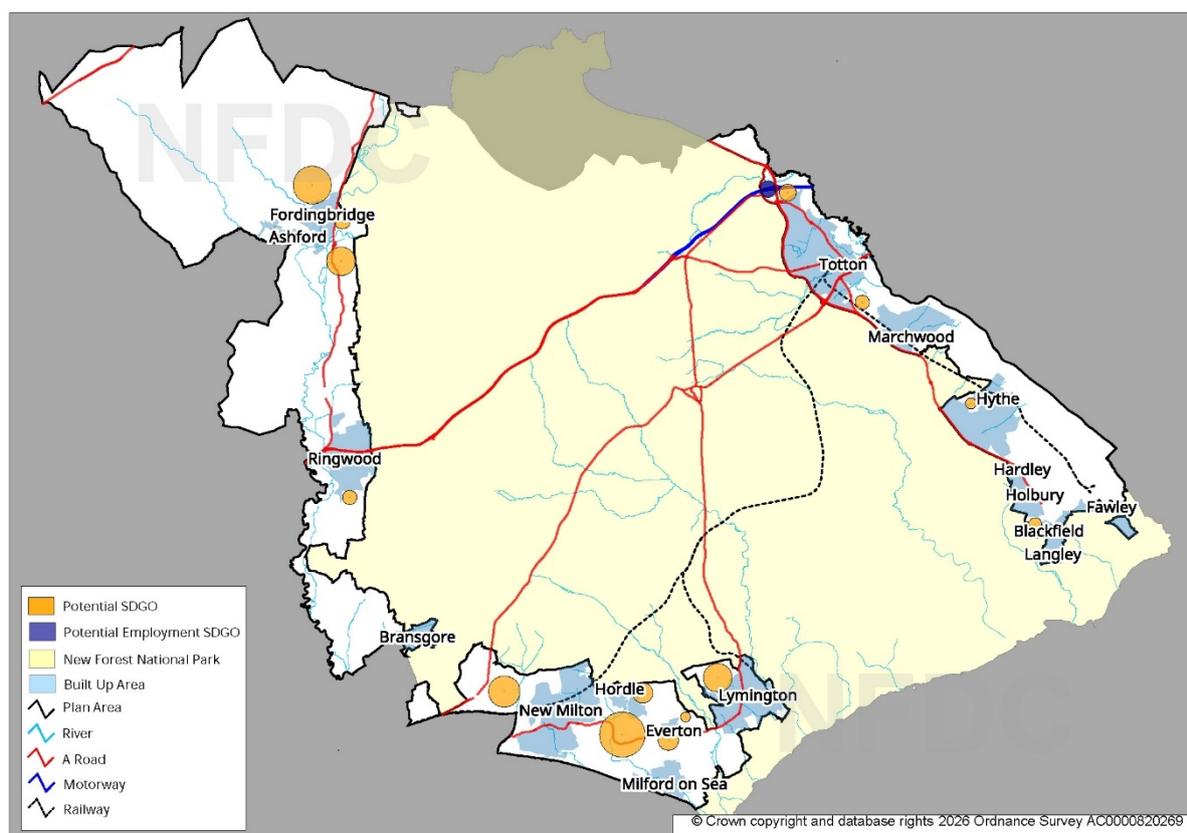


Figure 8 Broad spatial options for development

164. Some parts of some of the potential SDGOs have not been formally put forward by the landowner(s). We are contacting landowners to ask whether they would be willing to make their land available for development. If your land is within a potential SDGO area, we encourage you to respond to the consultation and let us know if you are interested in bringing it forward.

165. There is no obligation at this stage — it is entirely up to each landowner whether they wish to make their land available for development.

166. Depending on the scale of the SDGO (or part SDGO) other uses may be required which may include business/commercial floorspace to address the identified economic need, schools, and health and community facilities. Further assessment of the facilities which may need to be provided will be required (for example, in dialogue with the education and health authorities).

167. It is important, and understood, that development is delivered alongside new infrastructure, in order to deliver new development in a way which will integrate with and create new communities, minimise impacts, and achieve the key objectives of the Local Plan.
168. Infrastructure provision is therefore a critical consideration for each of the potential SDGOs. We are working with infrastructure providers and other partners to identify the infrastructure and facilities needed to support each SDGO, if allocated. The infrastructure requirements for the SDGOs could include transport infrastructure (for example to improve public transport, walking and cycling, and to manage traffic congestion); new employment and social infrastructure (local jobs, shops, schools and health facilities); and new green and blue infrastructure (green open spaces for people and for nature and water-based initiatives to manage flood risk, improve water quality and provide habitats).
169. The final version of the Local Plan review will include both general strategic policies on seeking sufficient infrastructure provision, plus detailed site policies that identify the infrastructure and community facilities required to support new development for each new site allocation. It will be supported by:
- An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) setting out all the infrastructure required to accommodate the growth proposed in the Local Plan, its indicative cost, and when, how and by whom it will be provided. The requirements will be viability tested.
 - An updated **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** charging schedule whereby all qualifying developments would pay a fixed sum per square metre towards a list of infrastructure projects identified to be necessary that are not specific to a single site or small number of sites. The adoption of this CIL charging schedule will run concurrently with the Local Plan and has separate consultation and examination requirements.

170. The SDGOs will be subject to comprehensive assessment work and detailed evaluation through Sustainability Appraisal before any decisions are made regarding which to propose as allocations within the Local Plan review. Responses received to this consultation in respect of the SDGOs will also be an important consideration.

171. The following important caveats also apply:

- at this early stage, land in the Green Belt is assessed no differently from land not in Green Belt. Green Belt is an important national policy and an important issue in this consultation. It is discussed in more detail in the Green Belt chapter of this Spatial Options and Policy Direction Local Plan consultation document.
- all sites will require Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations to establish whether the site alone or in combination with other proposals may adversely affect the integrity of one or more international nature conservation designations. At this stage we are working on the assumption that these effects can be adequately mitigated. However, this will need to be fully tested and evidenced before a conclusion can be made as to whether the SDGOs are capable of fulfilling the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.
- Natural England (NE) has been consulted on these strategic growth options, and its position remains that robust mitigation must be in place that covers both alone and in-combination impacts to designated sites. In particular, developments within 400m of the New Forest designated site boundaries should be supported by strong mitigation to ensure that impacts to designated sites are avoided or mitigated against. NE encourages application of the mitigation hierarchy at all stages of planning, i.e. to avoid potential impacts in the first instance and where this is not possible then to minimise and mitigate for any impacts.

172. The following pages set out some commentary for each of the potential SDGOs based on Local Plan review work undertaken to date, including:

- location

- potential uses (e.g., housing, commercial, open space etc.) and initial estimate of the number of dwellings for both what is currently thought might be realistically delivered in the Plan period and the total overall potential capacity of each SDGO if allocated
- summary of key site-specific considerations and issues affecting each SDGO
- potential infrastructure requirements

173. The information presented for each of the SDGOs at this stage of the Local Plan review is broad and high-level. Significant detailed further assessment work will be needed to determine their suitability, availability and achievability before any conclusions can be made on which (or which parts of) of the SDGOs to propose as allocations.

174. The initial housing capacity estimates presented in this consultation are broad in their nature and are only intended to inform more detailed studies of the SDGOs. The potential capacity figures do not indicate Council support for planning applications for sites which are unallocated, nor that the indicated capacity would be acceptable. It is also important to highlight that these initial housing capacity estimates have been calculated based on the existing adopted strategy for the mitigation of recreational impacts on international conservation sites. However, this mitigation strategy approach is being reviewed as part of the Local Plan review in order to ensure that the strategy for the mitigation of recreational impacts is appropriate and effective. If the approach for the effective mitigation of recreational impacts changes, then this will affect (increase or decrease) the number of the dwellings that each potential SDGO (if taken forward) may be able to accommodate.

175. The estimates of the number of dwellings that may be deliverable from each SDGO in the Plan period are equally high-level and informed by studies undertaken regionally and nationally on build-out rates and lead-in times. They serve to further illustrate the scale of the challenge we face regarding addressing the housing need and the lead-in times that will likely be required before any new allocations proposed in the Local Plan review might realistically be delivering dwellings on the ground. Further information on this is set out in the interim HELAA.

176. Many of the SDGOs are in multiple landownerships. This will be a key issue that the Local Plan review will have to consider/address as land assembly will be critical in ensuring that any site, if allocated, can be brought forward effectively and in a comprehensive way.

177. Some of the SDGOs may include some existing dwellings that have not been promoted for redevelopment. There is no expectation that they would form part of a future development.

178. The potential SDGOs for consultation are:

SDGO A (New Strategic Employment Area): Land around M27, Junction 2, Ower

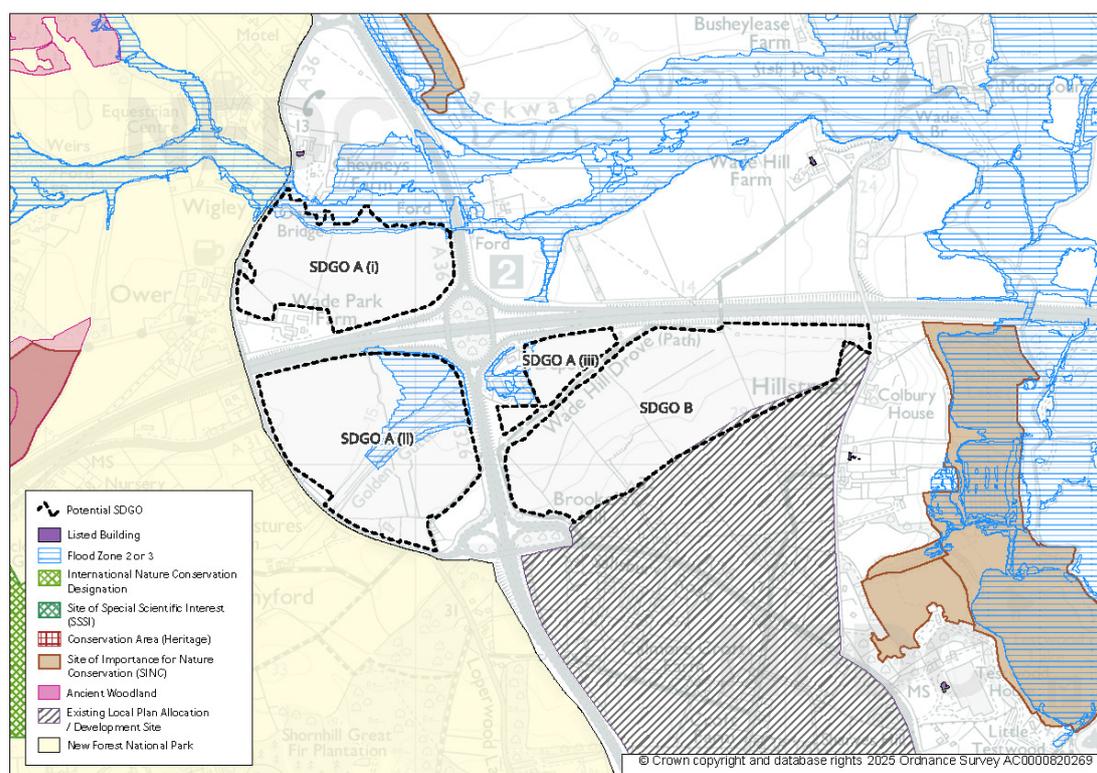


Figure 9 Strategic Development Growth Options A & B

Potential uses include:

- employment land (around 40ha) which may comprise primarily industrial, warehousing, logistics and distribution, and office uses
- Green infrastructure and open space

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- the SDGO is in a sensitive landscape location that is a gateway to the National Park. It is part of the setting of the New Forest National Park (relevant to paragraph 189 of the NPPF, 2024)
- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations
- gas pipelines present under the SDGO. The majority of SDGO is within the HSE consultation zones for the gas pipelines that cross through the SDGO
- southern part of the area of the SDGO south of the M27 is former / historic landfill
- accessibility of the SDGO to the local labour market by non-car-based means of travel

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken. This is particularly important due to the primary reliance upon road transport to access the site; the nearby extensive employment land at J3 offers access by non-car related modes of transport, which is possible to a lesser extent at J2.
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- utilities connections
- contribution to enhancements to River Blackwater tributaries as set out in the NFDC Waterside Landscape and Green & Blue Infrastructure report (2024).

SDGO B (New neighbourhood): Land to north of Salisbury Road and east of the A326, Totton

*SDGO B is mapped alongside SDGO A in **Figure 9** Figure 9 above.*

Note: This SDGO is the subject of a current outline planning application (25/10449) for up to 375 homes and a multi-functional community hub

Potential uses include:

- around 350 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that all these homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- supporting green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space
- community hub

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- potential amenity issues on residential development due to the SDGO's proximity to the M27
- potential landscape impacts; the land is raised above the River Test corridor potentially limiting the opportunities for mitigation.
- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations
- gas pipeline present under the SDGO
- a number of Tree Preservation Orders are present within the SDGO
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities in Totton by non-car-based means of travel, also accounting for the committed scheme adjacent to the south

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary education facilities
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections
- contribution to / delivery of Green and Blue Infrastructure opportunities and enhancements to River Blackwater tributaries as set out in the NFDC Waterside Landscape and Green Infrastructure report (2024).

- Watercourses in the wider vicinity are identified in the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Measures could include buffer strips along watercourses to improve water quality.

SDGO C (New neighbourhood): Land to the south of Totton

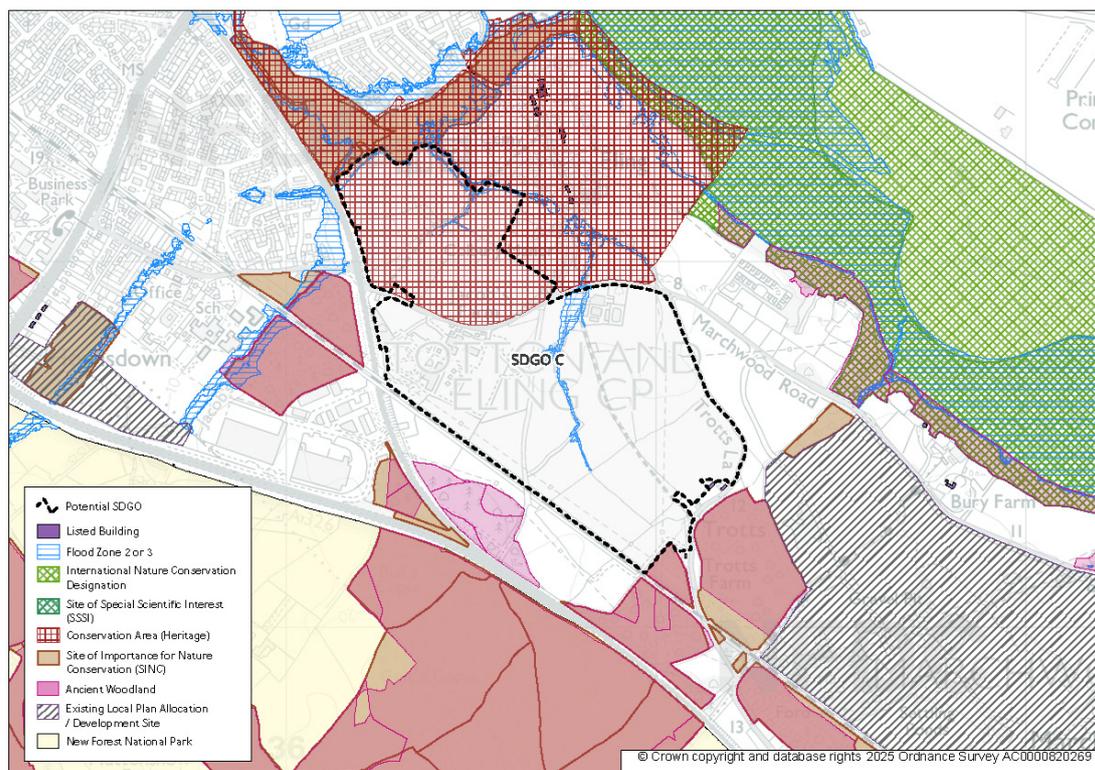


Figure 10 Strategic Development Growth Option C

Potential uses include:

- around 250 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that all these homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- significant green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- gas pipeline under the southern parts of the SDGO. The southern half of the SDGO is within the HSE consultation zones for the gas pipeline

- the area of the SDGO north of Jacob's Gutter Lane is in the Eling Conservation Area (historic manorial landscape), and is part of the setting of the Eling Tide Mill. There are visual connections between Eling Hill, Coles Farm and assorted landscape to south of the Conservation Area. There could also be associated impacts of additional traffic through Conservation Area. However, opportunities exist to improve rights of way through the Conservation Area and improve the condition of historic trackway/settings of non-designated heritage assets.
- part of the SDGO is in active commercial use (Sunnyfields Organic Farm)
- the SDGO is close to the National Park (adjacent to the south-west), and there are also landscape sensitivities to consider; the area to the north of Jacobs Gutter Lane is considered to have high landscape sensitivity, whilst the remaining area is less sensitive albeit functions as a landscape gap. The capacity and sensitivity of the landscape between the two settlements will be an important consideration
- there is ancient woodland to the south of the SDGO
- there are some areas of local ecological importance (i.e., Sites of Importance for Natural Conservation, and Priority Habitats) adjoining the edges of the SDGO. In close proximity to the Eling and Bury Marshes SSSI.
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities in Totton by non-car-based means of travel

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary education facilities
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections

- contribution to / delivery of Green and Blue Infrastructure opportunities and provision of linkages from National Park to the waterfront as set out in the NFDC Waterside Landscape and Green Infrastructure report (2024)
- Watercourses in the SDGO are identified in the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Measures could include 10m buffer strips along watercourses to improve water quality and reduce urban runoff (plus improvements of in-channel physical habitats, and control of invasive non-native aquatic species in the Conservation Area).

SDGO D (New neighbourhood): Land to the north of Hythe

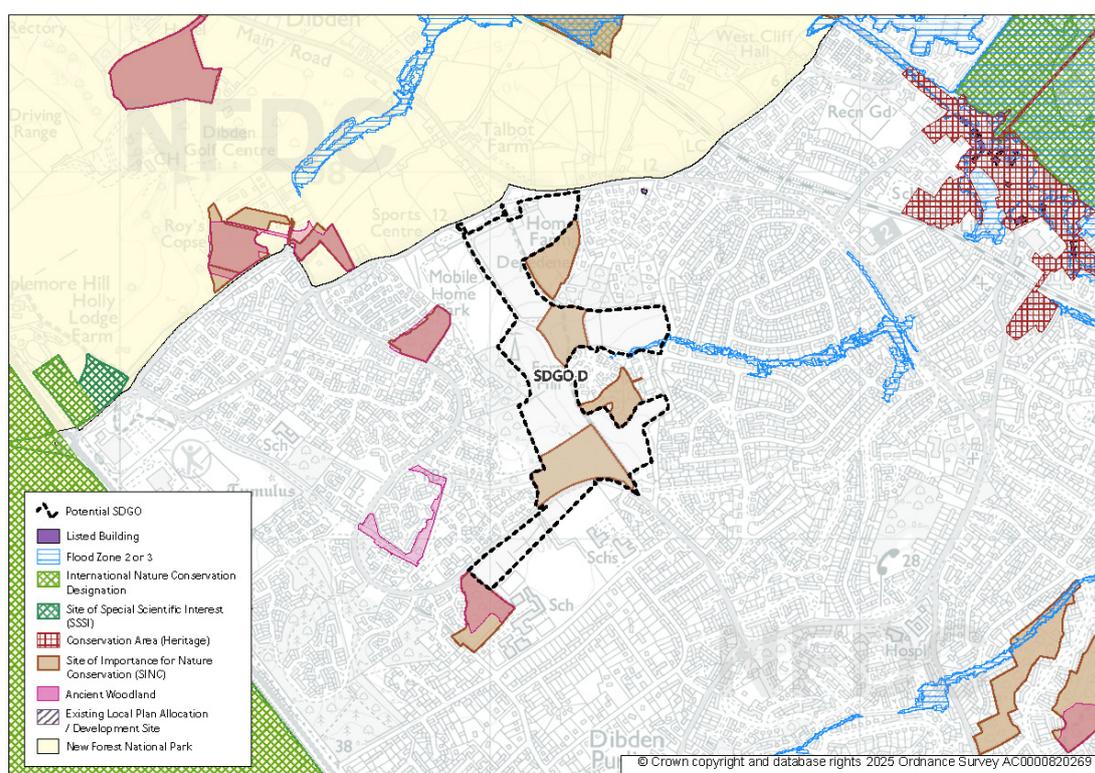


Figure 11 Strategic Development Growth Option D

Potential uses include:

- around 150 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that all these homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- supporting green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations
- there are some areas of local ecological importance (i.e., Sites of Importance for Natural Conservation, and Priority Habitats) both within and adjoining the edges of the SDGO which form part of a significant green corridor connecting the urban area to the National Park. It is important that any development does not envelop locally important woodland.
- the SDGO is in a sensitive landscape location and close to the National Park (opposite to the north); large areas of the SDGO have unusually high land with long views towards the Waterside, forming part of an important gap. Some capacity for development potentially exists close to existing settlement edges to east and south.
- part of the area of the SDGO that is south of Challenger Way is designated in the adopted Local Plan as Private/Education Recreational Land
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities in Hythe by non-car-based means of travel. Many services and facilities already exist within walking or cycling distance of the SDGO.

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- potential for well-planned ecological improvement/landscape on central parts; identified in the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy for measures including restoration of grassland towards species-rich grassland, and reducing the impact of road and urban runoff into watercourses
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary education facilities
- healthcare facilities

- utilities connections

SDGO E (New neighbourhood): Land between Holbury and Blackfield

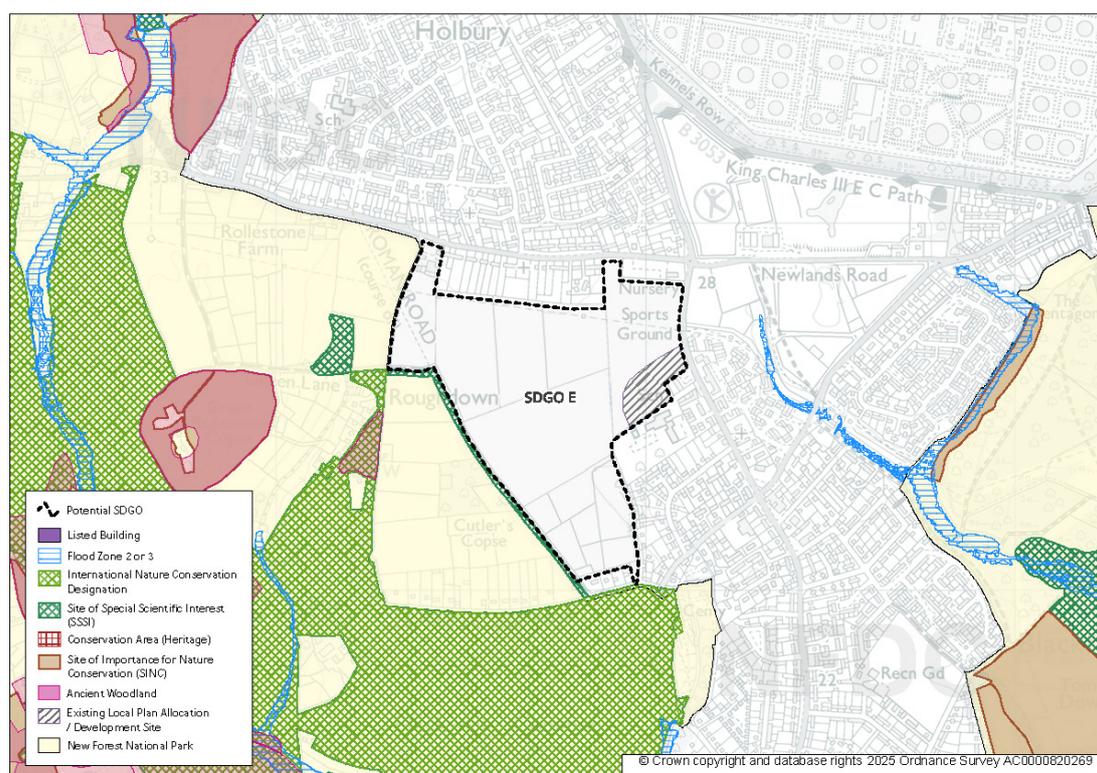


Figure 12 Strategic Development Growth Option E

Note: The majority of this SDGO is the subject of a current outline planning application (24/11132) for up to 200 homes

Potential uses include:

- around 200 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures in addition to capacity on existing housing site allocation BLA1. Our initial view is that all homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043 in addition to capacity on existing housing site allocation BLA1
- supporting green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- masterplanning to provide appropriate treatment of adjoining National Park, and to better connect both Holbury and Blackfield while maintaining a green gap

- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Additionally, significant part of the SDGO is within 400m of the New Forest SPA/SAC/Ramsar
- the presence of New Forest SSSI designation along the line of the Roman Road in this area - any impacts should be mitigated.
- the SDGO adjoins the National Park
- potential impact of any development on the separation between Holbury and Blackfield. The capacity and sensitivity of the landscape between the two settlements will be an important consideration
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities in Holbury/Blackfield by non-car-based means of travel
- the SDGO is situated in an area considered to be of significant archaeological interest relating to multiple periods of past human activity. The course of Roman Road through the SDGO is considered a heritage asset of significance.

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary education facilities
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections
- contribution to / delivery of linkages from National Park to the waterfront at Fawley as set out in the NFDC Waterside Landscape and Green Infrastructure report (2024).

SDGO F (New neighbourhood): Land to the north of Lymington

For consultation and consideration whether exceptional circumstances justify the release of land from the Green Belt for development.

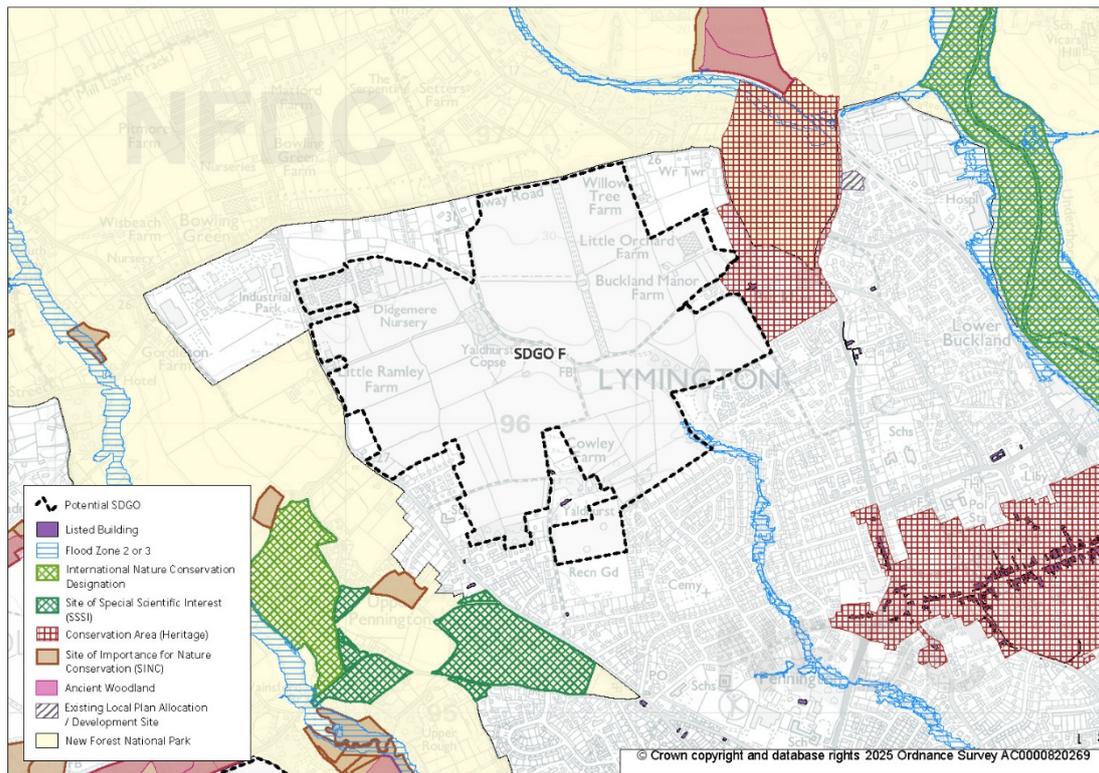


Figure 13 Strategic Development Growth Option F

Potential uses include:

- around 1,000 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that around 700 homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- significant green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space
- a community focal point or points which may include facilities such as local convenience shopping, flexible floorspace for business/commercial use, a community centre

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- SDGO is within the Green Belt. Under the council's new Green Belt Study (Part 1) the south-west corner of the site (around 6.5%) is potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt.
- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impacts to coastal designated sites should be considered as appropriate.

- ecological elements relating to the central stream and woodland that follows contour of valley (containing Priority Habitats) which would require enhancement and appropriate buffer to expand the green corridor function.
- individual and groups of protected trees within the SDGO
- the SDGO is in a sensitive landscape location and is close to the New Forest National Park (opposite to the north and west); the area from Sway Road down to Yaldhurst Copse is considered highly sensitive due to its elevated and open position and topography running down to the coastal area. South of Didgemere nurseries considered moderately sensitive due to the intact character and lack of connection to existing settlement. Southern areas of SDGO are more connected and less sensitive – however, in terms of settlement separation, Lymington is distinct from Pennington due to woodland/topography, and this would need to be considered. South-east area (north of Alexandra Road) is judged the least sensitive area in landscape terms due to topography and connectivity to Lymington
- Buckland Manor Conservation Area and numerous Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the SDGO. Conservation Area setting of Buckland Rings is sensitive, plus possible Bronze Age Barrow at Little Orchard Farm. The settings of Yaldhurst Manor (southern part) and Radley Manor (on the western edge) must be considered too.
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities in Lymington by non-car-based means of travel

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary and/or secondary education facilities
- healthcare facilities

- utilities connections
- need to maintain green spine and permeability through the site; contribution to / delivery of Green and Blue Infrastructure opportunities / provision of walking routes to accessible green spaces as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Rest of District) 2025. Watercourses in the SDGO are identified in the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Measures could include 10m buffer strips next to watercourses to improve water quality.

SDGO G (New Neighbourhood): Land to the northeast of Everton

For consultation and consideration whether exceptional circumstances justify the release of land from the Green Belt for development.

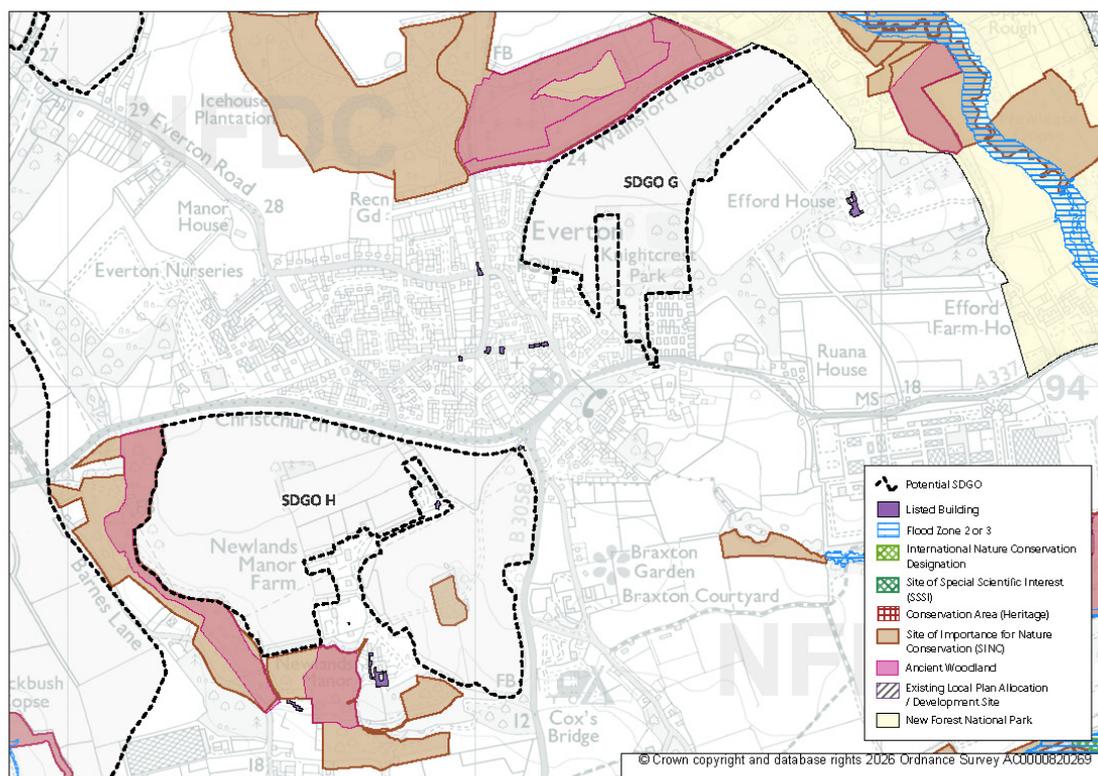


Figure 14 Strategic Development Growth Options G & H

Potential uses include:

- around 150 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures
- supporting green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- SDGO is within the Green Belt. Under the council's Green Belt Study (Part 1) the western half of the site is potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt.
- Mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. The site abuts the New Forest National Park on its north eastern boundary
- There are irreplaceable habitats and areas of local ecological importance adjacent to the boundaries of the SDGO (Ancient Woodland and SINC to the north) to the north side of Wainsford Road.
- Priority Habitat (Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland) present in the southern part. Retention and enhancement would likely be required as part of Biodiversity Net Gain measures.
- Protected trees on the southwestern boundaries of the SDGO
- This SDGO is judged to have moderate landscape sensitivity, with the northern section having higher sensitivity. The southwestern area, categorised as provisional grey belt, is lower sensitivity.

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections

SDGO H (New neighbourhood): Land to the south of Everton

For consultation and consideration whether exceptional circumstances justify the release of land from the Green Belt for development.

*SDGO H is mapped alongside SDGO G in **Figure 14** Figure 14 above.*

Potential uses include:

- around 500 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that all these homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- supporting green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space
- community hub/focal point/small-scale local facilities

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- SDGO is within the Green Belt. Under the council's 2025 Green Belt Study (Part 1) the whole of this SDGO is categorised as potential Grey Belt.
- land within this SDGO is considered 'best and most versatile' agricultural land.
- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impacts to coastal designated sites should be considered as appropriate.
- there are some areas of local ecological importance (i.e., Sites of Importance for Natural Conservation, and Priority Habitats) within and on the edges of the SDGO. Eastern section of SDGO has been identified within the LNRS for nature recovery measures. The central section is more enclosed and less ecologically sensitive. Opportunities exist for better ecological connection between the sites of importance for nature conservation (SINC) to the south and eastern areas of the SDGO
- this SDGO is judged to have moderate landscape sensitivity
- ensuring provision of, or connectivity to services and facilities by non-car-based means of travel
- individual and groups of protected trees within the SDGO
- Listed Buildings on land adjacent to the SDGO
- site is wholly located within former estate and parkland of Newlands Manor. Eastern and southwestern parts of SDGO are particularly sensitive to change; impacts are identified in relation to the possible loss of/impact on the historic parkland setting of Newlands Manor and impacts on associated listed structures.

- north and north-western parts of the SDGO are of substantially less value to the setting of the designated heritage assets. Historic estate elements have been wholly removed by modern agriculture. Western woodland along the west boundary is the exception. The southern half of the area closer to the historic walled garden is significant to the setting in that it retains its agricultural use.

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary and/or secondary education facilities; there is currently no primary school in Everton
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections
- contribution to promotion/delivery of east-west habitat connectivity from the River Avon towards Barnes Lane - encompassing ancient woodland at Great Newbridge Copse and Newland Manor Wood - as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Avon Valley & Downlands and South Coast Towns) 2025.

SDGO I (New neighbourhood): Land to the north and northeast of Hordle

For consultation and consideration whether exceptional circumstances justify the release of land from the Green Belt for development.

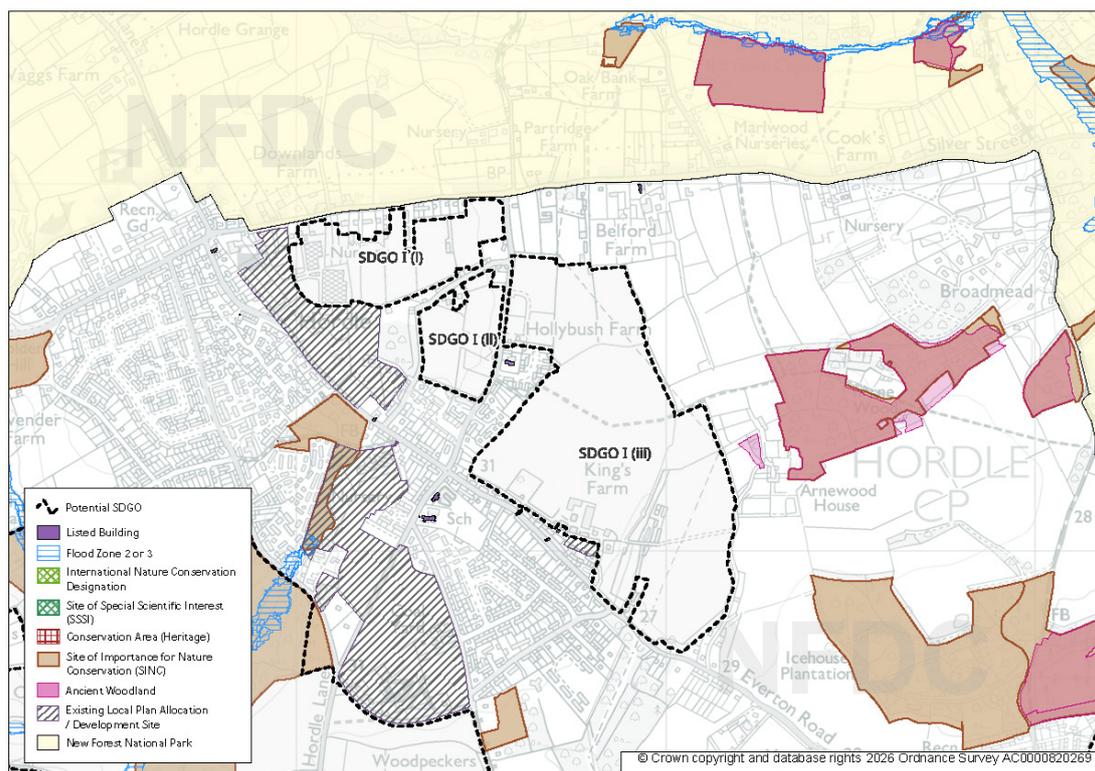


Figure 15 Strategic Development Growth Option I

Potential uses include:

- around 500 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that around 500 homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- supporting green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space
- a community focal point or points which may include facilities such as local convenience shopping, flexible floorspace for business use, a community centre

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- development within this SDGO would see significant extension to Hordle, in addition to the two significant committed schemes nearby.
- SDGO is within the Green Belt. Under the council’s 2025 Green Belt Study (Part 1) the north-western quadrant of the SDGO (27%) is potentially suitable for definition as grey belt.

- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impacts to coastal designated sites should be considered as appropriate.
- the eastern part of this SDGO (land parcel iii) is considered to be more sensitive to landscape change; containing a valley to the west of Arnewood House and being more isolated and disconnected from the existing settlement.
- the SDGO is close to the National Park (opposite to the north), and as such there would be a challenge in respect of balancing strategic growth with a scheme that is well-contained within the landscape.
- the watercourse situated in the south-east part of the SDGO is identified in the LNRS for the creation and management of 10 metre buffer strips next to the watercourse down to Everton Road. Alongside this, opportunities exist for improved ecological connection between the watercourse and the SINC situated north-east of Arnewood House.
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities by non-car-based means of travel
- some existing business uses in the SDGO
- individual and groups of protected trees within the SDGO
- Listed Buildings situated on land adjacent to the SDGO

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary and/or secondary education facilities
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections

- contribution to promotion/delivery of access to nature and walking / cycling from the settlement edges of Hordle and Everton to the National Park - utilising existing Public Right of Way (PRoW) through Arne Wood and Everton Wood - as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Avon Valley & Downlands and South Coast Towns) 2025.

SDGO J (New Settlement): Land around Downton

For consultation and consideration whether exceptional circumstances justify the release of land from the Green Belt for development.

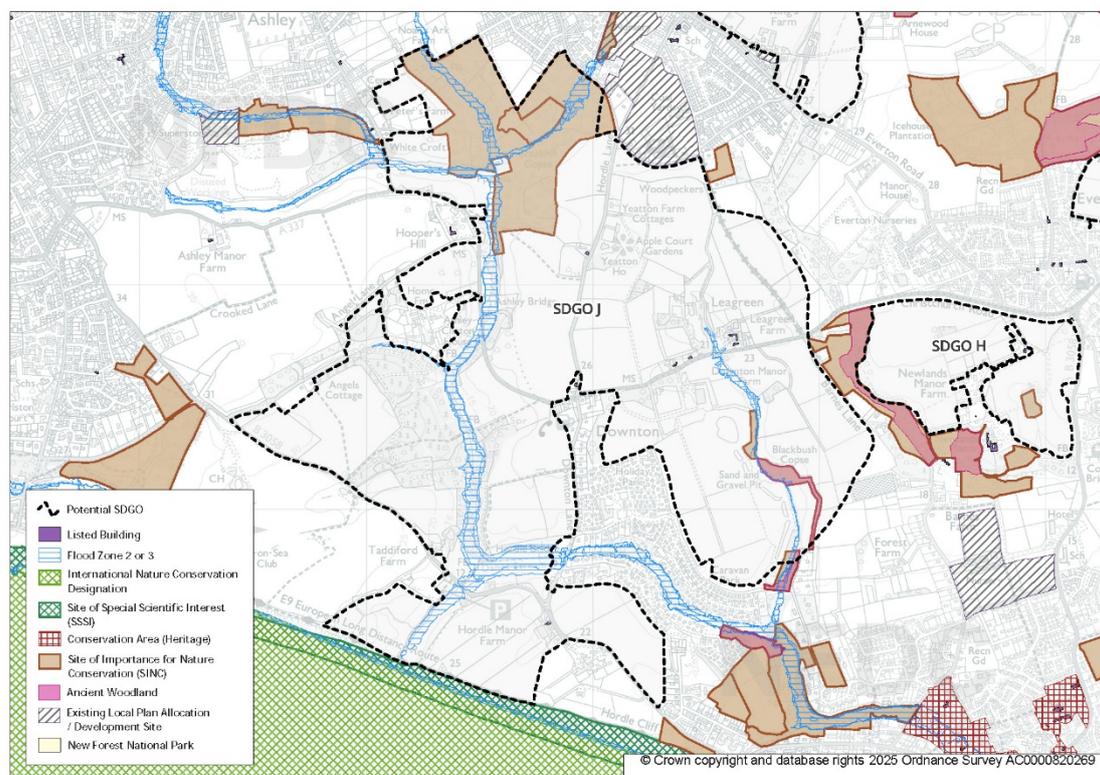


Figure 16 Strategic Development Growth Option J

Potential uses include:

- around 2,500 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that around 700 homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- significant green infrastructure (for example a country park), natural recreational greenspace and public open space

- a village centre to include facilities such as local convenience shopping, flexible floorspace for business/commercial use, a community centre, education and health
- employment land suitable for office/industrial use

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- determination of appropriate scale of growth; there is a need to balance existing constraints and the impact development may have on the settlement pattern in the south coastal towns (including a view to prevent further coastal sprawl) with the need to secure comprehensive growth alongside infrastructure delivery.
- In-combination effects of development within this SDGO and those at Hordle and Everton (and Lymington), including in terms of road capacity and bus services. Avoidance of coalescence with Milford-on-Sea could also prove challenging.
- SDGO is within the Green Belt. Under the council's 2025 Green Belt Study (Part 1) the southern two-thirds of the SDGO is potentially suitable for definition as grey belt.
- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impacts to coastal designated sites should be considered as appropriate.
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Priority Habitats are present in the northern parts of the SDGO, forming several key corridors on the western and eastern sides. These form important ecological corridors and habitat linkages. Opportunities potentially exist to introduce measures set out in the LNRS in relation to Danes Stream, including control of invasive non-native aquatic species, improving in-channel conditions for water quality, and 10m buffer strips along the watercourse.
- SDGO is located in a sensitive landscape location, with some areas being open and exposed, with a unique view down to the coast.

- a number of Listed Buildings situated in/adjacent to the SDGO which would need to be appraised to preserve their historic setting. In addition, views of the open landscape around junction of Downton Lane and Cliff Road contribute to setting and significance of designated assets. The area of SDGO to the south-east of A337 is less sensitive in heritage terms. There are also numerous potential sites for archaeology.
- individual and groups of protected trees within the SDGO
- SDGO is partially within a Mineral Safeguarding Area
- creating a sustainable, self-contained new settlement. Ensuring connectivity to services and facilities by non-car-based means of travel

In order to deliver a sustainable new settlement, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements. This could be as part of a significant opportunity for larger strategic green infrastructure, such as nature restoration, woodland access, improvements to walking routes (including right of way paths), and open space provision, which could form part of a comprehensive plan for the SDGO
- contributions towards new or improved bus services; development of this scale could trigger discussion of a new direct bus service between Christchurch, New Milton and Lymington
- primary and/or secondary education facilities; there are no primary schools in the vicinity of the site, and there would be a need for close working with neighbouring Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council in respect of secondary school capacity.
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections
- potential for some improvement and restoration of the historic parkland around Ashley Clinton.

- contribution to promotion/delivery of enhancing biodiversity and improved carbon sequestration parallel to Danes Stream and within transitional fringe habitats lying between the settlements of Ashley and Hordle - as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Avon Valley & Downlands and South Coast Towns) 2025.

SDGO K (New neighbourhood): Land west of New Milton

For consultation and consideration whether exceptional circumstances justify the release of land from the Green Belt for development.

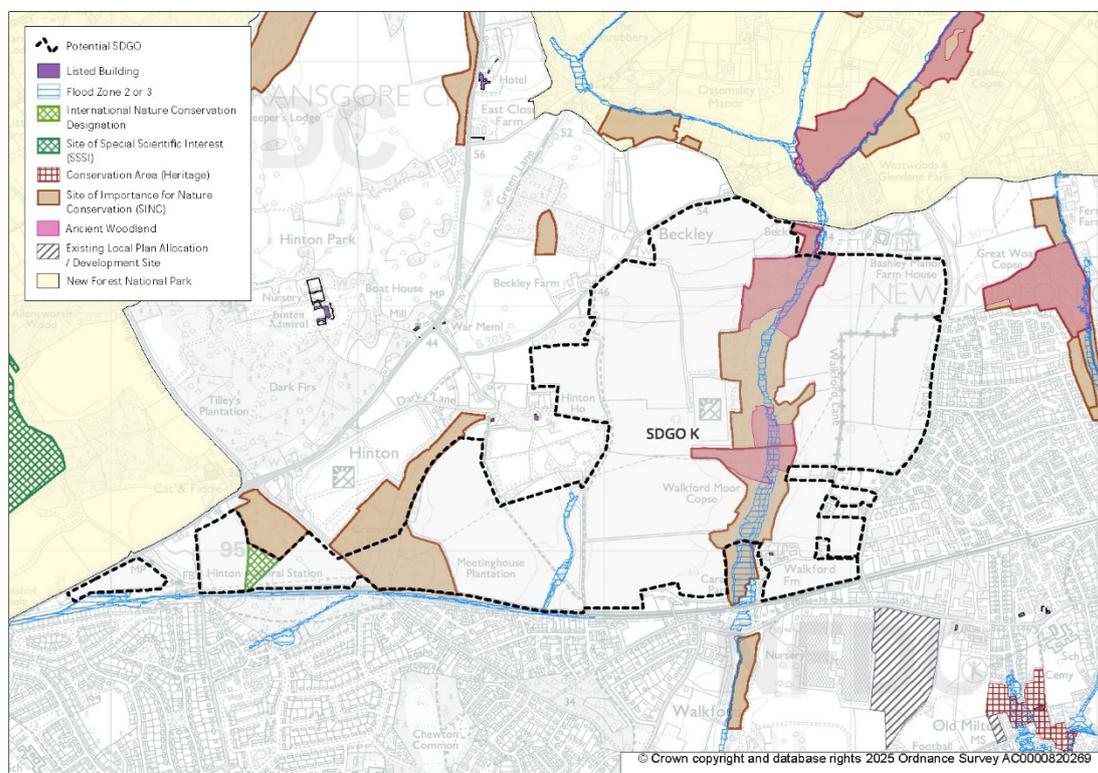


Figure 17 Strategic Development Growth Option K

Potential uses include:

- around 1,200 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that around 600 homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- significant green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space

- a community focal point or points which may include facilities such as local convenience shopping, flexible floorspace for business/commercial use, a community centre
- employment land suitable for office/industrial use
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities by non-car-based means of travel

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- SDGO is within the Green Belt. Under the council's 2025 Green Belt Study (Part 1) no areas within this SDGO are identified as potential grey belt.
- there is a small triangular parcel New Forest SAC in the area of the SDGO close to Hinton Admiral railway station. The areas of land adjoining this could potentially be linked to the existing SAC and appropriately restored. A western extension to New Milton (at the eastern side of the SDGO) would be the most favourable in ecological terms.
- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impacts to coastal designated sites should be considered as appropriate.
- there are some areas of local ecological importance (i.e., Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Priority Habitats, and Ancient Woodland) within and on the edges of the SDGO, and as such any strategic growth would need to come forward alongside extensive strategic green/blue infrastructure. Significant opportunity for strategic green infrastructure, such as nature restoration (for example the woodlands along Walkford Brook), woodland access, improvements to walking routes (including right of way paths), and open space provision, which could form part of a comprehensive plan for the SDGO.
- the broad area of the SDGO is in a sensitive landscape location and parts of it are close to the New Forest National Park (opposite to the north). Land in the central part sits within a shallow valley which is enclosed, with minimal public access. Eastern parts of the SDGO score more highly for sensitivity being flat and open
- potential impact of any development on the separation between New Milton and Highcliffe. The capacity and sensitivity of the landscape between the two settlements will be an important consideration

- individual and groups of protected trees within the SDGO
- numerous Listed Buildings, with the southern end of Walkford Lane particularly sensitive in terms of heritage setting.

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary and/or secondary education facilities
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections
- contribution to promotion/delivery of improved habitat connectivity and carbon sequestration along Walkford Brook and associated woodland – stretching from Beckley Bridge to Chewton Bunny - as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Avon Valley & Downlands and South Coast Towns) 2025.

SDGO L (New neighbourhood): Land at Long Lane / Green Lane, Ringwood

For consultation and consideration whether exceptional circumstances justify the release of land from the Green Belt for development.

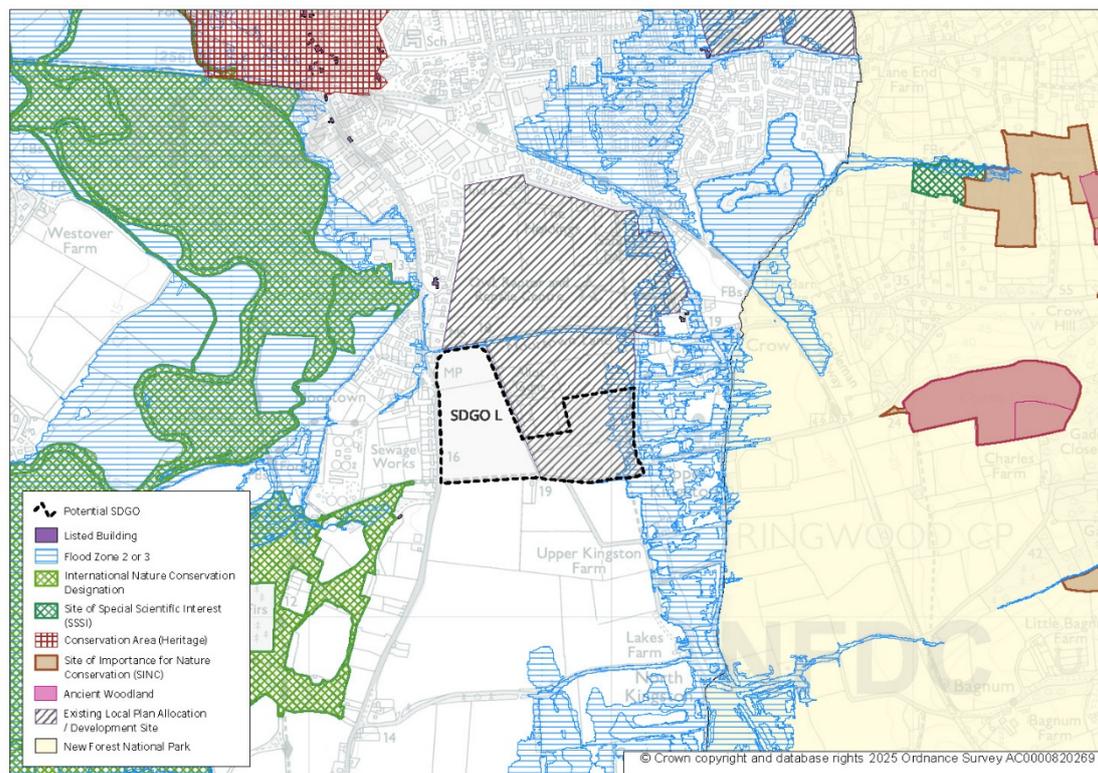


Figure 18 Strategic Development Growth Option L

Potential uses include:

- around 250 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures
- supporting green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- SDGO is within the Green Belt. Under the council's 2025/26 Green Belt Study (Part 1) no areas within this SDGO are identified as grey belt.
- Mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impact to the River Avon designated sites should be considered

- The SDGO is in a sensitive location and parts of it are close to the New Forest National Park (opposite to the east)
- Some eastern areas of the SDGO are within Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 (which extend slightly further under climate change scenarios).

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- healthcare facilities
- appropriate treatment of flood risk to the eastern side (informed by a flooding appraisal)
- utilities connections

SDGO M (New Neighbourhood): Land southeast of Fordingbridge

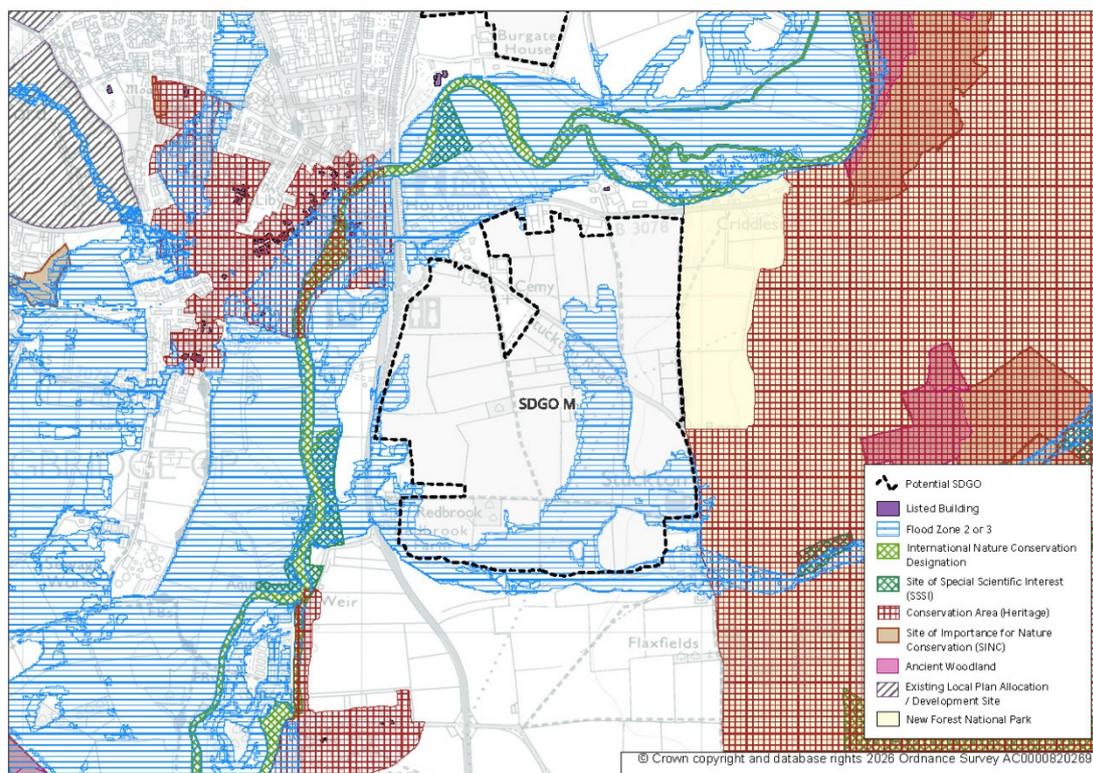


Figure 19 Strategic Development Growth Option M

Potential uses include:

- around 800 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that around 600 homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- significant green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space
- a community focal point or points which may include facilities such as local convenience shopping, flexible floorspace for business/commercial use, a community centre
- potential for employment land suitable for office/industrial use; there is limited employment land in Fordingbridge and as such this could be an opportunity to explore.

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impacts to the River Avon designated sites should be considered.
- the SDGO is in a sensitive landscape location and close to the New Forest National Park (opposite to the east). There are expansive views which may be affected by built development in this location.
- Significant parts of the SDGO are within Flood Zones 2 and 3, with additional areas at risk associated with climate change modelling. This would require further analysis through the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 2) before any conclusions could be drawn on the capacity of the site and ensure it is safe for development. At the same time an opportunity may exist to provide green infrastructure (including flood alleviation measures) to reduce the risks present on the site and provide wider benefits.
- SDGO is close to the Bickton Conservation Area (and the Fordingbridge Conservation Area). Multiple Listed Buildings close by the SDGO. Open landscape character of SDGO means any significant development will be highly prominent within the setting of the nearby Conservation Areas. The special interest of Fordingbridge and Bickton is derived in part from the riverside setting and location within the open flood plain of the Avon Valley. High quality views across the SDGO toward the Western Scarp Conservation Area
- there are some areas of local ecological importance (Priority Habitats) within and on the edges of the SDGO.
- recent surveys in the Avon Valley have revealed numerous new day and night bat roosts, confirming this area as a key site for the species. A recent study linked Avon Valley hibernation roosts to maternity sites in Dorset. Recommended measures include targeted surveys to establish how bats are using the landscape, safeguarding or providing roosting structures, hedgerow restoration, watercourse vegetation management, minimizing artificial lighting in line with national guidance, and maintaining dark corridors for connectivity.

- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities by non-car-based means of travel including access from Salisbury Road
- development in this location would expand Fordingbridge beyond the A338, which could act as a significant barrier to integration. This will need to be assessed and considered further

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary and/or secondary education facilities
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections
- contribution to promotion/delivery of biodiversity enhancements, nutrient mitigation buffer planting and pollinator stepping stones - as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Avon Valley & Downlands and South Coast Towns) 2025
- contribution to addressing gaps in the network of accessible greenspaces through improved connections to PRow which afford access to the wider countryside. - as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Avon Valley & Downlands and South Coast Towns) 2025.

SDGO N (New neighbourhood): Land east of Fordingbridge

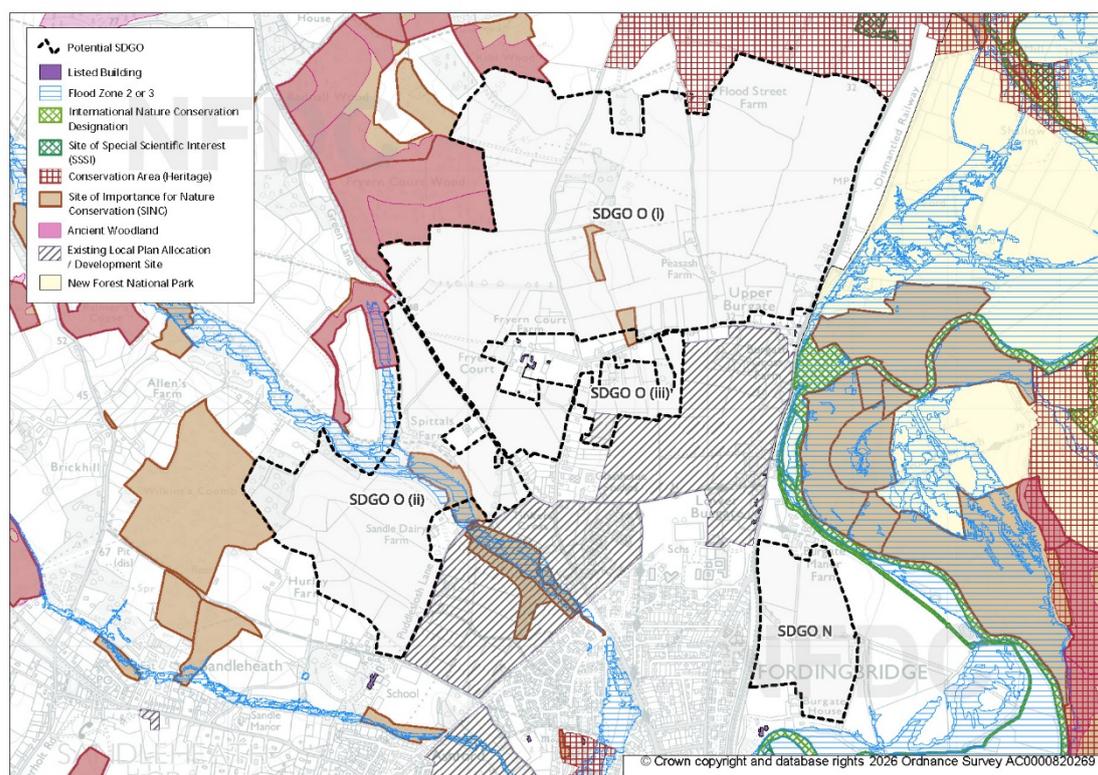


Figure 20 Strategic Development Growth Options N & O

Potential uses include:

- around 300 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that all these homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- supporting green infrastructure, alternative natural recreational greenspace and public open space
- potential for employment land suitable for office/industrial use; there is limited employment land in Fordingbridge and as such this could be an opportunity to explore.

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impacts to the River Avon designated sites should be considered

- the SDGO is in a highly sensitive landscape location being flat and expansive in character. The landscape is associated with a meander in the River Avon. Parts of it are close to the New Forest National Park (to the north / north-east).
- there are some areas of local ecological importance (Priority Habitats) within and on the edges of the SDGO
- recent surveys in the Avon Valley have revealed numerous new day and night bat roosts, confirming this area as a key site for the species. A recent study linked Avon Valley hibernation roosts to maternity sites in Dorset. Recommended measures include targeted surveys to establish how bats are using the landscape, safeguarding or providing roosting structures, hedgerow restoration, watercourse vegetation management, minimizing artificial lighting in line with national guidance, and maintaining dark corridors for connectivity
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities in Fordingbridge by non-car-based means of travel including access from Salisbury Road
- development in this location would expand Fordingbridge beyond the A338, which could act as a significant barrier to integration. This will need to be assessed and considered further.

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken
- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary and/or secondary education facilities
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections

SDGO O (New neighbourhood): Land to the north and northwest of Fordingbridge

*SDGO O is mapped alongside SDGO N in **Figure 20** Figure 20 above.*

Note: A small part of this SDGO is the subject of a current full planning application (25/10729 – Fiddlesticks Farm, Whitsbury Road) for 97 homes

Potential uses include:

- around 1,750 homes (market and affordable) comprising a mix of types, sizes and tenures. Our initial view is that around 600 homes could be realistically built in the proposed Plan period to 2043
- significant green infrastructure, natural recreational greenspace and public open space
- a community focal point or points which may include facilities such as local convenience shopping, flexible floorspace for business/commercial use, a community centre
- potential for employment land suitable for office/industrial use; there is limited employment land in Fordingbridge and as such this could be an opportunity to explore
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities by non-car-based means of travel

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

- the SDGO is large and exhibits a number of key sensitivities that would need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner, in particular relating to landscape impacts; access and highway capacity for the wider area; connections to the main Fordingbridge settlement; and ecological aspects. These elements will need to be appraised by further evidence base work and a comprehensive strategy would need to be produced for this growth option.
- mitigation of potential impacts (recreational, air quality, nutrients) on International Nature Conservation Designations. Impacts to the River Avon designated sites should be considered.

- the SDGO is in a sensitive landscape location. The setting of Fryern Court is an important feature of this area but elements of open space and Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace could be accommodated. The Upper Burgate area and land to the west of Whitsbury Road are judged to have less landscape sensitivity. A landscape-led approach which secures suitable land to avoid the coalescence of Fordingbridge with other villages and hamlets would be needed
- a large number of heritage assets are found in this area. The land around Fryern Court is situated on higher ground. The most sensitive sites are to the north and north-east of the SDGO. Breamore Conservation Area sits to the north of the SDGO and its setting would require specific consideration.
some parts of the SDGO are within Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 with possibly increased risk under climate change scenarios. This would need further detailed appraisal.
- there are some areas of local ecological importance (i.e. of Importance for Nature Conservation, Priority Habitats, and Ancient Woodland) within and on the edges of the SDGO
- recent surveys in the Avon Valley have revealed numerous new day and night bat roosts, confirming this area as a key site for the species. A recent study linked Avon Valley hibernation roosts to maternity sites in Dorset. Recommended measures include targeted surveys to establish how bats are using the landscape, safeguarding or providing roosting structures, hedgerow restoration, watercourse vegetation management, minimizing artificial lighting in line with national guidance, and maintaining dark corridors for connectivity.
- ensuring connectivity to services and facilities in Fordingbridge by non-car-based means of travel including access from Salisbury Road

In order to deliver sustainable development, key infrastructure needs/requirements could include provision of and/or financial contributions towards:

- highway network improvements. A detailed assessment of local traffic impact, highway network capacity and access considerations will need to be undertaken

- cycling/walking network provision/improvements
- contributions towards new or improved bus services
- primary and/or secondary education facilities
- healthcare facilities
- utilities connections
- contribution to / delivery of enhancements to habitat connectivity along Sweatfords Water – stretching from Rockbourne to land to the northwest of Fordingbridge - as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Avon Valley & Downlands and South Coast Towns) 2025.
- contribution to / delivery of the Avon Valley Path as a low carbon form of travel to access the New Forest National Park - as set out in the NFDC Green Blue Infrastructure report (Avon Valley & Downlands and South Coast Towns) 2025.
- contribution to a formalised PRow / multiuser trail connecting Ashford with Breamore, accommodating the route of the dismantled railway.

Other Potential Development Site Options

179. In addition to the areas identified for consideration as potential SDGOs that will be assessed further and tested through the Local Plan review process, interim assessment work to date has also identified a number of other sites that may have capacity for 10-99 dwellings outside the defined built-up areas that may have potential for development.

180. At this stage, these are simply options for consideration, not proposed site allocations. They will be considered through the Local Plan review process and will be subject to more detailed assessment and Sustainability Appraisal to establish whether they would be suitable and achievable to propose for allocation in the Local Plan review. We are seeking your views on these potential sites to help shape the next steps.

181. The potential site options are shown together with their HELAA site ID numbers in the maps overleaf. Further information, including the initial assessment setting out main constraints/considerations, on these sites is set out in the **interim HELAA**. The initial housing capacity estimates in the HELAA are broad in their nature and are only intended to inform more detailed studies of the SDGOs. The potential capacity figures do not indicate Council support for planning applications for sites which are unallocated, nor that the indicated capacity would be acceptable.

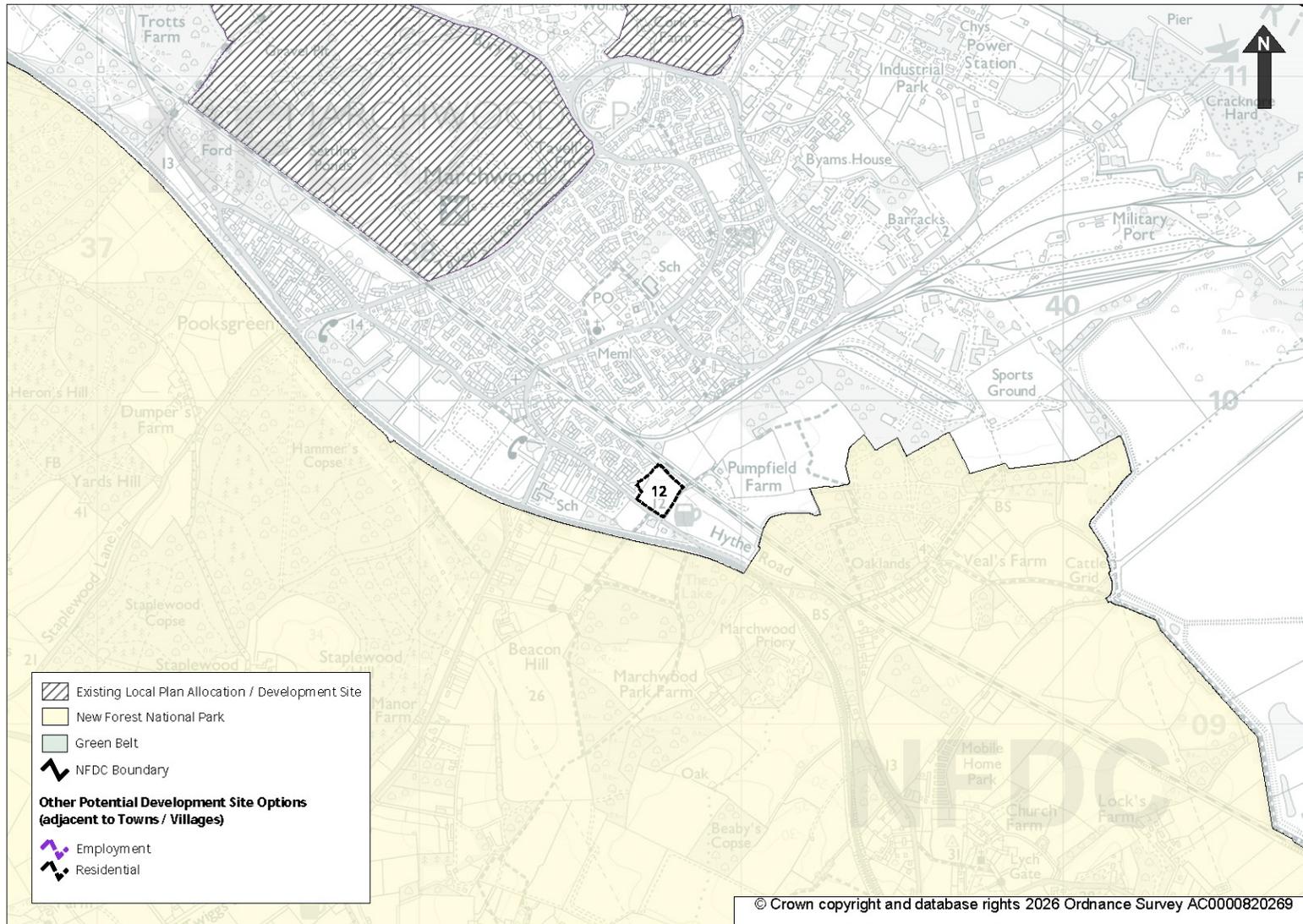


Figure 21 Other potential development site options adjacent to Marchwood

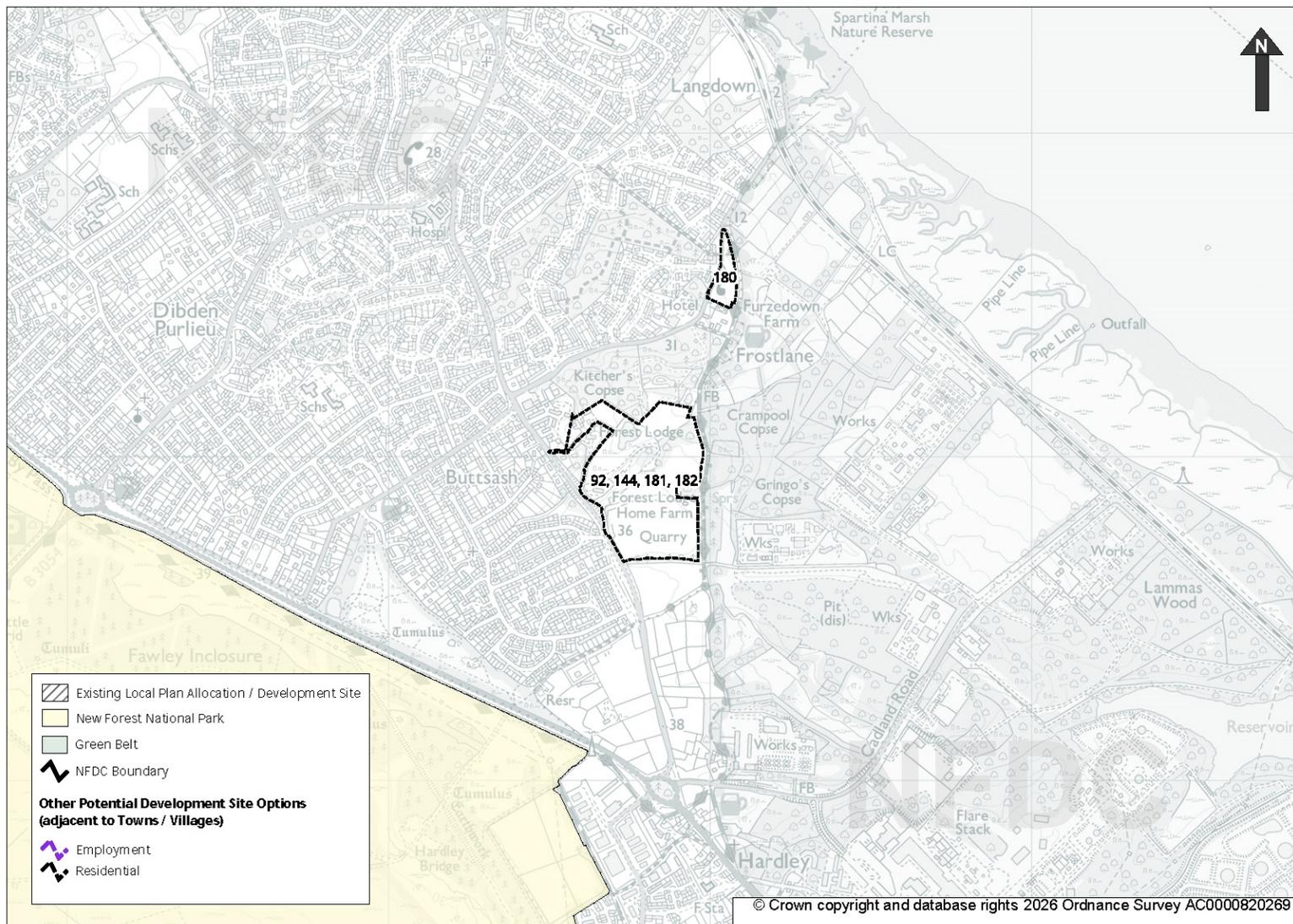


Figure 22 Other potential development site options adjacent to Hythe & Dibden

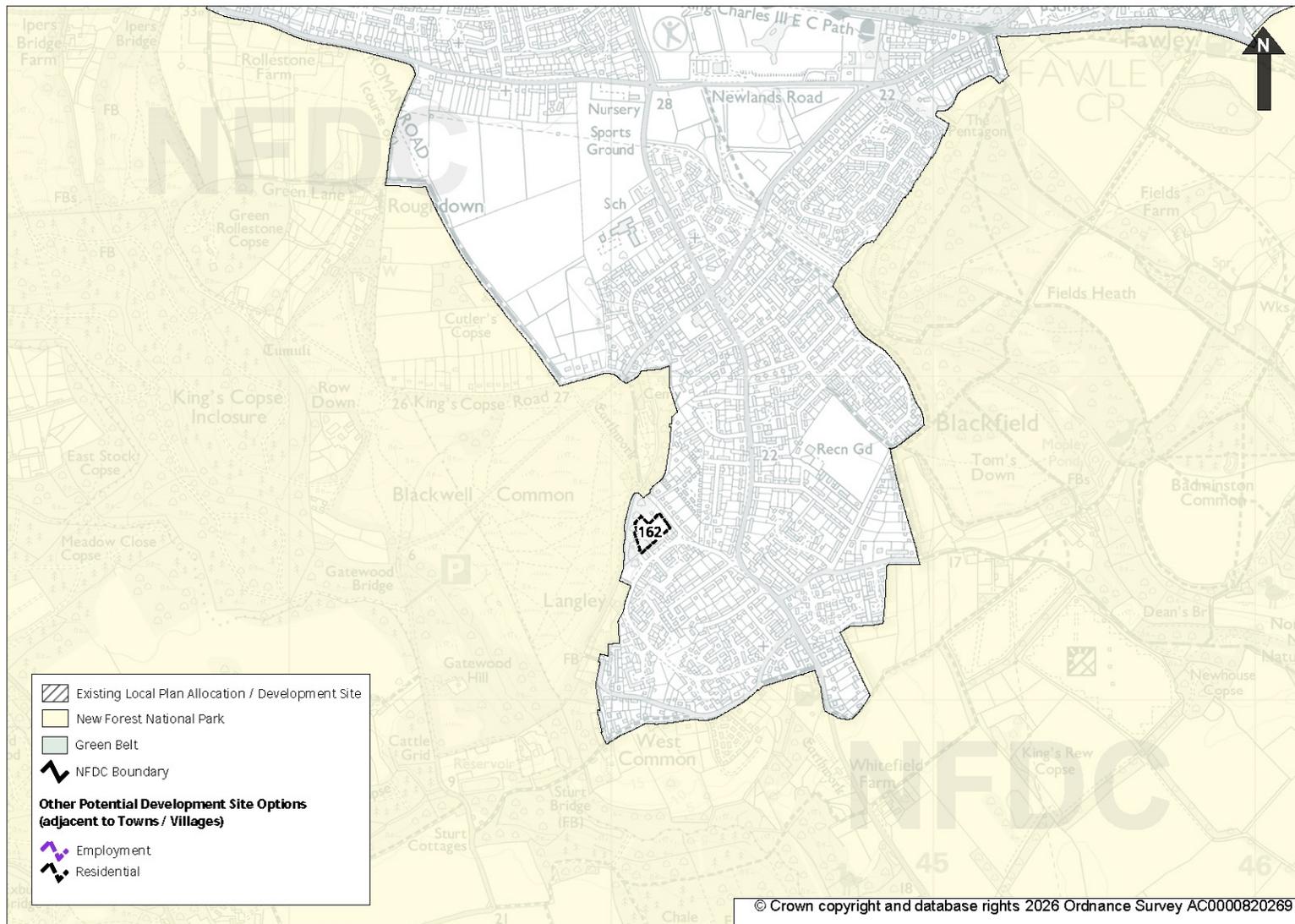


Figure 23 Other potential development site options adjacent to Blackfield

140

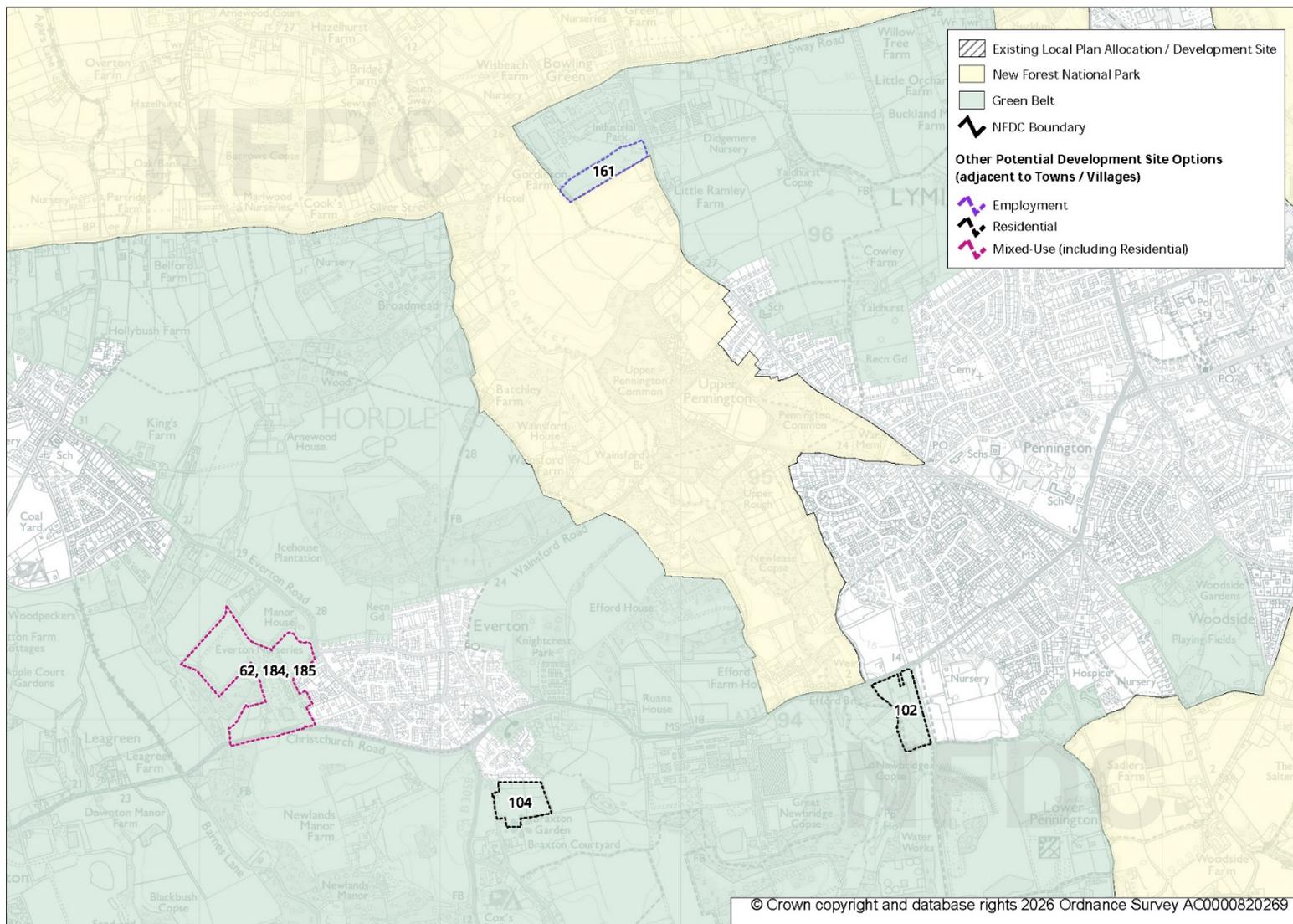


Figure 24 Other potential development site options adjacent to Lymington, Pennington & Everton

141

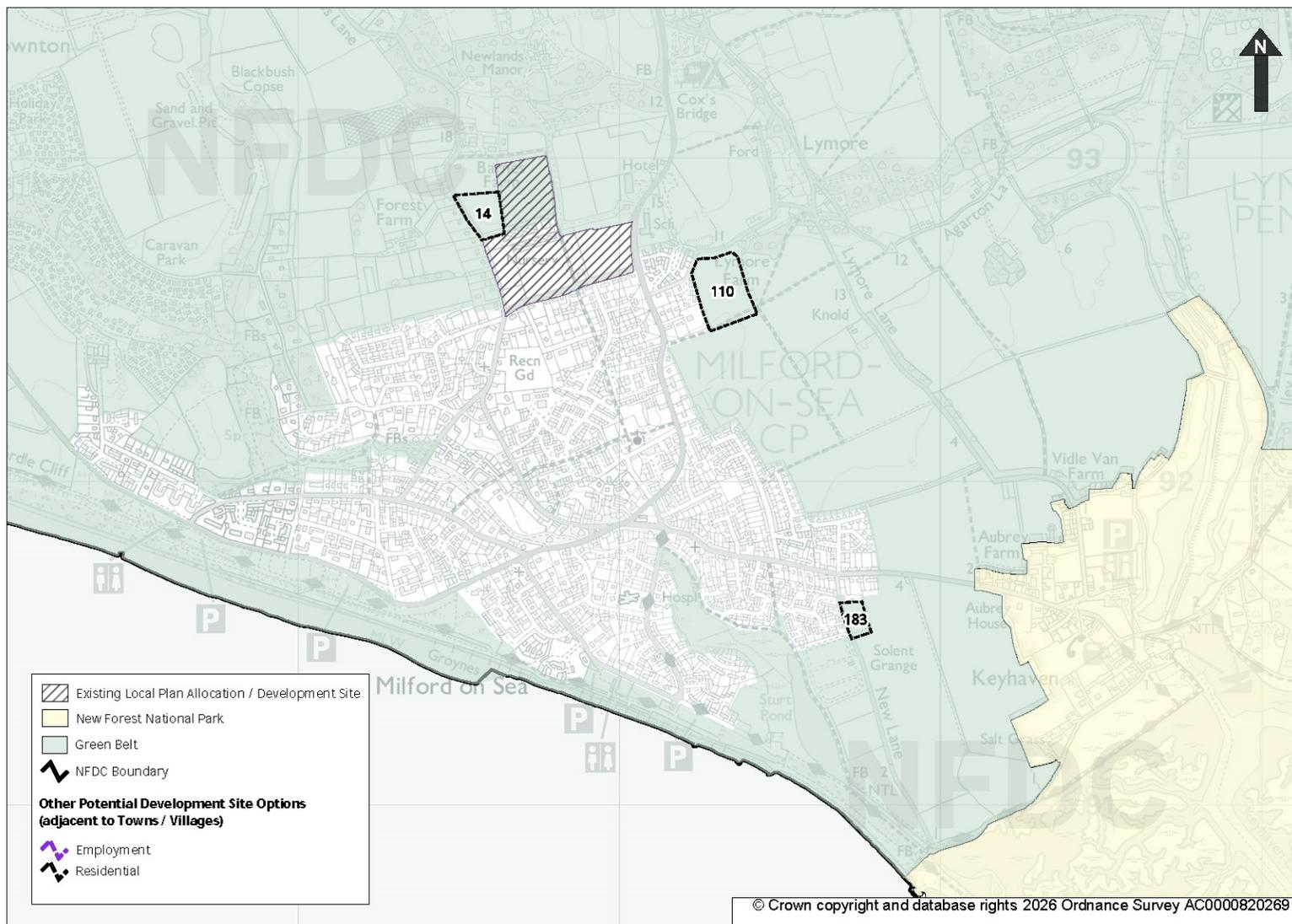


Figure 25 Other potential development site options adjacent to Milford on Sea

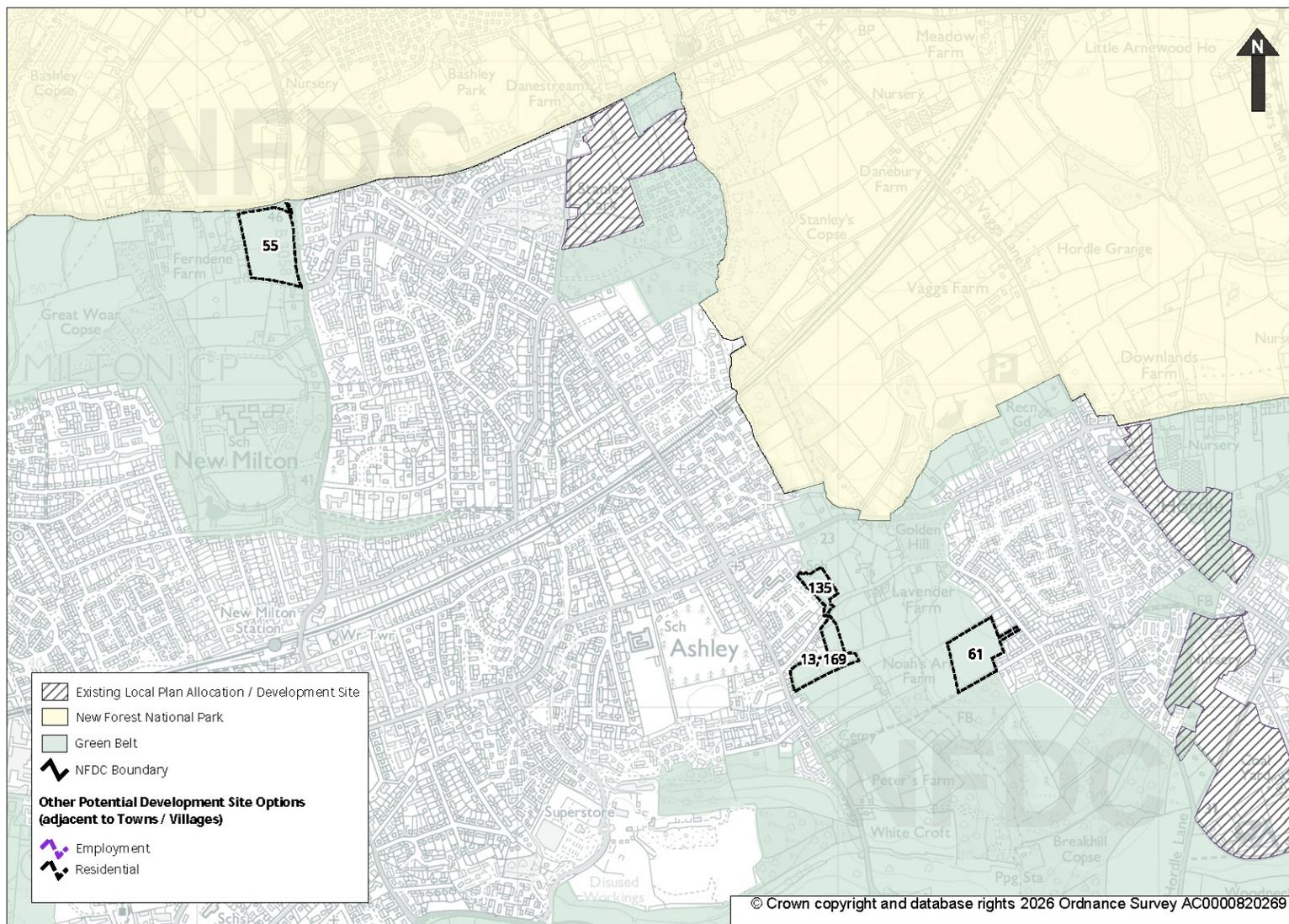


Figure 26 Other potential development site options adjacent to New Milton & Hordle

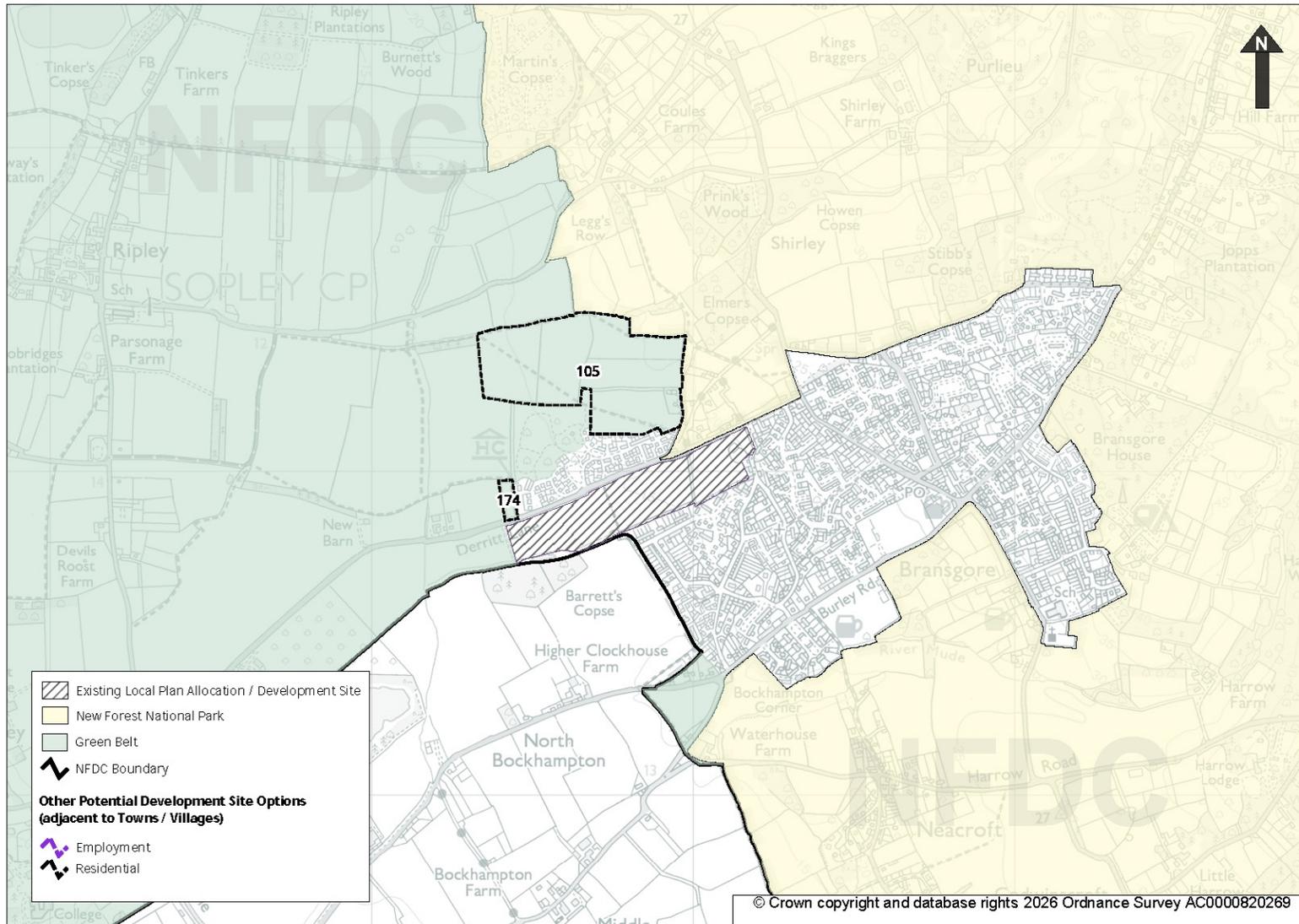


Figure 27 Other potential development site options adjacent to Bransgore

144

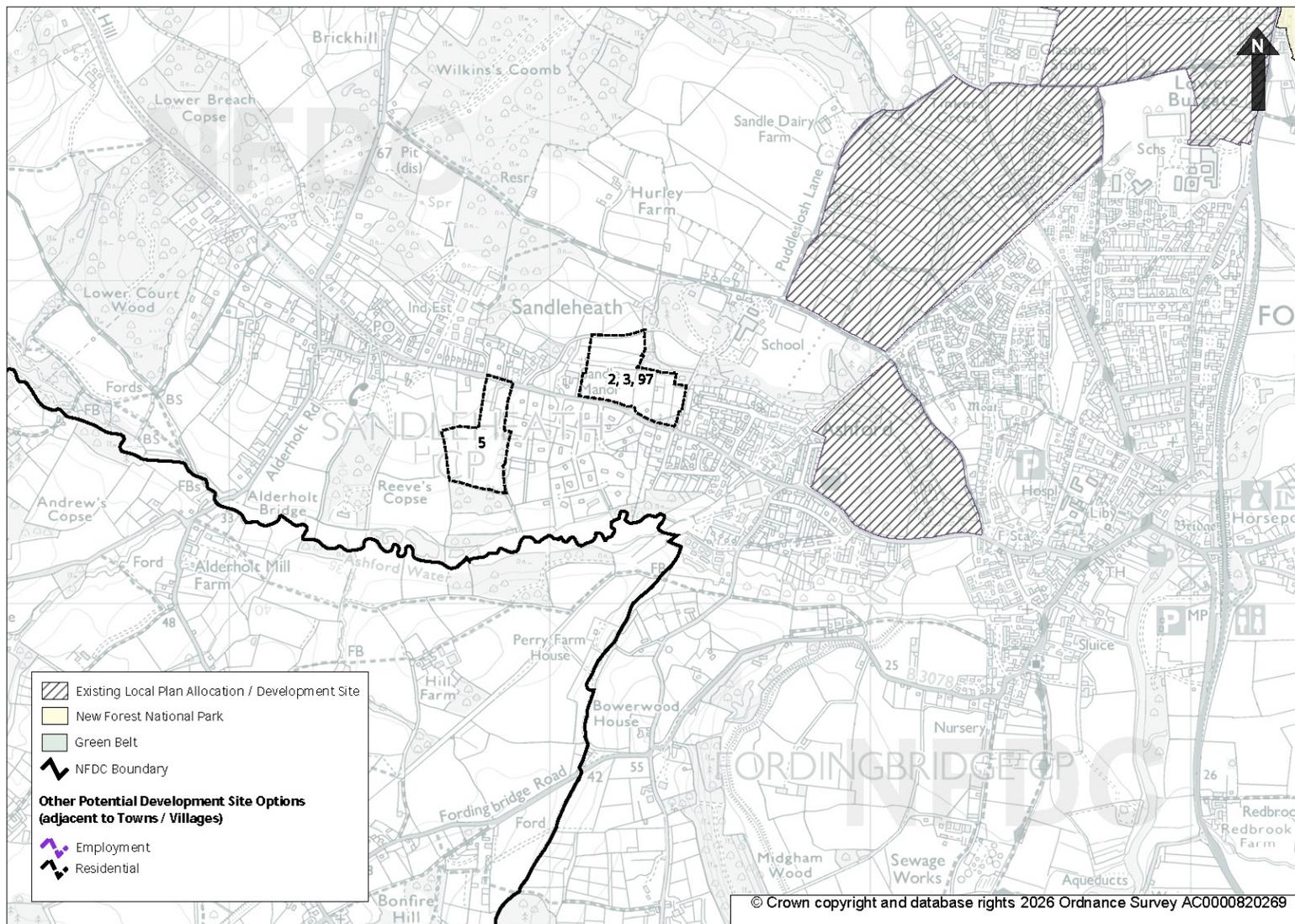


Figure 28 Other potential development site options adjacent to Sandleheath

Potential Cumulative Growth across the Plan Period

182. The following maps present the potential cumulative growth across the Plan period, for each sub-area. The bar charts consider both existing supply (presented in orange) and what may be the potential realistic delivery from the growth options (presented in a purple colour scale) as presented in the Sustainable Spatial Strategy section of this document. It is important to note here that these maps have been created on the premise that all the potential development options, as presented above, are taken forward. It is however equally important to caveat that this may not be the case.

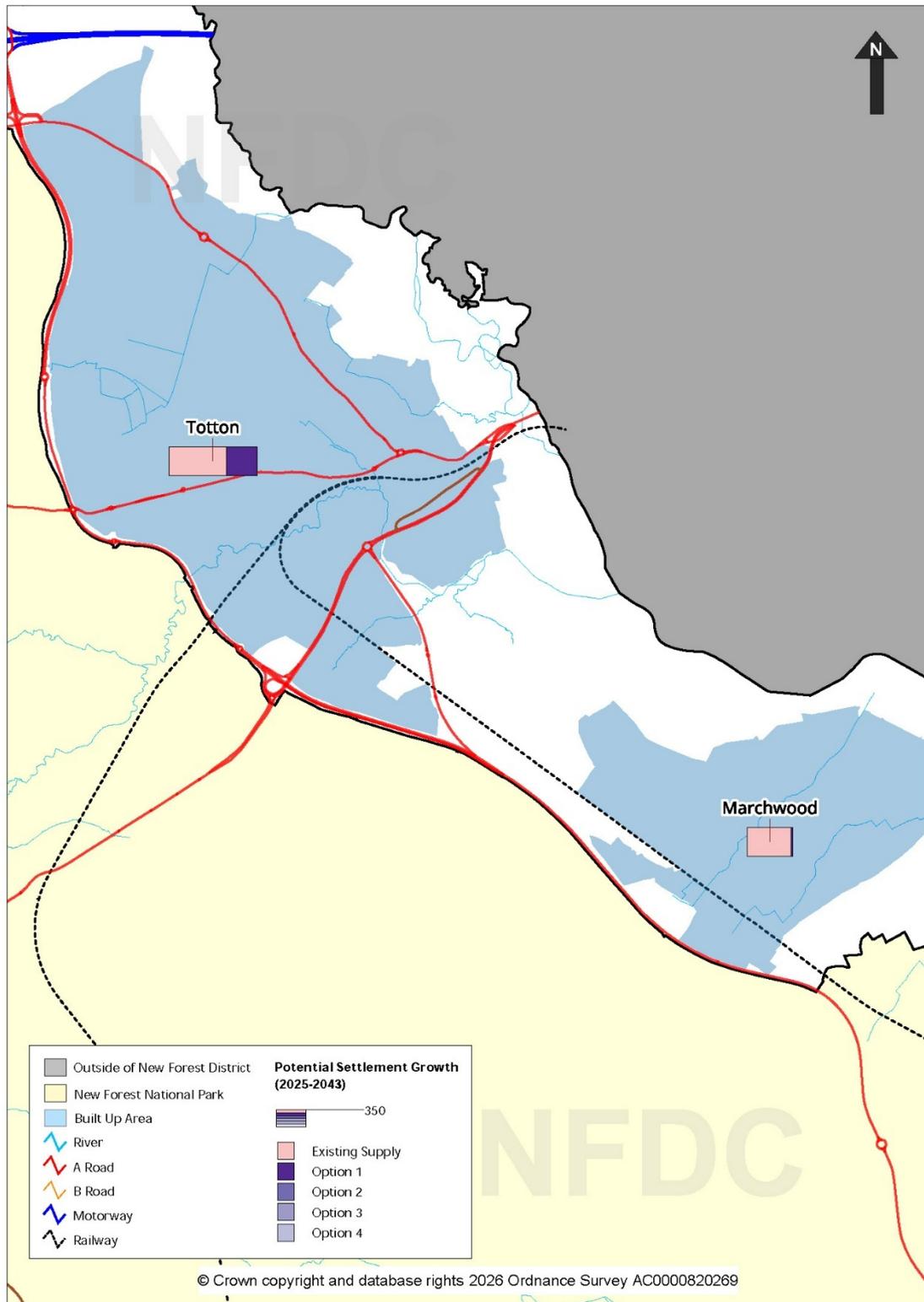


Figure 29 Potential Cumulative Growth in the Waterside Sub-Area (north), 2025-2043

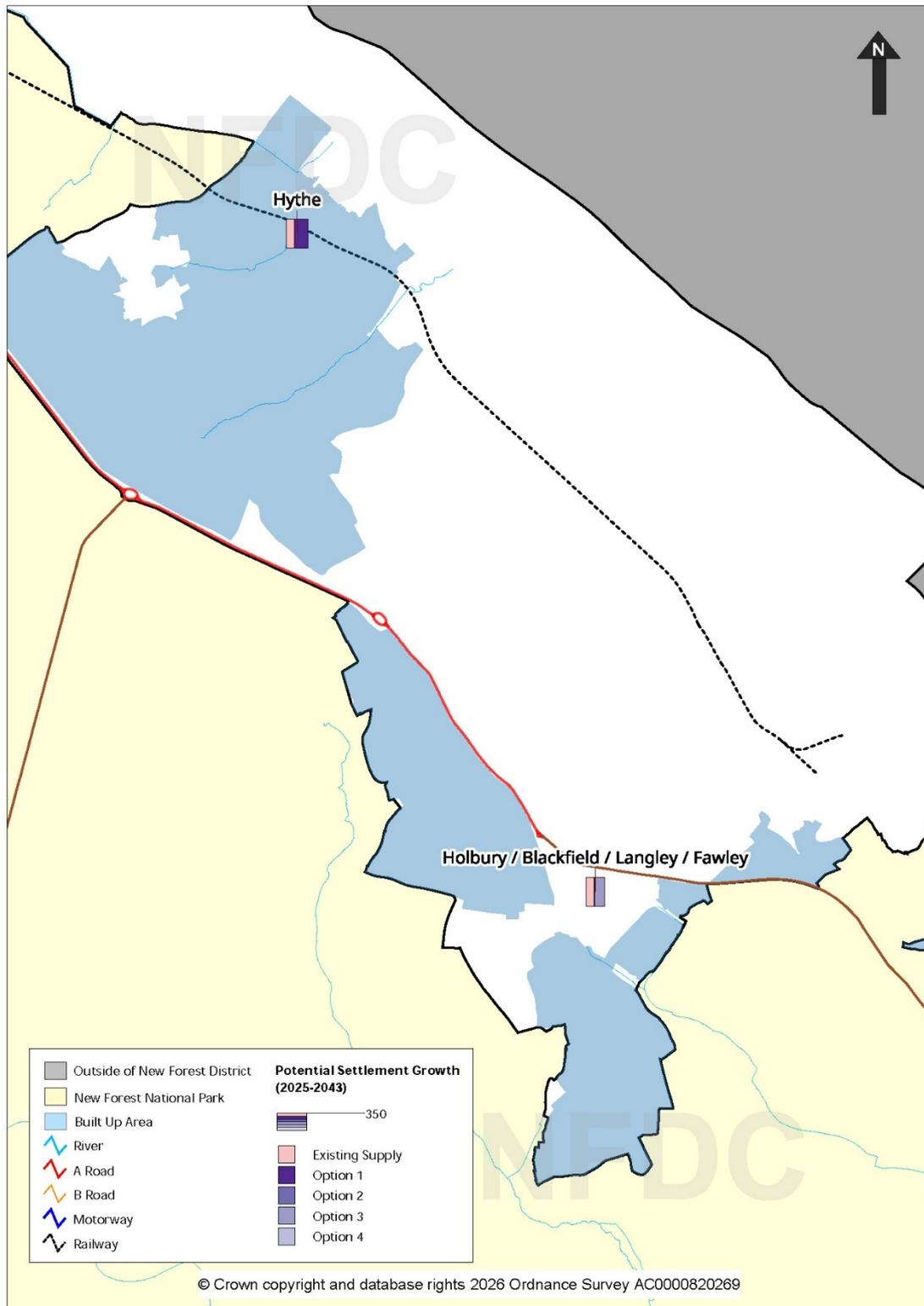


Figure 30 Potential Cumulative Growth in the Waterside Sub-Area (south), 2025-2043

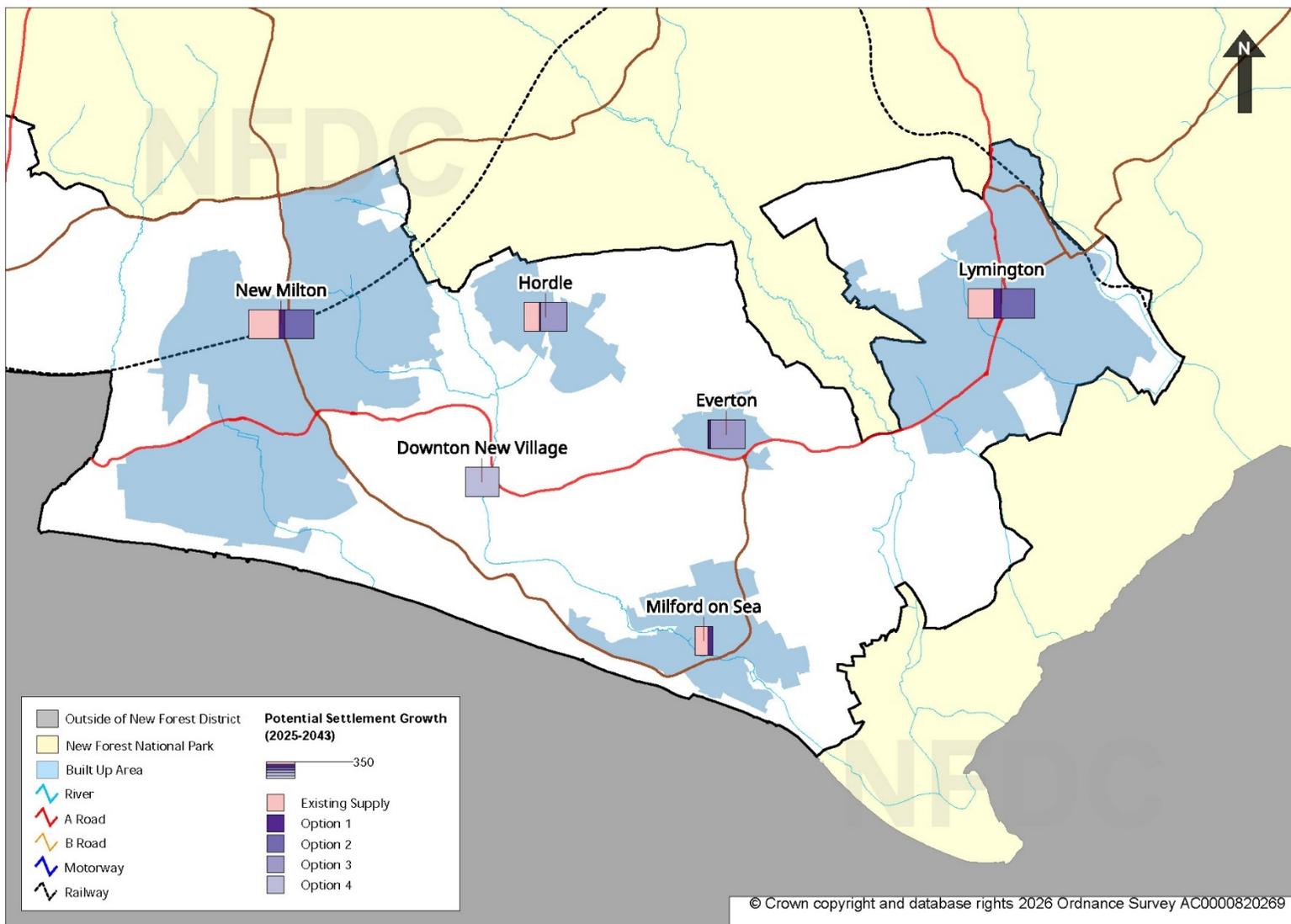


Figure 31 Potential Cumulative Growth in the South Coastal Towns Sub-Area, 2025-2043

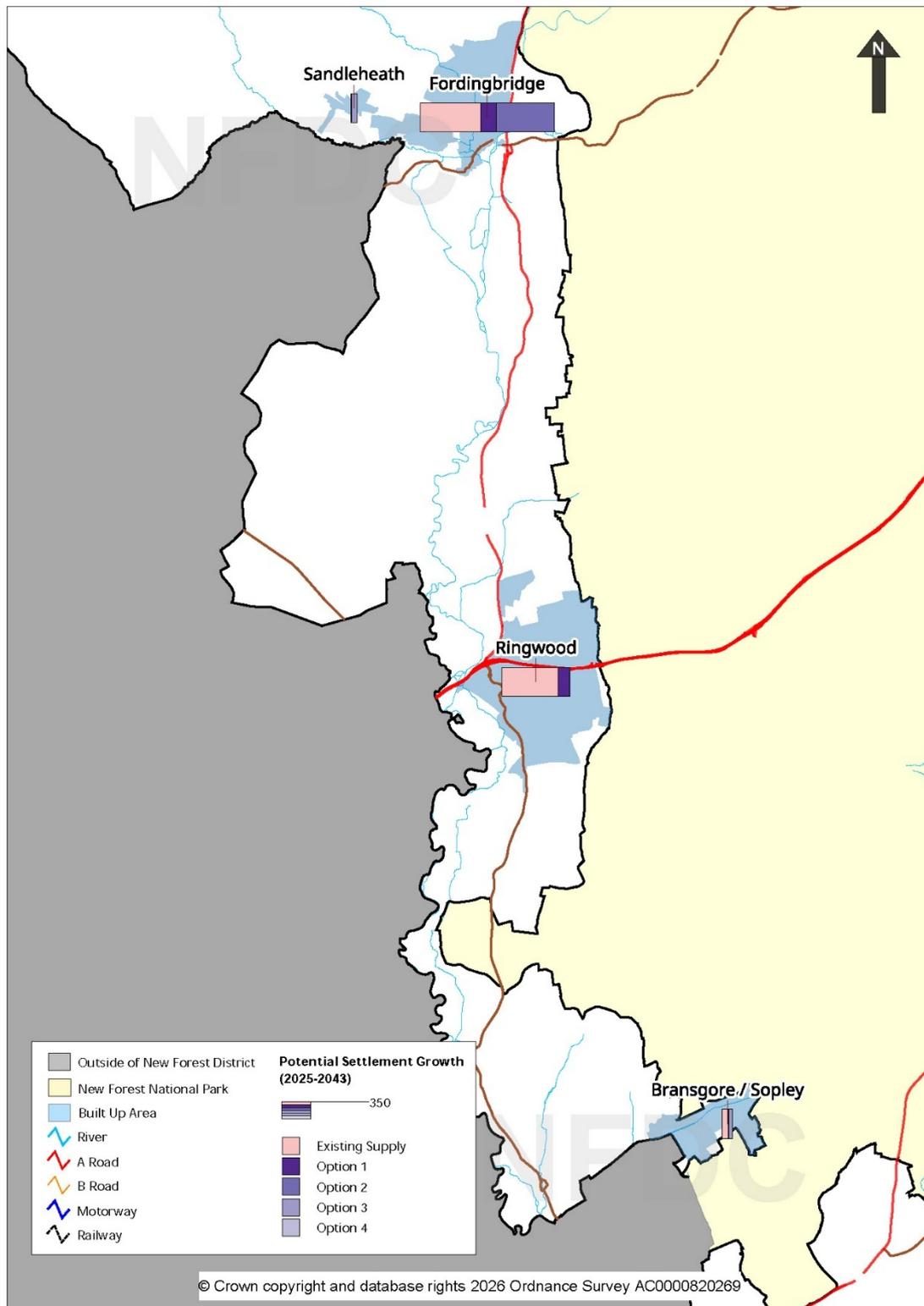


Figure 32 Potential Cumulative Growth in the Avon Valley & Downlands Sub-Area, 2025-2043

Further information / evidence base weblinks

183. Interim Sustainability Appraisal

184. Interim Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Consultation questions

- 11) Do you agree with the potential Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs) we are considering as options? Please explain your reason and note which of the SDGO area(s) you are commenting on specifically.
- 12) What do you think about the other potential development sites that we are considering as options?

Homes for all

Housing

Aim and Objectives

185. A key objective for the Local Plan is to provide a range and choice of good quality new homes by type, size, tenure and location. The Local Plan will need to ensure that new housing provision, as far as possible, addresses local housing needs providing, in particular, homes more affordable for younger households and a wider spectrum of homes and other measures enabling older residents to continue to live well and remain independent in their New Forest communities.

What you told us

Housing Mix

186. A common theme throughout responses to the Issues and Scope consultation was the need for affordable housing and smaller properties for younger generations as well as smaller properties for the elderly. Many respondents noted the ageing population and considered that this is partly due to younger people moving out of the district to find affordable housing. There is some concern over a perceived excess of older persons or retirement housing, and also a view that these are often too expensive for many elderly residents.

187. It was also suggested that the council consider increased densities in developments, particularly in larger towns, for a combination of end-users (young, elderly). A number of respondents noted the proportion of vacant properties across the Plan Area and encouraged the council to consider this as an option to address the need. Location-specific policies were also suggested in terms of affordable housing, whereby the areas with the greatest identified need are given higher affordable housing targets.

Affordable Housing

188. The general view of respondents was that the housing being provided now is not affordable for local people. Some respondents referenced larger (family) properties and emphasis on home ownership; however, the majority referenced the need for rented accommodation, smaller properties and flats.

Second Home Ownership

189. It was suggested that the council consider a policy to place restrictions on the use of newly built dwellings as second homes. Those in favour of consideration of a policy indicated that second homes drive prices up and make housing unaffordable for local people

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

190. **Paragraph 61 of the NPPF** states that to significantly boost the supply of homes, it is important that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. The overall aim should be to meet an area's identified housing need, including an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community. NPPF Paragraph 62 requires that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups of the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies including older people and people with disabilities

191. We therefore need to consider potential policy approaches to the size, type and tenure of new housing that will best meet the needs of residents whilst ensuring that new housing development is viable to deliver.

New Forest Housing Needs Assessment (Iceni, 2025)

192. The New Forest Housing Needs Assessment (Iceni, 2025) provides the primary data and analysis to inform policies on housing type, size, tenure and choice; affordable housing; second homes; and residential accommodation for older people. It was commissioned jointly with the National Park Authority, although the data and analysis are broken down for the separate plan areas to support policies in both Local Plan reviews.

193. The New Forest Housing Needs Assessment (Iceni, 2025) suggests there will be an acute need for both social and affordable rented housing, but that social rents should be prioritised where delivery does not prejudice the overall delivery of affordable homes.

194. The study shows that there is a need for mix of housing sizes across all tenures as indicated below in Table 4.

Suggested size mix of housing by tenure – New Forest District (outside the National Park)				
	Market	Affordable home ownership	Affordable housing (rented)	
			General needs	Older persons
1-bedroom	5%	20%	20%	50%
2-bedrooms	40%	45%	35%	50%
3-bedrooms	40%	30%	35%	
4+-bedrooms	15%	5%	10%	

Table 4 Suggested size mix of housing by tenure – New Forest District (outside the National Park)

195. Based on its analysis, the Housing Needs Assessment makes a number of recommendations, with some of the key ones being to:

- maximise delivery of affordable housing, prioritising social rent where viable
- adopt flexible housing mix policies to reflect demographic changes and site-specific characteristics
- support delivery of specialist housing for older people and those with disabilities, including M4(2) and M4(3) compliant homes
- address unmet demand for self and custom-build plots, with around 50 plots needed per base period in the New Forest District (outside the National Park) Plan Area.

Second homes

196. We recognise the growing concern around the impact of second homes and short-term lets on housing availability and affordability for local residents across the New Forest. Data suggests that there are currently around 1,200 properties registered as second homes in the whole District including the National Park. Based on this data and figures from the most recent **Census** on location and type of second addresses, it is not considered that there is compelling evidence to justify proposing a blanket policy to place restrictions on the use of newly built dwellings as second homes.

Policy Direction

Housing Mix

197. New Forest District faces a significant demographic challenge, with a growing proportion of older residents and a decline in younger age groups. This trend has implications for the sustainability of local services, the vitality of communities, and the resilience of the local economy.

198. Given the current and projected demographics of the Plan Area and the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment, we therefore need to review and update adopted Policy HOU1 to ensure that the Local Plan review clearly includes a strategic policy that requires that the size, type and tenure of new housing meets the needs of residents at all key stages of life. This policy should also seek to promote and support development in sustainable locations and support a balanced demographic profile.

199. To achieve this, the proposed policy approach is as follows:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach: Mixed and balanced communities

All new residential development should deliver a range of housing accommodation which address local housing needs, for both market and affordable housing, to create mixed and balanced communities including suitable provision for:

- a mix of homes by size, type and tenure which reflects the needs identified by best available local evidence; and

- specific housing needs, including housing suitable for younger people, older people, multi-generational housing, self- and custom-build housing, and those who require specialist housing.

Every development should contribute appropriately to improving housing diversity wherever possible, taking into account the location, size and characteristics of the site, the form of development proposed and the viability of the scheme.

200. The proposed policy approach is not intended to set a prescribed mix to be provided on every individual site. To ensure the mix of housing is the most appropriate to best meet needs, this will be determined on a site-by-site basis. The mix should reflect the needs identified by best available local evidence (such as the 2025 New Forest Housing Needs Assessment). The mix should also take account of the site, its size and its location, the form of development proposed and the viability of the scheme. The overall mix should also provide for an appropriate density of development which makes efficient use of land, whilst being environmentally appropriate to the local area.

201. Not all sites will be appropriate to provide a full mix. For example, whilst larger greenfield sites should provide for a full and comprehensive mix, this may not be possible on smaller sites and sites within settlements depending on the site's size, location and local context, including the character of the local area. The appropriate mix of homes should therefore be achieved from the total combined mix delivered from new residential development overall, from all sites in total.

202. Alternative options considered include being completely prescriptive in the policy and seeking to set and require specific housing mixes on all sites regardless of size or location. This is not considered to be a justifiable approach as overly prescriptive policies can become out of date quickly if the situation or evidence changes. Requirements for residential development can be a key factor in the overall viability of the scheme and appropriate flexibility can aid in ensuring that development is viable and subsequently delivered. A prescriptive housing mix requirement for schemes is more likely to need amendment for individual schemes at the application stage which is likely to contribute to delays in the determination process and therefore delay the delivery of housing.

Affordable Housing

203. Policy HOU2 of the current adopted Local Plan sets a requirement for all new developments of 11 or more dwellings, or of more than 1,000sqm gross internal area of residential floorspace, to provide affordable housing as follows:

- the target is for 35% of dwellings on new developments of 11 or more dwellings to be affordable in the Totton and the Waterside area
- the target is for 50% of dwellings on new developments of 11 or more dwellings to be affordable in the rest of the Plan Area
- the tenure mix target is to provide 70% of affordable homes for rent, split equally between social and affordable rent, and 30% intermediate or affordable home ownership tenures including shared ownership

204. The Housing Needs Assessment provides compelling evidence that there is a significant need for affordable housing to rent, and that delivery of affordable housing is maximised, prioritising social rent, where viable. However, monitoring evidence shows that a number of the strategic sites coming forward for development have not been able to meet the current affordable housing target due to viability reasons.

205. It is therefore necessary for the targets in adopted **Policy HOU2** to be reviewed and it is critical that the affordable housing targets set out in an updated strategic policy for the Local Plan review are viable for developments to deliver.

206. The strategic policy will set out the approach to meeting the affordable housing requirements of the district setting out the circumstances under which affordable housing contributions will be required and how the type, tenure and size of affordable housing will be determined.
207. The policy will likely require that all sites of 10 more homes (this in line with the **current NPPF definition of major development**) make on-site provision of affordable housing subject to viability. The policy will seek to maximise the total amount of affordable housing with the priority for social rent whilst balancing the need to ensure that the development is viable to deliver, which will be informed by a Whole Plan Viability Assessment. A tenure and house size mix for affordable housing reflecting the most up-to-date local housing needs evidence, viability evidence and national policy requirements will be expected. At this stage, evidence is suggesting that the delivery of homes for social rent should be prioritised over the delivery of homes for affordable rent.
208. The precise affordable housing target and tenure split will be established later in the Local Plan review once the Whole Plan Viability Assessment has been completed. There will, however, likely need to be some flexibility in the affordable housing target in order to take account of site-specific conditions and abnormal costs.
209. Given the viability challenges experienced on some sites with meeting the current affordable housing target, it is unlikely that increasing the current overall affordable housing target set out in Policy HOU2 of the adopted Local Plan will be a reasonable and justifiable policy approach. Potential options that could be considered/tested for the approach to affordable housing policy in the Local Plan review include:
- maintaining the current adopted Local Plan affordable housing targets set out in Policy HOU2)
 - setting out a separate overall affordable housing target for each sub-area of the Plan Area
 - setting out a single affordable housing target for the whole Plan Area

- maintaining the overall targets for affordable housing provision but reducing proportions for social and/or affordable rent and increasing the proportion for intermediate or affordable home ownership tenures
- reducing the overall targets for affordable housing provision but increasing the target for the proportion to be made available for social rent
- reducing the requirements for affordable housing and/or social rent to prioritise other policy objectives

Specialist Residential Accommodation

210. The Housing Needs Assessment shows a clear need for a policy setting out the approach to specialist residential accommodation, including older persons' housing. It is proposed that this policy will update current adopted Policy HOU3 and set out the approach to meeting the need for specialist accommodation for groups with specific needs that are not met by standard homes. These include (but are not limited to) older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes), people with disabilities, those in need of support with their mental health, single homeless people with support needs, and young people leaving care. The proposed policy approach is set out below:

Possible Policy Approach to Specialist Residential Accommodation

The proposed approach is that specialist housing will be supported where a need for the type of specialist housing proposed is demonstrated, and where the development would not lead to concentrations of such provision in a community. All development proposals for independent and supported living schemes and new build development for care home accommodation should be located in areas that are close to local facilities and services.

In addition, the provision of specialist accommodation, particularly care homes and supported living schemes, may be encouraged on larger development sites where it can contribute to a mixed and inclusive community. This can also support the creation of appropriate building forms, street character, and opportunities for lifted density in masterplanning.

Given the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment which suggests that there is a clear need to increase the supply of accessible and adaptable dwellings and wheelchair-user dwellings we will also consider, subject to viability, whether to include a requirement within the policy for development proposals for specialist accommodation to meet M4(2) adaptable standards as a minimum and include a proportion of the homes as wheelchair adaptable/accessible in accordance with M4(3) standards set out in Building Regulations.

Rural housing exceptions sites, community-led housing, and agricultural or forestry workers dwellings

211. Large parts of the Plan Area are rural in character. It is important to recognise the particular issues facing rural areas in terms of housing supply and affordability, and the role of housing in supporting the broader sustainability of villages and smaller settlements. It will also be important to set out the circumstance where a new dwelling may be permitted in the countryside to address the essential needs of a rural agricultural/forestry enterprise.

212. A proposed approach for policies to appropriately cover these issues is set out below:

Possible Policy Approach to Rural housing exceptions sites and community-led housing

We propose to continue to set out a rural housing exception sites policy (currently Policy HOU5 of the adopted Local Plan) to support new housing development on sites outside of the defined built-up area boundaries that are closely related to existing settlements, subject to strict criteria to ensure that it meets an identified local affordable housing need which would not otherwise be met.

The NPPF (paragraph 82) indicates that consideration should be given to whether to local planning authorities should allow for some market housing on rural exception sites which could assist in facilitating such sites coming forward.

To align with the NPPF, the Local Plan review is considering whether to update adopted Policy HOU5 in this regard by stating that the inclusion of a small element of market housing within a rural exception scheme may be supported as enabling development where its inclusion is demonstrated as being absolutely necessary to achieve viability. The proportion of market housing may vary on a site-by-site basis but should be of a minimal proportion and should be capped to being only what is absolutely required to achieve development viability. This should also be in proportion to the size of the development and with affordable housing remaining the predominant tenure.

In relation to community-led housing, it is proposed to continue the current approach of **Policy HOU5** to support and encourage housing on appropriate sites, and other ancillary or related development proposed alongside housing, by qualifying Community-led Housing group on land it owns or controls, where the development has the support of the local community and is proposed to meet the identified local needs of the community it relates to.

213. Regarding agricultural, forestry and other occupational dwellings, the Local Plan review proposes to roll forward the approach set out in the **Saved Policy DM21 of the adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** which is considered to remain consistent with the NPPF.

Proposed Policy Agricultural or forestry workers dwellings (existing policy DM21)

New permanent dwellings will be allowed to support existing agricultural/forestry activities on well-established agricultural or forestry enterprises, where:

- (i) there is a clearly established existing functional need;
- (ii) the need relates to a full-time worker, or one who is primarily employed in the agriculture/forestry enterprise and does not relate to a part-time requirement;
- (iii) the unit and the agricultural/forestry activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so;

(iv) the functional need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned.

Where the need is established, the dwelling should be sited so as to meet the identified functional need and be well-related to existing farm buildings or other dwellings. All dwellings permitted under this policy will be subject to an appropriate restrictive occupancy condition.

An occupancy condition restricting the occupancy of a dwelling to a person employed or last employed in agriculture or forestry will not be removed unless the local planning authority is satisfied that the long-term need for the dwelling has ceased and there is no evidence of a continuing need for housing for persons employed or last employed in the locality in these categories.

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities

Aims and objectives

214. To seek to address the need for gypsy and traveller pitches and for plots for travelling showpeople whilst having due regard to the protection of local amenity and the local environment.

What you told us

215. Responses to the consultation mainly referenced the need for appropriate evidence and engagement with the communities concerned, leading to the identification of land through the local plan process, subject to consultation. Some responses also suggested the provision of a transit site.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

216. Historically, Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities have some links to the New Forest area, and the communities make up a small, but higher-than-average, proportion of the local population. All local planning authorities are expected to make their own assessment of need and to develop fair and effective strategies to meet need, including ensuring there are sufficient authorised plots and pitches. Our Local Plan will need to include fair, realistic and inclusive policy measures that have due regard to the protection of local amenity and the local environment. Our Local Plan will also need to appropriately address the identified need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities.
217. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) (ORS, 2025) provides the primary data and analysis to inform policies on the provision of accommodation for these communities (including travelling showpeople). The GTAA covers the New Forest District (outside the National Park) Plan Area. New Forest National Park Authority has commissioned a separate assessment to support its Local Plan Review.
218. The GTAA identifies a need for 22 pitches emerging from the 33 households that met the **2024 Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (PPTS)** planning definition. There is also a need for 7 pitches emerging from the 8 undetermined households (those households where it is not currently clear whether they meet the 2024 PPTS definition). The assessment also identified a need for 4 plots for travelling showpeople emerging from the 9 households that met the 2024 PPTS planning definition. Due to the historic low numbers of encampments, it is not recommended that there is a need for additional formal public transit provision in New Forest District at this time.

219. There are currently 6 known established existing gypsy and traveller sites and 3 known established travelling showpeople yards within the Plan Area. In terms of the existing future developable supply for gypsy and traveller accommodation, Saved Policy TOT10 of the Local Plan Part 2 (2014) allocates land at Little Testwood Farm for permanent residential gypsy and traveller pitches. It has capacity for around eight new pitches. The land allocated adjoins an existing established gypsy and traveller site and it is proposed to carry the allocation forward into the Local Plan review.

Policy Direction

Gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople

220. The existing potential developable supply of land for new pitches is not sufficient to address this need. **Policy HOU4** of the current adopted Local Plan is no longer consistent with national policy nor adequate to address gypsy and traveller accommodation needs. It also does not set any policy protection for existing established sites or set out the criteria by which planning applications for new traveller pitches or showpeople plots will be considered on unallocated sites. An updated gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople policy will therefore need to identify how the assessed need for gypsy and traveller accommodation will be met. This is likely to involve a need for new site allocations. The policy will also need to set out the approach for how planning applications for new traveller pitches or showpeople plots will be considered.

221. No sites were promoted for gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation to either the 2024 Call for Sites or the 2025 Further Call for Sites. This is a challenging situation as there is a lack of available and suitable sites to make sure we can meet the assessed need for gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation within the Plan Area.

222. The possible policy approach to seek to address this issue is set out below:

Possible Policy Approach: Gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople

The submission of sites to accommodate the need for gypsy and traveller pitches or for travelling showpeople plots accommodation is invited through this consultation. Should no suitable sites be identified through the call for sites process, we may need to consider other mechanisms such as whether the policy should require that, where appropriate, new strategic development growth areas, if allocated, should contribute to the provision of accommodation for gypsy and travellers and travelling showpeople.

It is proposed to safeguard existing gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople sites (which are either allocated or have permanent planning consent) from alternative development, unless it is fully demonstrated that the site is no longer required to meet any identified traveller needs or that the pitches/plots will be re-provided in an equally appropriate and accessible location. It is proposed that other sites that are subsequently granted permanent planning permission for gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople use will also be safeguarded in accordance with this approach.

It is proposed that the approach will support appropriate intensification/expansion of existing authorised gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople sites and also set out a criteria-based approach against which planning applications for new traveller pitches or showpeople plots on unallocated sites will be determined. Possible criteria for this could be that:

- the occupant(s) meet the definition of gypsies, travellers or travelling showpeople (**Planning Policy for Traveller Sites 2024 Annex 1** or a subsequent revision)
- the occupant(s) can demonstrate personal circumstances that show a strong need to be located in the area
- the site is in a sustainable location where services and facilities are accessible and
- the proposed development is consistent with all other relevant Local Plan policies

Further information / evidence base weblinks

- 223. Housing Needs Assessment (Iceni, 2025)
- 224. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (ORS, 2025)

Consultation questions

- 13) What are your views on our approach to providing homes for all?
- 14) Do you agree that the Local Plan should provide a mix of homes, including affordable ones for younger people, and more options for older residents and people with additional needs, including those with disabilities
- 15) Should our affordable housing targets be the same throughout our plan area or vary by location or size of site?
- 16) Do you agree with our proposed approach to enabling affordable housing schemes in rural areas?
- 17) How should the Local Plan provide sites for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople? Do you have any ideas for locations that should be considered?

Protecting the Natural Environment

New Forest (international sites)

Aim and Objectives

225. The New Forest is special, with unique character and environmental qualities. The council must work towards defining the right balance between meeting development needs and aspirations within the Plan Area, whilst protecting the quality of the local environment, including avoiding harm to International Nature Conservation sites and to nationally recognised areas of high nature conservation or landscape value such as the New Forest National Park and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. There are additional nature conservation sites of importance in close proximity to the District boundary which will require due consideration, including the Dorset Heaths SAC/SPA and the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA.

226. The council aims to manage the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of development on designated nature conservation sites through a clear hierarchy of response:

- avoid impacts wherever possible
- mitigate impacts where avoidance is not feasible
- compensate for residual impacts where necessary

227. In addition, the council will promote understanding and care for the natural environment, including the management of recreational and other pressures in sensitive locations.

What you told us

228. Those who responded to the Issues and Scope consultation gave numerous suggestions on how we can ensure that people do not harm the particularly sensitive parts of the New Forest. Many respondents were in favour of a new country park, which is free to access and well served by active travel opportunities, and suggestions were also made for a better and more connected network of footpaths and cycleways outside of the national park, with respondents noting that if residents are required to travel to go out in nature, then they will likely choose the most desirable locations.
229. Several respondents advocated for specific dog-walking fields and/or dog parks – which are secure and with adequate provision for disposal of dog waste – to reduce visits to the New Forest solely for dog walking. A suggestion was made for a rolling closure of popular sites to allow nature recovery, and many respondents advocated for additional rangers with the power to give fines for offences such as littering and touching or feeding grazing animals. Other one-off suggestions included education for residents on wildfire mitigation, in addition to tourist-focussed campaigns, more alternative areas of accessible greenspace provision (often referred to as SANG / ANRG), and protection of farmland and back-up grazing land.
230. Several respondents also noted the sensitive habitats outside of the National Park, including road verges of ecological importance and other locally designated habitats.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

231. Substantial parts of the Plan Area, including its coastline, are covered by statutory nature conservation designations, a large proportion of which include national, European and international designations. Outside these there are also many sites that are covered by local nature conservation designations. There are also priority habitats and species, not all of which will be within designated sites. These designations are in place to protect valuable and threatened species and the habitats that support them.
232. Protecting and enhancing our natural environment is fundamental to delivering a sustainable development strategy. The natural environment is an essential and precious asset and underpins our wellbeing and prosperity.

233. The recreational pressures arising from residential development within our Plan Area may lead to adverse effects on the internationally important nature conservation sites within the New Forest. In addition to this, transport and point source emissions of air pollutants generated as a result of new development can adversely affect air quality, which has implications for the natural environment and human health. Furthermore, the expansion of urban areas into natural or rural landscapes, and the fragmentation of landscapes, creates artificial boundaries which alter the environment and impact species. This is the urban edge effect, and it can lead to degradation of habitat quality and disruption of ecosystems.
234. To comply with both national and international legislation to protect the designated sites, measures need to be taken to ensure adverse effects from development on the integrity of protected sites are avoided or mitigated. It is also important that there is sufficient protection of those habitats supporting the designated sites (supporting habitats or those that are functionally linked) and proportionate protection is afforded to them. The protection of supporting habitats should be given appropriate weight.
235. The mitigation for recreational impacts is currently set at a provision of 8 hectares of Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace (ANRG) per 1,000 population, a standard that has been accepted by Natural England for the currently adopted Local Plan. This ANRG is designed to provide attractive, multifunctional open space that encourages local recreation, including dog walking, in preference to visits to protected nature conservation sites.
236. Based on this standard and an occupancy rate that varies by dwelling size, sites of approximately 50 dwellings are currently required to provide a new ANRG of at least 1 hectare, which is considered the minimum size likely to function independently. This standard may need to be adjusted to reflect any changes in household size in the intervening period, and we will be testing this assumption alongside Natural England to ensure it remains appropriate.

237. In addition to its role in mitigating recreational impacts, ANRG provision delivers wider benefits: it supports the creation of high-quality development, enhances the setting of new communities, and can provide recompense to existing residents by improving access to natural spaces. For example, the SS17 allocation—while having a considerable impact on the countryside—delivers new public access to areas previously unavailable to local people, helping to foster a stronger connection with the natural environment. However, a disbenefit is they represent a significant land take on an allocation.

Policy direction

238. Existing policies in the current Local Plan continue to address the key issues, and it may be that these are largely rolled forward. Minor updates will also likely be made to take account of statutory changes.

239. The proposed policy approach will continue to provide protection of the New Forest internationally designated sites, and will ensure developers have regard and give appropriate consideration to the proximity of new development to sites of international importance for nature conservation.

240. The mitigation hierarchy is the framework used to manage, mitigate and minimise the adverse environmental impacts of development. This hierarchy (avoidance, minimisation, restoration, offsetting) will be used in our policies to ensure the protection, conservation, and enhancement of biodiversity. Where environmental harm or losses cannot be avoided, they should be adequately mitigated. If this is not possible, then the resultant loss or harm from development must be compensated. Where compensation is not possible, planning permissions will be refused.

241. The mitigation approaches taken by the council have been in place for a number of years, and together with reviewing monitoring information, we will work with Natural England to ensure that approach remains valid, or whether an alternative, wider approach with other authorities is more appropriate. Such a wider approach could include introducing the prospect on providing additional Country Parks into the Mitigation Strategy.

242. The level of protection given will be commensurate with the designation. Exceptions will only be made where the public benefits significantly outweigh any adverse impacts, and this must be suitably evidenced and justified. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats will be refused.

Solent and Southampton Water (international sites)

Aim and Objectives

243. A substantial proportion of the wider District's coastline is covered by statutory nature conservation designations, and outside of these there are also many sites that are covered by local nature conservation designations. There are also priority habitats and species, not all of which will be within designated sites. Together, approximately 90% of the Plan Area's coastline has an environmental designation of some sort.
244. When considering development impact in the Solent area, the primary issues typically relate to avoiding bird disturbance, and reducing nutrient deposition. A policy is required to ensure consideration and protection of habitats and species along the Solent from key impacts arising as a result of new development, including wastewater impact on water quality; species and habitat disturbance / degradation; and recreational pressures.

What you told us

245. Respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation made reference to the coastal and marine environment and the need to ensure adequate protection is given to these environments, particularly those with designations for biodiversity or geological importance.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

246. There are high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus input to the Solent water environment and there is sound evidence that these nutrients are causing eutrophication at these designated sites. These nutrient inputs currently mostly come either from agricultural sources or from wastewater from existing housing and other development, and result in dense swathes of green algae and other effects on the marine ecology from an excessive presence of nutrients. This is adversely impacting the Solent's protected habitats and bird species. There are concerns surrounding the further deterioration of designated sites in light of the scale of development that is anticipated over the next few decades.
247. In addition to issues surrounding nutrient input to the Solent water environment, new development near these areas can increase existing recreational pressures and lead to adverse effects on the integrity of the Special Protection Area's (SPA's), in addition to the disturbance of bird populations. The Solent coastline is a haven for over 125,000 wintering birds, including 10% of the global population of dark-bellied brent geese. In the summer, breeding birds such as terns and gull also congregate here. These birds rely upon undisturbed habitats to feed, rest and raise their young. However, with the scale of growth anticipated by 2050, recreational visits to the coast are expected to increase significantly, posing a real threat to these species. The Solent waters and coastline are also home to a wide range of other species which are vulnerable to development.

Policy direction

248. At present, the Bird Aware Solent partnership delivers a **strategic mitigation plan** to offset the impact of increased recreational pressure we are a partner organisation of Bird Aware Solent. The plan requires mitigation for all new residential development within 5.6km of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA. Such mitigation measures are currently funded by developer contributions, calculated based on the number of bedrooms in each dwelling.

249. However, recreational pressures are not the only impact arising from new development, and therefore any policy will seek to address additional key issues arising from new development that can adversely impact our marine and coastal environment including, but not limited to, noise and vibration (predominantly during the construction phase); an increase in nutrient input into watercourses from wastewater; and air and light pollution.

Biodiversity, Local Nature Recovery & Ecological Enhancement

Aim and Objectives

250. We aim to safeguard and improve biodiversity, and the protection and enhancement of species, habitats and ecological functionality in the Plan Area.

251. The Local Plan will seek to demonstrate alignment with the aims of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Hampshire; the LNRS serves as a framework for nature and environmental improvements and was introduced as a requirement by the Environment Act 2021.

252. With regards to nature recovery, in response to the council's declaration of a Climate and Nature Emergency in 2021, we have already sought to incorporate and see the delivery of specific ecological enhancement measures within new developments across the Plan Area. The council aims to strengthen the requirements of the existing **Ecological Enhancement Schedule** to ensure the provision within new development of features for swift nesting, bat roosting, hedgehogs and invertebrates such as bees, thereby encouraging nature into new development.

What you told us

253. Respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation were largely in agreement regarding the need to protect and enhance our natural environment and made several suggestions to deliver this including wildlife corridors and ensuring the provision of a swift brick and/or bat boxes on new developments.

254. Views on the mandated 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) target were fairly balanced between those that felt higher BNG targets should be insisted upon, and those that generally opposed the suggestion of enhanced BNG targets. It was felt by a small number of respondents that BNG targets should apply to all new development, including, for example, residential extensions to existing properties.
255. No specific comments were made by respondents in relation to the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy, however suggestions were made by respondents to incorporate nature features into new development, such as through nesting boxes, swift bricks and hedgehog highways, thereby encouraging nature into residential areas.
256. On policy development, the Environment Agency have recommended that BNG policies should encompass explicit reference to the aquatic environment and the role BNG can play in improving water quality, water resources, flood protection and other benefits by management of rivers and wetlands. It was also recommended that consideration be given as to whether to include a specific policy seeking conservation and enhancement of rivers and watercourses.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

257. Nature decline is widespread and ongoing across England. Local Plans can help reverse this trend by integrating nature recovery into spatial planning through the identification of priority habitats, via the restoration of ecosystems, and by improving ecological connectivity.
258. BNG is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. This means protecting and enhancing important existing habitats and ensuring that environmental features which are lost or degraded are compensated for by restoring or creating new habitats. In short, it is a necessary approach to help enable the recovery of nature across England. We propose to align the Local Plan with the national policy approach to BNG and will not mandate a heightened BNG target.

259. We have required a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain as a condition of planning permission for 'major' new build development for several years, however **new legislation** has now come into force that makes it a statutory obligation. The **Environment Act 2021** also introduced a strengthened 'biodiversity duty' requiring all public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
260. Linking with this, the LNRS for Hampshire maps the most valuable existing areas for nature, and maps specific proposals for targeted intervention for creating or improving habitats for nature in addition to achieving wider environmental goals. The Plan Area is home to an abundance of species, however due to the fragmented nature of greenspace and habitats across the District, species are often confined to small areas. As such, there is a need for functional ecological corridors to enhance the connectivity of isolated patches of habitat and enable the movement of wildlife throughout the Plan Area and beyond. Functional ecological corridors play a crucial role in biodiversity enhancement and nature recovery, particularly in areas affected by urban development, agriculture, or infrastructure.
261. Of particular note is the Greater Horseshoe Bats, for which there are scattered records across Hampshire. Recent radio-tracking work from one of the two previously known key roost sites in the Avon Valley has identified numerous new day and night roosts, predominantly in the Avon Valley north of Ringwood. This appears to be an important area for this species, with the Peak Count of 38 in a known roost in April 25. This study found evidence of a link between the population of Greater Horseshoe Bats using the Avon Valley hibernation roosts to known maternity/hibernation roost sites in Dorset.

Policy direction

262. A policy will be required to control the biodiversity impacts from development, including the approach to BNG. There is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 for developers to achieve a net 10% gain on biodiversity value on new development, compared to the pre-development state. The requirement applies to both major and small-scale developments. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects are expected to be included by late 2025 pending further changes to legislation. The policy will align with national legislation and will not seek to mandate a higher BNG target.
263. The policy will require the mitigation and/or compensation of all adverse environmental impacts resulting from new development and encourage developers to exceed the statutory 10% BNG requirement, where practicable. The policy will likely specify that BNG should be delivered on-site, but when this is shown to be unachievable, off-site measures can be agreed. The policy will align with national policy and require adherence to the latest Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The policy will further ensure that off-site BNG is consistent with the strategic aims of the Local Nature Recovery Network and NFDC Green and Blue Infrastructure studies and preferably be delivered near the development.
264. With regard to Greater Horseshoe Bats, based on the results of the recent radiotracking surveys mentioned above, it is proposed that the Local Plan introduce a specific policy aimed at protecting such habitats and ensuring a proactive approach is taken to both safeguard the known roost sites and provide further suitable roosting structures where permissible. The policy will require a robust survey approach (including April surveys for transitional roosts in the Avon Valley) and will require provision of robust and comprehensive mitigation and monitoring where development impacts are unavoidable.

265. Drawing on the opportunities identified in the LNRS, and suggestions made through responses to the Issues and Scope consultation, we are keen to deliver a targeted policy on rivers and waterbodies. The likely policy direction would incorporate nutrient neutrality; pollution control; surface water run-off during construction and operation of new development; and have links to the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. The policy could set out a requirement for all major developments to demonstrate, where necessary, how it will contribute to the protection and enhancement of waterbodies, including natural treatment and pollution control.
266. The LNRS states that “new developments should take place around habitat networks, rather than the other way round”. The proposed policy direction will ensure, in the context of the LNRS, the protection and enhancement of international, national, and locally designated sites, areas of ancient woodland, and Local Wildlife Sites, and habitats and species of principal importance for biodiversity.
267. The proposed policy approach will also require the proportionate inclusion of ecological enhancement measures within all new developments across the district and transpose the requirements of our existing **Ecological Enhancement Schedule** into Local Plan policy. At present, this is designed to aid developers in tracking the delivery of these features, in addition to setting out what features are proposed on which plots, etc, however we intend to strengthen this requirement through the Local Plan.
268. Furthermore, the policy will set out the requirement for functional ecological corridors to be incorporated into new development, to allow the movement of species and ecological processes across fragmented environments.

Green & Blue Infrastructure

Aim and Objectives

269. Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) comprises a broad range of high-quality green spaces, the network of rivers and lakes, and other environmental features. The council aims to ensure that additions and enhancements to the Plan Area's GBI network are designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering ecosystem services and quality of life benefits. It is the council's intention that the GBI network include provisions of all scales, from small scale such as street trees, green roofs, urban parks, private gardens, and allotments, or may take the form of larger scale provision such as woodland, wetlands, and natural flood management measures. GBI can also link with the mitigation of recreational impacts of development on the New Forest and Solent international nature conservation sites.

270. GBI improvements will be delivered in a multitude of ways, including as part of new development via the planning system, through upgrading of existing GBI, or retrofitting of new GBI in areas where provision is poor.

What you told us

271. Respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation advocated for enhanced provision of green space near residential developments, in addition to an enhanced green infrastructure network across the Plan Area.

272. The provision of green and open space was considered an important factor of development by the majority of respondents. Several respondents suggested that green space be well signposted and that they be accessible via multiple signposted footpaths. The need for open space to be accessible by public transport and active travel opportunities was also highlighted, with many noting that green spaces are currently not accessible to all people. Connectivity between different green spaces was also emphasised.

273. It was suggested by many respondents that safe open spaces should be provided within all new development, with the size of provision to vary depending on the size of the development, to ensure that everyone has access to open space without the need to travel long distances.

274. Provision of greenspace was also raised as a means through which the National Park could be protected and recreational impacts on sensitive habitats be mitigated.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

275. The NPPF paragraph 20 considers green infrastructure one of the key strategic priorities, and therefore development plans must set out a strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of, and make sufficient provision for, green infrastructure. Therefore, to ensure compliance with national planning policy, we need to consider all potential policy approaches to GBI.

276. There are clear spatial disparities across the Plan Area in access to greenspace, habitat connectivity, flood risk, and nutrient pollution. Mapping of 'Broad Opportunity Zones' (BOZ mapping) has indicated where interventions can deliver the most impact, especially in areas with poor access to greenspace, high deprivation, or ecological sensitivity. It is acknowledged that existing planning policies do not fully address multifunctional GBI delivery, and there is a need to move beyond current site-by-site mitigation to strategic, landscape-scale planning.

277. High-quality GBI provision will bring multiple benefits across the Plan Area, notably for climate resilience, biodiversity net gain, recreational mitigation and health and wellbeing. In addition, GBI plays a vital role in shaping the character and setting of developments, streets, and public spaces. Through an integrated, landscape-led approach, applied from the earliest stages of site allocation, layout, and design, GBI can help create distinctive, attractive, and context-sensitive places. This approach supports placemaking, enhances visual quality, and contributes to the long-term sustainability and identity of new communities.

Policy direction

278. A GBI policy will provide a framework for developers, and require retention and enhancement of existing GBI assets, and expect the implementation of additional GBI features. It is proposed that the policy approach will set out a framework for both strategic-level GBI networks and local-scale GBI integration and enhancement.

279. The proposed policy approach will ensure that the GBI network complements and is part of the Local Nature Recovery Network, in addition to incorporating BNG and climate resilience objectives. Developers will be required to consider the implementation of functional ecological corridors, particularly where new development occurs in close proximity to sites with international, national or local environmental designations, or near to sites identified within the LNRS as sites of opportunity for nature recovery.
280. It is further proposed that the policy will require developers to provide a GBI Statement setting out how the proposal contributes to the strategic GBI network and supports delivery of BNG, the LNRS and climate resilience objectives.

Backup Grazing

Aims and Objectives

281. Among the ancient administrative arrangements for managing the Forest, there is the system of common rights enjoyed by those who occupy certain properties in and around the Forest. These grew by custom and usage until they were encapsulated in statute at the end of the 17th century. They include the rights of pasture (the grazing of certain animals), fuel wood (the collection of fallen timber), and mast (turning out pigs in the Autumn). These rights are attached to land in and around the Forest which extends beyond both the Plan Area and National Park boundaries. They are administered by the Verderers of the New Forest.
282. The system of commoning – the depasturing of animals onto the Forest to graze – is essential both to the character and appearance of the Forest and to its ancient community traditions. It is an activity facing social and economic pressures particularly related to costs of housing, competition for back-up grazing land, poor economic returns, road accidents, and visitors, and makes it challenging to provide a viable living for commoners. The local planning authority is committed to encouraging the continuation of commoning activity, though its powers are somewhat limited in this regard.

What you told us

283. The majority of respondents felt that back-up grazing land should be addressed as commoning is an integral part of the character and management of the New Forest. However, some respondents felt that this was not an issue needing to be addressed by the council, and that additional land should be sourced by the commoners themselves if they require it.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

284. Back-up grazing land remains a key consideration for the council throughout the plan-making process due to the vital role that the commoning system plays in the New Forest's ecosystem and landscape character. In order to exercise common rights of pasture, a commoner must have sufficient pastureland beyond the open forest to support animals during winter months and supply feedstuffs. This is known as back-up or run-back land. The availability and proximity of back-up land are essential not only for the functioning of the commoning system but also for maintaining the distinctive landscape character of the New Forest. If commoners are forced to seek land further afield, often due to development pressures or rising land values, this can result in fragmented land management, increased transport impacts, and reduced viability of traditional practices.

285. Back-up land is vulnerable to pressures for development and other alternative uses such as golf courses or recreational horse keeping, which can effectively take it out of grazing use and/or increase its value to levels beyond the reach of commoners. Protecting and supporting access to suitable back-up land is therefore critical to sustaining commoning, conserving the landscape, and ensuring the long-term resilience of the Forest's cultural and ecological systems.

286. Only a relatively small proportion of agricultural land within the New Forest is available for back-up grazing at any one time, because it is often in other agricultural uses. A policy would seek to ensure that a sufficient pool of back-up grazing land is protected from other uses in order to maintain an adequate supply for use by commoners.

287. There are extensive areas of back-up grazing land within the Plan Area, to which built development, and the associated environmental mitigation may pose a threat, as detailed in the 'Commoners' back-up grazing in the New Forest 2025'. This report outlines how, in recent years, several hundred hectares of grazing land have been repurposed for biodiversity net gain, nutrient neutrality and other environmental schemes, the need for which is likely to further increase with the anticipated scale of development over the plan period.

Policy direction

288. A policy of this nature is not a requirement of national planning policy; however, we believe that implementing a policy that protects grazing land is preferable. The preferred policy approach would therefore outline that any development which would result in the loss of land actively used for back-up grazing, or with potential for such use, will not be permitted. The policy would also likely require that an inventory of such land be maintained, and kept up to date, to ensure sufficient land is available for this purpose. This would probably require significant resource and time but could be a combined approach between NFDC, the National Park Authority, and the Verderers. In concert these organisations could monitor factors that have a bearing on the commoning system and the requirement for back-up grazing land.

289. With specific regard to the re-purposing of agricultural buildings for commoning purposes, the local planning authority regards use by commoners as a beneficial agricultural use, and when considering redundancy and alternative uses, will need to be satisfied that such buildings are not required for purposes relating to commoning. This may be addressed as part of a policy on Rural economy.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

290. [Bird Aware Solent Revised Strategy](#)

291. [Hampshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

292. Green and Blue Infrastructure Technical Studies: [Waterside](#), Avon Valley and Downlands & South Coastal Towns

293. **Commoners' back-up grazing in the New Forest 2025**

294. **Ecological Enhancement Schedule**

295. **Biodiversity Net Gain**

Consultation questions

- 18) Do you agree with our ideas for protecting and enhancing nature? Do you think we have missed anything?
- 19) Do you agree to our proposed policy approach for Green and Blue Infrastructure?
- 20) Do you think our proposed policy approach will help to protect and enhance the natural environment and contribute to improving community wellbeing and public health?
- 21) What are your views on the proposed approach to BNG? Should the Local Plan encourage developers to exceed the statutory 10% BNG requirement?
- 22) Should we include a separate policy on rivers and watercourses to address the impacts of development on nutrient neutrality, pollution control and surface water runoff? Is there anything specific you would want to see included within this policy?
- 23) What are your thoughts on new developments including features like wildlife corridors and nesting boxes?
- 24) What should our priorities for improving green and blue infrastructure (GBI) in the Plan Area? Are there particular locations or types of provision that should be prioritised?
- 25) How should we protect land for back-up grazing land for commoning? Who do you think should be responsible for maintaining an inventory of such land, and how could this be managed?
- 26) How can we better manage visitor pressure on sensitive areas in and around the New Forest?

The Green Belt

Green Belt across the South Coastal Towns and Avon Valley area

Aim and Objectives

296. The fundamental aim of Green Belt set in national policy, is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
297. The Southwest Hampshire Green Belt comprises 21% of the Plan Area, covering 5,181 hectares. It covers areas outside defined settlement boundaries across the entirety of the South Coastal Towns sub-area, park, and the Avon Valley and Downlands sub-area in the area to the south of Ringwood (the extent of Green Belt is shown in Figure 33). It also adjoins more extensive Green Belt areas in Dorset that preserve the openness of countryside around the Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole conurbation.

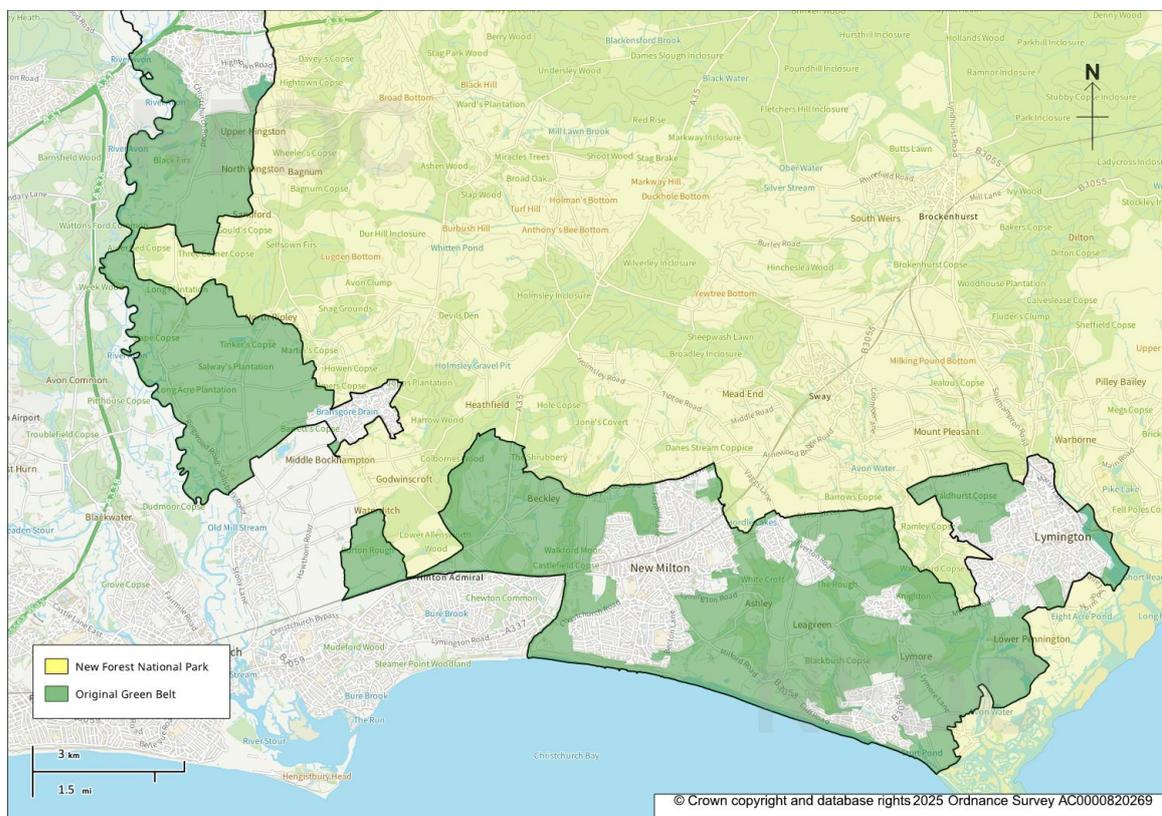


Figure 33 Current extent of green belt

298. Government policy sets out that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

What you told us

299. Respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation felt that the council's Green Belt study should be updated to reflect the current context of the District. Many respondents felt that strategic gaps were important to maintain. Some felt that some Green Belt land could be released for small development whilst others felt that it should be protected. Some respondents felt that the damage caused by loss of Green Belt and active agricultural land should be taken into account.

300. The Issues and Scope consultation asked whether there are current Green Belt sites that were felt to have the potential for more positive uses. Many respondents suggested specific sites, the majority of which have been submitted to the Call for Sites. Others indicated that they felt Green Belt sites could be used for parks, wildlife, agriculture and other creative uses.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

301. Our Green Belt designation covers land outside defined settlement boundaries across the entirety of the South Coastal Towns sub-area and the Avon Valley and Downlands sub-area in the area to the south of Ringwood. The extent of the Green Belt has been regularly reviewed in the New Forest, with relatively poorly performing land removed from the Green Belt in the adopted Local Plan to accommodate residential development.

302. Our 2016 Green Belt review concluded that most of the Green Belt continued to serve the purposes of the Green Belt very well, but also identified some areas that made a weaker contribution to Green Belt purposes. Those areas making a weaker contribution, and in appropriate locations for strategic housing development, were removed from the Green Belt.
303. National policy allows Green Belt boundaries to be altered only in exceptional circumstances, which must be fully evidenced through the Local Plan process. Authorities must also demonstrate that all other reasonable options have been exhausted before considering Green Belt release.
304. The government has also reinforced the plan-led system, requiring mandatory housing targets based on a revised standard method (as set out in the Spatial Strategy chapter above. Local authorities are now required to review Green Belt boundaries and the government has confirmed that “exceptional circumstances” includes a demonstrable unmet housing need. Government has also introduced a criteria-based approach for land defined as Grey Belt to be released. Given the level of unmet need that has been identified for this area, we are therefore required by national policy to review our Green Belt.
305. Recent ministerial statements have emphasised that local plans must now also incorporate new “Golden Rules” for any development on Green Belt land; namely, housing can only be built on Green Belt land if developers deliver high levels of affordable housing, appropriate infrastructure improvements, and accessible public green space. The sequential approach to land allocation remains but has been updated; namely prioritising brownfield land, then “Grey Belt” (defined in the following section) and only then higher-performing Green Belt land.

306. We have commissioned a Green Belt assessment that will analyse changes to the NPPF and associated PPG. It will consider changes to the built environment since 2016 (the last Green Belt study) and identify grey belt land in accordance with the revised NPPF and PPG. The main part of the work will assess the contribution to Green Belt of individual parcels within the plan area, with mapping to clearly identify the areas where contribution to Green Belt purposes is weaker.

Policy direction

307. We have embarked on a review of the Green Belt which may identify land that could be sustainably released for development. Included in this review will be the identification of land that is potential Grey Belt.

308. The NPPF is clear that before considering the release of Green Belt, we must appraise all other reasonable options for meeting the development need (paragraph 147). In addition, parcels assessed for their contribution to Green Belt purposes at this stage will be subject to many other assessments and considerations before we move to the next stage of the local plan. We will do so through the Sustainability Appraisal process and fully informed by other technical studies that are part of the emerging evidence base.

309. Nevertheless, national policy is clear that where a Green Belt review is undertaken, we must propose alterations to meet identified needs in full, unless the review provides clear evidence that doing so would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the whole area. This is further work which we have commenced to determine if the proposed strategic development growth options (SDGOs) and other options noted in the **Error! Reference source not found.** chapter would undermine the Green Belt across the whole area.

Grey Belt considerations

Aim and Objectives

310. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
311. Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, national policy is clear that plans should give priority to previously developed land, before consideration is given to grey belt and then finally to other Green Belt locations, taking account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. Grey Belt is a more recent addition to national policy, and it is incumbent on us to identify potential Grey Belt to inform our overall assessments.

What you told us

312. No specific comments were made in relation to Grey Belt during the Issues and Scope consultation.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

313. The 2024 NPPF introduced a new classification of 'Grey Belt'. Grey Belt is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising Previously Developed Land and any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt that make a limited contribution to three of the Green Belt purposes limiting the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (purpose A), preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another (purpose B) and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns (purpose D). The PPG states, at Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 64-009-20250225, that in identifying potential Grey Belt land, authorities should consider where areas of potential Grey Belt would be covered by or affect other designations in **footnote 7**. Where this is the case, it may only be possible to provisionally identify such land as Grey Belt in advance of more detailed specific proposals.

314. The government guidance is clear that 'where grey belt is identified, it does not automatically follow that it should be allocated for development, released from the Green Belt, or for development proposals to be approved in all circumstances. The contribution Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes is one consideration in making decisions about Green Belt land. Such decisions should also be informed by an overall application of the relevant policies in the area's adopted Plan and the NPPF', including whether:

- development is sustainably located
- whether it would meet the 'Golden Rules' contribution
- whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed

315. It is important to note that even where a Green Belt assessment identifies land as potential Grey Belt, it must still be situated in a sustainable location and go on to meet the 'golden rules'. It does not automatically follow that Grey Belt land must be allocated for development or released from the Green Belt. The contribution that Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes is one consideration among many in reaching a view about Green Belt land. Further appraisal work will be required by us on the back of this consultation and additional Green Belt assessments.

Policy direction

316. We will need to demonstrate how we have complied with the government's national policy on the sequential approach to the location of strategic development sites (especially **paragraphs 147 and 148**). As part of our work, we will need to fully consider this in the appraisal of potential site allocations.

317. Whether reviewing Green Belt boundaries or determining applications for development in the Green Belt, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should determine whether a site's location would be appropriate for the kind of development proposed. Consequently, where potential Grey Belt land is not in a location that is or can be made sustainable, development on this land is inappropriate. Further work will include detailed analysis of growth options through the Sustainability Appraisal, taking full account of responses to this consultation, and the application of the sequential approach.
318. The Sustainability Appraisal will test the sustainability of the emerging options and assess the sustainability at each stage of plan preparation. It will also provide a judgement against reasonable alternatives, and this will likely include options for the release of Green Belt.
319. Once the Green Belt assessment is complete, we will use the conclusions to review Green Belt boundaries where our technical work identifies sustainable sites that are both available and deliverable. This will directly inform our preferred sites and policy approaches. Part 1 of the Green Belt Study has been published as part of the evidence base for this consultation, with Part 2 to follow. The work will help to identify land that could be categorised as potential Grey Belt and therefore be released from the Green Belt, the objective in all of this being to meet our local housing need as far as we can.
320. The approach to Green Belt in the current Local Plan falls back on national planning policy. The proposed policy approach is to continue with the current approach of determining development proposals in accordance with national policy. There is little merit in duplicating national policy and this approach has served the district well.

Alternatives considered and Reasons for Discounting

321. Augment the existing policy: expand this significantly and articulate how proposals within the New Forest District's Green Belt will be considered, especially in view of the re-use of brownfield land and other considerations relating to potential Grey Belt. This would be a substantial policy which would merely duplicate the approach set out in government policy.

322. No Policy: This would result in the Local Plan being silent on the issue of development in the green belt. This would not provide the protection that the Green Belt requires and would be deficient in many elements.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

323. Green Belt Study (Part 1) Methodology and Initial Findings on Grey Belt (LUC, 2025)

Consultation questions

- 27) To meet future housing needs, the Council may need to review the current extent of the Green Belt. Are you satisfied that the Council has considered all reasonable options for meeting local housing need, before it considers releasing land from the Green Belt for development?
- 28) Do you have any comments about how grey belt has been assessed in our Green Belt Study (Part 1)?
- 29) Do you have any comments on how we have applied the outputs of this assessment to the relevant housing options in the Plan Area?
- 30) Do you think that applying national planning policies that protect important natural/semi-natural areas, like national parks, nature conservation sites, or places with special environmental or heritage value, could prevent or limit development in the District?

High Quality Design, Landscape and Placemaking

Placemaking and Landscape

Aim and Objectives

324. We are committed to delivering well-designed, cohesive development that positively reinforces a sense of place within both existing and new communities. The creation of vibrant and sustainable places depends on the integration of a diverse mix of uses, spaces, and connections that support the needs of those who live in, work in, and visit them. These places should be designed to foster social interaction, promote wellbeing, and reflect the character and identity of their surroundings. This approach aligns with national guidance, including the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, which emphasise the importance of context, identity, spaces and built form in shaping successful places. It also reflects principles set out in Manual for Streets, which advocate for streets and public spaces that are attractive, safe, and inclusive, and which contribute positively to the overall character of development.

325. We are seeking to create environmentally sensitive places which respect and enhance the natural and historic character of the Plan Area and ensure that all residents and visitors can benefit from the advantages these characteristics offer. This will further the creation of locally distinctive communities with a strong sense of place, creating a positive atmosphere for those living and working within the Plan Area.

326. Part of the creation of high-quality places is ensuring that there are a sufficient range and accessibility to housing within a balanced housing market. This is complemented by ensuring the provision of development of an appropriate size, scale, density, design, and landscape led layout which complements the distinctive local character of the community and delivers environmental net gain. Environmental Net Gain means ensuring that development results in an overall improvement to the natural environment, leaving habitats and biodiversity in a better state than before. The current policy approach sets out the expectation for 'environmental net gain' and this includes gains in landscape quality design quality and local distinctiveness. These are fundamental to the council's work to achieving better environmental design (expressed in current adopted Policies STR1 to STR3). Since the last Local Plan, the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements have been introduced, and our proposed approach is to expand and incorporate both BNG mitigation and environment net gain into these policies.

327. The objective of achieving Environmental net gain is to bring together focussed natural environmental improvements (for example BNG) with wider landscape quality, design quality and local distinctiveness. It is an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

328. A strong sense of place is inherently connected with a strong sense of community, and it is our aim that development will support strong, vibrant and healthy communities where people feel safe, healthy, socially connected and proud of where they live.

What you told us

329. Many respondents encouraged the consideration of higher densities, though noted that this should be in keeping with the character of the local area and still comprise sufficient green / open space to ensure wellbeing and prevent overcrowding. It was suggested that densities be assessed on a site-by-site basis and that the community should be consulted on the design of such developments. It was widely accepted that a range of densities will likely be required, however not at the expense of the environment, local character, or community wellbeing.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

330. Design and placemaking encompass social and economic opportunity, creating an accessible environment that supports the health, wellbeing, and quality of people's lives. Great places are safe and inclusive, well-planned, well-managed, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all whilst promoting a green economy. The NPPF, **National Model Design Code**, and **National Design Guide** underwrite these ambitions.
331. The evidence being assembled will include a refreshed Landscape Character Assessment (an update to the 2000 version), Landscape Sensitivity Study, and Settlement Character Study. These will also provide part of the evidence base in selecting sites for new residential development in the plan area. Some of these will be updates to existing assessments and some will be new. The outputs from these studies will be finalised over the coming months.
332. These will inform the selection of potential residential development sites and strategic growth points. This work will identify the suitability of sites for new development, what the capacity might be and the general indication of potential landscape enhancement or mitigation that may be required if development should come forward. It is also worth noting that such analysis is not considered in isolation - as technical studies they will be used in conjunction with other evidence, such as the Sustainability Appraisal and Green Belt assessment.

Policy direction

333. The existing local plan already provides strong strategic objectives for design and landscape character, in particular SO1, SO2 and SO3. These are valuable and the council will seek to keep these with some minor updates to reflect new policy directions in relation to green infrastructure planning. The proposed direction is therefore to augment the existing approach with the following:

- Ensuring new development is located in sustainable locations and that the density of new development is responsive to the character and carrying capacity of the surrounding area and landscape. This should take a landscape-led approach and be informed by Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Sensitivity Study, and Townscape Character Study where appropriate
- Proposals for higher densities which are uncharacteristic for the area will be acceptable when accompanied by high-quality design which takes a landscape-led approach and is respectful of the historical and natural character of the area. Uncharacteristic interventions would usually only be permissible where they respect local identity and do not demonstrably harm it
- In areas where new settlements and major development sites are proposed, where character must necessarily change, the development must deliver an environmental net gain appropriate to the landscape setting.

High-Quality Design

Aim and Objectives

334. The NPPF highlights that design centres around the creation of high-quality and sustainable buildings and places. Design and placemaking should be specific to the local area and we are committed to seeing new development which is respectful of and enhances the local context of both settlements and countryside.

335. High-quality design is essential to creating active, inclusive and safe communities which are fair, tolerant, and cohesive with a strong culture and other shared community activities. High-quality design creates quality buildings and natural environments with a positive sense of place which incorporate a wide-range of features, including: user-friendly public and green spaces; appropriate styles and types of development which complement distinctive local character; high-quality, mixed-use, durable and flexible buildings which use materials that minimise negative environmental impacts; buildings and public spaces which promote health; and enhanced accessibility of jobs, key services, and facilities by active travel and public transport. These are characteristics which the council aims to see incorporated throughout new development.

336. To support the long-term futures of the Plan Area's communities, the council also seeks to advocate for future-proofed design which is fit for the future and incorporates resilience to climate change whilst allowing for flexibility to adapt to new smart technology and ways of life.

What you told us

337. Some respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation felt that the council should exert more control over the design and zoning of allocated sites in the Local Plan.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

338. The NPPF is clear that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is seen as a key aspect of sustainable development, helping to create better places to live and work and making development more acceptable to communities.

339. In addition, high-quality design helps reflect local aspirations, heritage, and distinctiveness, contributing to a sense of place. National policy guidance encourages giving significant weight to proposals that reflect local design policies or demonstrate outstanding or innovative design, especially when they promote sustainability or elevate design standards in an area.

Policy direction

340. Our current local plan Policy ENV3 provides guidance on achieving high quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness. A proposed policy approach involves some revisions to **Policy ENV3** to reflect the landscape led approach as well as emerging design codes that we are producing. This policy also sets out principles for high-quality, locally distinctive design that promotes safe, inclusive, and attractive places.

Proposed Policy: Design quality and local distinctiveness

New development and significant alterations should take a landscape-led approach and achieve high-quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness, quality of life, and enhances the character and identity of the locality by creating buildings, streets, places and spaces that are:

- functional: well-connected to surrounding places, and logically laid out so that different elements work well together in a manner that is safe to access, easy to navigate, convenient to use and that makes effective use of both developed land and open spaces
- appropriate: sympathetic to its environment and context, respecting and enhancing local distinctiveness, character and identity; and
- attractive: visually appealing and enjoyable to be in

New development will be required to:

- a) achieve design standards in alignment with Nationally Described Space Standards, the National Design Guide and the emerging New Forest District Council Design Codes
- b) create buildings, streets and spaces which are sympathetic to their environment and their local and historical context and enhance the sense of place in terms of layout, landscape, scale, height, appearance and intensity and in relationship to adjoining buildings, spaces and landscape features
- c) avoid adverse impacts such as visual intrusion, overbearing scale, overlooking, noise, or light pollution on local character or residential amenity in accordance with other policies relating to environmental risk.

- d) create buildings, streets and spaces which are accessible to those with disabilities or of reduced mobility, that are safe and easy to navigate, and that minimise opportunities for anti-social and criminal behaviour or other public threats
- e) integrate sufficient cycle and car parking spaces so that realistic needs of residents are met in a manner that is not prejudicial to the character and quality of the street, highway safety, emergency or service access or to pedestrian convenience and comfort
- f) incorporate design measures that enhance resource efficiency, building sustainability, and energy performance, while also improving climate change resilience, including flood mitigation. Wherever appropriate and effective, features such as greywater recycling, natural heating and cooling, should be integrated to reduce environmental impacts.
- g) incorporate opportunities for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and features through design to achieve Amenity and Biodiversity benefits as well as addressing flood capacity and water quality issues
- h) provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles through well-designed green spaces, including sufficient planting. Where applicable, this should include provision for play areas, sports facilities, and natural green spaces that contribute to recreational mitigation and overall community wellbeing.
- i) provide high-quality routes that connect people and wildlife to the wider landscape by optimising Green and Blue Infrastructure opportunities, including delivering tree-lined streets and open spaces and gardens that contribute to the character of the area
- j) development should provide sufficient private amenity space appropriate to the type and location of housing.

Further detail will be set out in the district's Design Code.

341. Another potential policy direction would be to not have a specific policy governing design and, instead, be reliant upon the NPPF, NPPG and National Design Guide. However, this is not considered to be an appropriate approach towards design as, in that instance, there would be no local strategy guiding design. This is essential in an area as unique as this Plan Area and having a design policy will enable the safeguarding and enhancement of the Plan Area through good design. Having a local policy will enable us to embed and protect key design principles which are most essential for the locality.

Relationship to Design Code

Aim and Objectives

342. Design codes are guides that set out clear rules for how new buildings and spaces should look and feel. Their main aim is to make sure new developments are high-quality, sustainable, and fit in with the local area. They also give developers and communities more certainty about what is expected from the start.

343. Design codes are usually specific to a particular area or site and use pictures and numbers to show exactly what is allowed. This helps everyone understand and agree on what good design looks like.

344. By setting out these rules early, design codes help make sure new developments match the area's character and prevent buildings from being too crowded or out of place. They also help link big-picture planning with the details of how places are actually built.

What you told us

345. Many respondents were encouraged by the thought of higher densities, though noted that this should be in keeping with the character of the local area and still comprise sufficient green / open space to ensure wellbeing and prevent overcrowding. It was suggested that densities be assessed on a site-by-site basis and that the community should be consulted on the design of such developments.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

346. The NPPF has been updated to emphasize design quality and beauty as strategic objectives. It expects local authorities to prepare design guides or codes consistent with the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code (NMDC). We are expected to use design codes to reflect local character and preferences, and there is flexibility with regard to geographic coverage and how prescriptive they are. Part of this work includes the process of engaging communities meaningfully in the design coding process.
347. Design codes are now considered the primary tools for assessing and improving development quality, especially in sensitive or character-defined areas such as the New Forest. Alongside developing design codes, the council is also undertaking Landscape Character, Sensitivity, and Capacity studies which will provide evidence-based assessments of individual sites and growth areas to help ensure densities are appropriate for the local context.

Policy direction

348. Under the **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023** (LURA), every local Planning Authority in England is expected to prepare a design code for its area. These codes can be incorporated directly into the local plan or adopted as supplementary to the development plan. To address this, the council has already commenced a programme of work to develop a design code and settlement character studies. This work will feed directly into the Local Plan and we will set out a policy approach which harnesses the content of the Design Code and enables it to be applied directly to discussions on emerging housing sites. In this way we will look to secure high-quality and locally distinctive places.

Living Space

Aim and Objectives

349. The provision of sufficient living space within new homes is an important element of high-quality housing design and a pre-requisite for good environmental living conditions.

350. Residents of new homes should be provided with sufficient space for basic daily activities and needs. Setting minimum space standards can help to mitigate impacts from overcrowding, particularly relating to health and wellbeing, reducing depression, giving children room to play within the home and helping to ensure a good night's sleep. Space should be provided for the furniture people need, to store personal possessions, to prepare food conveniently or to socialise with friends and family. If homes are to be robust and sustainable in the long term, they must offer functional and adaptable spaces that meet the needs of families, children, older people and disabled residents.

351. Subject to suitable evidence, the National Planning Practice Guidance allows local planning authorities to require new residential development to meet minimum internal space standards as set out in the '**Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard**' (2015)

352. The nationally described space standard is not a building regulation and remains solely within the planning system as a new form of technical planning standard and is continually updated.

What you told us

353. Responses to the Issues and Scope Consultation were mixed, with some respondents advocating for new policies on housing space standards and garden sizes and others being opposed to the idea. The general sentiment amongst respondents was that space standard policies should be considered on a settlement-by-settlement basis or have a distinction between standards for urban and rural communities.

354. Some respondents felt that national standards are too rigid, and a more flexible approach should be taken to suit the District's unique character. In contrast, others felt that no additional policy was needed and that adherence to building regulations and national standards should be sufficient.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

355. Introducing a policy would help to ensure that those good practices that are prevalent today will continue and ensure that rooms are delivered to the size they are required to be across the range of dwelling types and sizes, ensuring a good stock of homes of all sizes.

Policy direction

356. We are giving consideration to a requirement that all new homes, including subdivisions of larger properties and conversions, could be required to meet the nationally described space standards, unless it can be shown unpracticable in the face of other material considerations and policy requirements. For example, the council will consider minor reductions in the internal space standards where it can be demonstrated that this is necessary to ensure the repair and re-use of a heritage asset without undermining its character and fabric integrity.

357. To justify such an approach, we will need clear evidence that a significant proportion of new development is falling short of the national space standards regarding bedroom size.

358. This approach could be carried forward in line with any subsequent standard that the government may introduce, pending a review of potential viability consequences when applied to the Plan Area.

359. If implemented, all planning applications that involve residential development, would be assessed for the internal space of each dwelling, or as applies against standards and requirements to be set out in the Local Plan. Planning applications would be accompanied by appropriate evidence and information setting out the internal floorspace, bedroom sizes and the extent of built-in storage for each dwelling.

Consultation questions

- 31) Do you agree with our approach to design and creating attractive places?
- 32) What features matter most to you?
- 33) Should we allow higher-density housing in some areas?

- 34) How should we use design codes to guide development? How can we involve local communities in this to ensure new places reflect local aspirations and character?
- 35) Should the Local Plan set minimum space standards for new homes? If yes, what should this and should there be exceptions?
- 36) Are there particular locations or types of landscape features you think are especially important to safeguard or improve?
- 37) How important is it to include parks, trees, and water features in new developments?

Climate Change and Environmental Risks

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Aim and Objectives

360. New Forest District Council declared a Climate Change and Nature Emergency in 2021 to support the UK Government's adoption of environmental objectives, including a legally binding target to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The council are committed to encouraging developers take all practical steps to decarbonise the running of buildings; meaningfully reduce embodied carbon in construction; and ensure that development is climate change adapted.
361. Climate change adaptation refers the measures that are needed to best prepare for the likely impacts that climate change will bring. Adaptation measures include making changes and adjustments to processes, systems, practices and structures. The purpose of climate change adaptation is to protect and safeguard future generations of people and the environment they live in. Adapting to climate change will make us more resilient to the impact it will bring; for the UK, the expectation is that we will experience hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters, with extreme weather events such as heatwaves, storms and heavy downpours becoming more frequent and more intense.
362. The Local Plan will seek to improve the resilience of local communities to climate change, including managing the risks of flooding and coastal erosion. The council will prioritise the beneficial reuse of previously developed land and to promote the use of renewable resource and energy sources within sustainable limits.

363. The Local Plan will require a focus on sustainable and active travel (in line with both the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (covering the **District and National Park, excluding the Waterside**; and a separate plan covering the **Waterside**) and the **Local Transport Plan 4**), thereby seeking to reduce vehicular emissions and other local factors contributing to climate change or that degrade sensitive environments or quality of life. What you told us

364. The majority of respondents felt that more ambitious targets and measures to tackle climate change would be positive. However, there were others that were opposed largely due to wishing to see consistency or more realistic targets over those that were more ambitious. Another common issue was the need to have more sustainable housing with better environmental standards, materials, and practices. Many respondents felt that a focus on nature-based solutions would be best, using and supporting the natural ecosystem to best tackle issues of climate change.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

365. The NPPF emphasises that responding to climate change is central to the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. Paragraph 162 of the NPPF establishes that plans must take a proactive approach mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts. It requires policies to consider these issues in the context of their impact on flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity, landscapes, overheating and drought risk. To tackle these issues, it states that policies should support appropriate measures to ensure future health and resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.

366. Climate change affects all of us. In response to the perceived threat, the Climate Change Adaptation Report by New Forest District Council (2025) outlines the district's vulnerability to climate change and the urgent need for adaptation. It projects significant changes in climate patterns, including warmer, wetter winters, hotter, drier summers, and rising sea levels. These changes are expected to increase the frequency and severity of flooding, coastal erosion, heatwaves, and poor air quality. The report emphasizes that these impacts will disproportionately affect vulnerable groups such as older adults, children, those with health conditions, and low-income households.

367. It goes on to identify key hazards and their implications for residents, businesses, and the environment. Flooding and coastal erosion threaten homes, infrastructure, and tourism, while heatwaves and air pollution pose serious health risks. It also highlights the importance of demographic data in understanding vulnerability, noting the district's ageing population and pockets of deprivation, especially outside the National Park.

Policy Direction

368. The council needs to provide a clear policy approach for mitigating and adapting to climate change. It will use the evidence described above and any other studies that are relevant. In doing so we will seek to ensure that future development, habitats, and future occupants will be as protected and prepared as possible. The approach proposes:

- introducing measures and setting targets for energy efficiency and carbon reduction, including supporting community energy initiatives
- supporting suitable opportunities for low carbon energy generation and storage to serve the Plan Area
- introducing measures and set targets for water efficiency, and require consideration of measures such as rainwater recycling and greywater harvesting
- encouraging the retrofitting of existing buildings for carbon reduction
- requiring development proposals to prioritise sustainable and active travel, thereby moving away from car-led schemes

- requiring development to incorporate multi-functional nature-based approaches to help offset operational carbon emissions and help reduce the risks associated with climate change (for example, natural flood risk management), as well as providing benefits for nature restoration and recovery, and improvements to biodiversity (tree planting, and habitat enhancement)
- introducing a new standard for design that requires developers to prioritise climate change mitigation and adaptation at every stage of the design process, thereby addressing the relevant risks posed by climate change in the development location

Flood Risk

Aim and Objectives

369. Flooding can arise from a multitude of sources, each with its own cause and characteristics. The main types of flooding relevant to the Plan Area include fluvial, coastal flooding, surface water flooding, and groundwater flooding. Flooding can also arise from overwhelmed sewers and drainage systems, and other artificial sources. Significant parts of the Plan Area face some level of flood risk, and those areas at greater risk include low-lying land near the coast and around water courses (including rivers, streams and the feeder streams, drains and ditches that flow into them), and areas affected by rainwater surface run-off.

370. Hampshire County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority responsible for managing local surface water drainage, whereas the Environment Agency is responsible for the strategic reduction of flood risk from main rivers. For local planning authorities, the NPPF establishes flooding as a strategic priority for Local Plans to address.

What you told us

371. The most common theme raised among respondents to questions in the Issues and Scope document on climate change and the anticipated impacts were concerns surrounding flood risk and the need for appropriate drainage to mitigate this.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

372. The **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)** is a key evidence-based document prepared by Local Planning Authorities to inform spatial planning and development decisions. Its primary purpose is to ensure that flood risk is properly considered in the planning process, helping to steer development away from areas at high risk of flooding and to manage flood risk sustainably. The SFRA considers the sources of and areas impacted by flooding, in addition to setting out potential implications of climate change on the frequency and severity of future flood events.

373. SFRAs highlight areas where flood mitigation, infrastructure improvements, or adaptation measures are needed, and can help safeguard land needed for current or future flood risk management features. SFRAs can therefore help ensure that new development is resilient to future flooding and climate change impacts, through the integration of flood risk into spatial planning.

374. The current SFRA for NFDC updates the 2018 version and is a joint report for both the Council and the New Forest National Park Authority. Table 5 sets out an overview of the types of flood risk that may affect some of the Plan Area's larger settlements.

Settlement	Tidal / Fluvial Flood Risk	Surface Water Flood Risk	Groundwater Susceptibility	Reservoir Inundation Risk
Fordingbridge	Areas within Flood Zone 3b in south; historic fluvial flooding; defences protect against 1 in 100 year flood events.	Risk near watercourses and roads (e.g. Station Rd, Bowerwood Rd)	Potential for flooding at surface	None

Settlement	Tidal / Fluvial Flood Risk	Surface Water Flood Risk	Groundwater Susceptibility	Reservoir Inundation Risk
Ringwood	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; historic flooding; defences protect against 1 in 75 year flood events.	Risk along roads (e.g. A31, Southampton Rd, Linford Rd)	Potential for flooding at surface	Risk from Blashford Lake
Bransgore	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; exceedance flows from drains	Risk along roads (e.g. Burnthouse Ln, Burley Rd, Ringwood Rd)	Potential for flooding at surface	None
New Milton / Barton-on-Sea	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; historic flooding; defences protect against 1 in 25 year fluvial flood events.	Risk along watercourses and roads	Potential for flooding below ground level	None
Lymington	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; tidal locking risk; historic flooding; defences protect up to 1 in 200 year fluvial flood events	Risk in NE and Waterford Ln / Stanley Rd area	Potential at surface near river	None

Settlement	Tidal / Fluvial Flood Risk	Surface Water Flood Risk	Groundwater Susceptibility	Reservoir Inundation Risk
Blackfield	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; risk from Stanswood Stream and Darkwater	Risk along Hampton Ln and Lepe Rd	Potential below ground level	None
Holbury	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; fluvial flood risk from Darkwater	Risk along roads and watercourse	Limited potential	None
Hythe	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; tidal and fluvial risk; historic flooding	Risk along Southampton Rd, South St, Shore Rd	Potential at surface near coast	None
Marchwood	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; tidal and fluvial risk; historic flooding	Risk near watercourses and pooling areas	Potential at surface	None
Totton / Calmore	Areas within Flood Zones 2, 3a, 3b; tidal and fluvial risk; historic flooding; defences present	High risk between Totton, Calmore, and Hammonds Green	Potential at surface	Risk from Test floodplain

Table 5 Overview of the types of flood risk that may affect some of the Plan Area's larger settlements

Policy Direction

Alignment with National Planning Policy

375. The council will apply national policy to address flood risk, ensuring that development is directed away from areas with the highest risk of flooding from any source and that flooding is taken into account at all stages of the planning process. The Sequential Test will be applied to direct new development to areas with the lowest probability of current and future flooding, and to control and avoid inappropriate development in areas at current or future risk from flooding. Where necessary, the exception test may subsequently be applied which will ensure that future development is safe.

Drainage and Surface Water Management

376. With climate change expected to bring greater variability in the weather experienced across the District, the anticipated rise in the intensity of summer storms are likely to exceed the capacity of the drainage and wastewater networks and cause localised flooding. Policy will therefore require developers to consider options that ensure surface water is separated and does not enter the sewer network, to avoid the need for significant increases in capacity of the existing networks. Policy will prioritise on-site surface water management through effective provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and will require the construction of SuDS that contribute to, or preferably wholly manage, the disposal of surplus rainwater, regardless of the size of the new development.

377. Any future policy or policies will outline that the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be prioritised where compliance with all other policies can be demonstrated. SuDS deliver multi-functional benefits for people and the environment and are the Council's preferred approach. While flood risk management is a key function of SuDS—addressed through the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)—planning policy has a vital role in securing the other pillars of SuDS: amenity and biodiversity. These aspects contribute to high-quality design, landscape character, and BNG.

Flood Risk Management and Mitigation

378. Any Policy in the Local Plan Review will set out that all planning applications for new development will require a flood risk assessment, with the exception of those sites within Flood Zone 1 that are less than 1 hectare in size (other than sites in a critical drainage area).
379. Policies will provide guidance on the range of on-site measures that could be considered to manage and mitigate flood risk, and it must be demonstrated that new development is safe and resilient to flooding and does not increase the risk or severity of flooding elsewhere.
380. Policy will set out a presumption that major new development will utilise above-ground features to maximise the benefit for flood risk management; this may include green roofs/walls, rain gardens, and water retention features such as ponds and/or swales. Additionally, it will also set out a preference for softer, nature-based approaches to flood risk management over traditional flood defence engineering, which utilise the natural hydrological and landscape features and characteristics to manage and manipulate the sources and pathways of flood waters, and may include restoration, enhancement and alteration of such features.

Coastal Change

Aim and Objectives

381. The Council has no statutory duty to undertake Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) activities. However, where possible and subject to funding, the council works with partners to manage flood and coastal erosion risk. The management of the New Forest District coastline, including areas within the New Forest National Park Authority, is guided by Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs). An SMP is a non-statutory document that sets out a strategic approach to the sustainable management of the coastline, using four policy categories:
- Hold the Line – maintain / upgrade / replace coastal defences in their current position where funding permits

- Managed Realignment – manage coastal processes to realign the ‘natural’ coastline configuration, either seaward or landward of its present position
- No Active Intervention (do nothing) – a decision not to invest in providing or maintaining defences or management of the coast
- Advance the Line – a decision to build new defences seaward of the existing defence line where significant land reclamation is considered

382. The District has approximately 40 miles of coastline, of which almost 90% of it has been assigned some form of nature conservation designation. The District’s coastline is managed by two SMPs: the Hurst Spit to Durlston Head SMP (which addresses the frontage between Hurst Spit and Chewton Bunny); and the Selsey Bill to Hurst Spit SMP (which covers the coastal frontage between the River Test/Southampton Water and Hurst Spit).

383. The Selsey Bill to Hurst Spit Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) identifies a ‘Hold the Line’ policy along much of the Waterside frontage from Redbridge to Calshot Spit. West of Calshot Spit to Hurst Spit, the policy varies between ‘Hold the Line’ and ‘No Active Intervention’.

384. West of Hurst Spit, the Hurst Spit to Durlston Head SMP applies a ‘Hold the Line’ policy between Hurst Spit and Milford on Sea, with extensive sections further west identified for ‘No Active Intervention’ or ‘Managed Realignment’. These policies reflect the long-term vulnerability of the frontage to coastal change. The emerging Hurst Spit to Lymington (FCERM) Strategy indicates that, in light of updated evidence on sea level rise, sediment supply, coastal squeeze and increasing flood and erosion risk, future changes to SMP policy may be required along several frontages between Hurst Spit and Lymington.

What you told us

385. Several respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation were concerned about coastal erosion and sea level rise. The Environment Agency have recommended the Plan make reference to the Hurst Spit to Lymington Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy, and Natural England have noted their expectation that the Plan identifies a coastal change management area, citing inevitable sea level rise and coastal change which will bring challenges for both society and the environment. They further advise that Local Plans should provide for coastal adaptation and help facilitate the relocation of valued environmental assets away from areas of risk.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

386. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF requires that strategic policies set out an overall strategy and make sufficient provision for flood risk and coastal change management. Further, paragraph 184 of the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should identify as a CCMA any area likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast, and:

- be clear as to what development will be appropriate in such areas and in what circumstances and
- make provision for development and infrastructure that needs to be relocated away from Coastal Change Management Areas

387. The District's coastline is subject to ongoing natural change and erosion, particularly along undefended sections of the open coast between Naish and Milford on Sea. Existing sea defences, while providing protection to cliffed frontages, have disrupted natural sediment supply to Hurst Spit at the eastern end of Christchurch Bay. As a result, and without ongoing replenishment, Hurst Spit is experiencing long term sediment loss and increasing vulnerability to crest lowering, overwashing and landward migration into the Keyhaven–Lymington Marshes.

388. Within the Solent, there has also been significant loss of mudflats and saltmarsh, reflecting wider estuarine erosion and coastal squeeze, where rising sea levels and fixed landward boundaries constrain natural habitat rollback. Evidence from ongoing regional coastal monitoring, the adopted Christchurch Bay & Harbour FCERM Strategy, and the emerging Hurst Spit to Lymington FCERM Strategy indicates that coastal erosion, flood risk and coastal squeeze across Christchurch Bay are expected to increase under future climate change scenarios. This reinforces the need for a proactive and adaptive approach to coastal management across the District.

389. **Planning Practice Guidance** sets out that a Coastal Change Management Area (CCMA) should be defined where the SMP policy is anything other than hold or advance the line at any time during its plan period. The SMPs covering the District's coastline have indicated a combination of hold the line, managed realignment and no active intervention along various sub-sections of coastline, at various stages of the SMP plan period and as such a local plan policy will be required to ensure inappropriate development is avoided and physical changes to the coast are not exacerbated.

Policy Direction

390. Guided by the District's SMPs, the Local Plan will identify areas likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast. The Local Plan will set out a policy to designate CCMA's where the SMP policies of 'no active intervention' or 'managed realignment' are utilised at any stage across the SMP plan period. The policy will be clear what development will or will not be appropriate in a CCMA and under what circumstances, and make provision for subsequent relocation of vital infrastructure away from these areas.

391. The proposed policy approach is:

Proposed Policy: Coastal Change Management Areas

The Local Plan will identify and designate Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMAs) along the District's coastline, as shown on the Policies Map.

CCMAs will be designated where the relevant Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) identifies a policy of 'no active intervention' or 'managed realignment' at any stage during the SMP plan period, or where other robust evidence indicates significant risk of coastal change.

Within a designated CCMA, development proposals will be determined in accordance with the following criteria:

- a. New residential development (including new dwellings, conversions, and intensification) will not be permitted, except for:
 - i. Subdivision of existing properties will only be permitted where it demonstrably does not increase overall occupancy or vulnerability to coastal change.
 - ii. Limited extensions or alterations must not increase the number of bedrooms or habitable space in a way that increases occupancy or vulnerability.
 - iii. Replacement dwellings, provided there is no increase in the number of people living at risk and the replacement is sited to maximise resilience.
- b. Essential infrastructure and key community facilities will only be permitted where:
 - i. There is a demonstrable operational need for a coastal location;
 - ii. A site-specific Coastal Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) demonstrates that the development will be safe for its planned lifetime, with costed plans for adaptation, rollback, or removal if necessary.
- c. Temporary, removable, or time-limited uses (such as beach huts, seasonal cafes, or holiday accommodation) may be permitted in the highest risk areas, subject to conditions requiring removal and site restoration before risk becomes unacceptable.
- d. All proposals within a CCMA must be supported by a site-specific CCVA, proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposal, demonstrating that the development will be safe for its planned lifetime, will not increase risk elsewhere, and will not prejudice the implementation of SMP policies.
- e. Where necessary, permitted development rights will be removed to prevent inappropriate intensification of risk within CCMAs.

The Local Plan will make provision for the subsequent relocation (“rollback”) of vital infrastructure and community facilities away from areas at risk, in accordance with SMP recommendations and in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Proposals for the relocation of existing development at imminent risk will be supported, subject to compliance with other plan policies and minimising environmental impact.

The boundaries of CCMAAs and the associated policy approach will be kept under regular review, to ensure they reflect the latest evidence, SMP updates, and best practice in coastal change management.

Environmental Risks

Aim and Objectives

392. A policy is required which seeks to ensure that new development is appropriately managed or controlled where it poses or exacerbates safety risks to communities. It also endeavours to ensure that existing health and safety risk factors are avoided wherever possible in affected or sensitive locations, or minimised where development is necessary.
393. The Plan Area, and in particular the Totton and the Waterside sub-area, contains a range of infrastructure, installations and industries that could give rise to various forms of pollution (including noise), or which involve the use of hazardous substances or explosives covered by specific regulatory regimes. These include the Fawley oil refinery complex, major gas and oil pipelines, and military installations. Within the consultation areas around these installations, the development potential of land may be constrained especially for uses with vulnerable occupants such as children or care home residents.
394. The council additionally aim to manage and where possible reduce or mitigate activities that unacceptably impact on air quality or levels of noise, dust, odour or light pollution.

What you told us

395. No responses were received during the Issues and Scope consultation that noted specific concerns in relation to community safety.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

396. National planning policy provides detailed guidance on how planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places that are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion. Paragraph 102 adds that planning policies and decisions should promote public safety and take into account wider security and defence requirements.

397. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is a statutory consultee for planning applications around major hazard sites and pipelines and on applications for hazardous substances consent. The HSE has identified inner, middle and outer consultation zones around major potential hazard sites or installations, and provides guidance on appropriate development within the three consultation zones, taking into account the nature of the risk posed, and the scale of potential exposure to that risk (based on the scale of development and the relative vulnerability of potential occupiers).

Policy Direction

398. It is proposed that the Local Plan will continue to contain a policy outlining that development should not result in pollution or hazards which prejudice the health and safety of communities and their environments, including air quality and the water environment. The current policy in the adopted Local Plan is Policy CCC1. Where necessary to enable development to take place, appropriate measures will be required to prevent, control, mitigate or offset the impacts or risks of development on community health and safety. It is proposed to carry forward the current policy as follows:

Proposed Policy: Safe and healthy communities

- i. development should not result in pollution or hazards which prejudice the health and safety of communities and their environments, including air quality and the water environment. Where necessary to enable development to take place, appropriate measures will be required to prevent, control, mitigate or offset the impacts or risks of development on community health and safety
- ii. when the opportunity arises, particularly through development or redevelopment, remedial measures will be taken to address existing pollution or hazards which prejudice the health and safety of communities and their environments
- iii. development within the safeguarding area of a military explosives storage area or within the consultation zones of a hazardous industrial site or pipelines will be restricted or managed either in accordance with Health and Safety Executive guidelines, or in consultation with the Secretary of State for Defence, as applicable
- iv. in the interests of public safety, vulnerable developments will not be permitted
 - a. within the defined Coastal Change Management Area at Barton-on-Sea to Milford-on-Sea unless in accordance with Coastal Change Management Areas policies
 - b. in areas at risk of flooding unless in accordance with the sequential and exceptions tests
 - c. on contaminated, polluted or unstable land unless it is first adequately remediated or otherwise made safe for the proposed use and for the local community prior to occupation

399. This policy proposes to address environmental and public health risks, ensuring development does not compromise the safety or wellbeing of communities. The policy will also aim to set out where, in the interests of public safety, vulnerable developments will not be permitted.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

400. The option to not have a policy addressing community safety was not considered appropriate. Without such a policy, there is a greater likelihood of development potentially being sited in areas which would put the public at an increased and unacceptable risk. Additionally, remaining silent on this would not align with national policy.
401. The alternative options considered were to rely on the NPPF and associated guidance when appraising development proposals. Whilst this would provide some coverage and protection for our communities, it would not provide the specificity that we believe is necessary for this issue, for example the spatially specific elements of coastal change along our southern coastal area or the pipeline and HSE safeguarding zones around the waterside area.

Health and Wellbeing

Aim and Objectives

402. The Local Plan will promote the creation of healthy, inclusive, and climate-resilient communities by embedding health and wellbeing into spatial planning.
403. We intend to promote healthy and active lifestyles by creating environments that support physical activity, mental wellbeing and social interaction, through ensuring that new development incorporates active design principles, including walkable neighbourhoods, safe cycling infrastructure, and access to recreational facilities.
404. The Local Plan will seek to reduce health inequalities by ensuring equitable access to healthcare, green spaces, nutritious food, and safe housing. The Plan will also aim to ensure the proportionate delivery of healthcare facilities, community centres, and social spaces within accessible locations in order to create inclusive, safe, and resilient communities that support wellbeing across all ages and abilities.

What you told us

405. Respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation typically felt that health and wellbeing was an important issue to address, and the issues noted within this section of the consultation document were widely accepted by respondents, though suggestions were also made of additional issues for the Council's consideration.
406. In specific relation to policy development, it was noted that health and wellbeing policies should be preventative in nature, and that policies should have a greater focus on the importance of movement and physical activity. It was also recommended that a greater link to climate change and health be included within policy, particularly as the impacts of climate change are likely to disproportionately affect those in deprived areas. The council were therefore encouraged to consider the co-benefits of policies that tackle health and climate ambitions, noting that policies that aim to tackle the flooding and other impacts of climate change can also have significant benefits for public health.
407. Suggestions made by respondents were varied, and included community gardens, active travel provision and increased space for recreational activities, in addition to increased tree cover in town centre areas, additional benches on footpaths, high streets and coastal paths (to encourage those who are less mobile to spend time outdoors). Several respondents suggested provision of additional free outdoor gyms or sheltered activities for all ages, and others suggested more affordable access to the council's existing health and leisure centres. It was also felt by some respondents that community engagement should be at the heart of this, as different communities have different needs.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

408. Hampshire's **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)** looks at the current and future health and wellbeing needs and inequalities within Hampshire's population. It is used to inform and guide the planning and commissioning of health, wellbeing and social care in the local authority area. The JSNA outlines that the District's unbalanced demographic profile creates an increased demand for health and social care services. It also outlines that there is a high prevalence of conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and respiratory illnesses within the District. There are rising concerns around mental health District-wide, particularly among young people and older adults experiencing isolation, and therefore access to mental health services and community support is a priority. Rural isolation is a contributor to this, whilst access to transport in some rural communities affects service delivery. In terms of health inequalities, pockets of deprivation exist within the District, particularly in parts of the Waterside sub-area. Targeted interventions are therefore needed to address disparities.
409. The NPPF paragraph 96 sets out that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe communities which "enable and support healthy lives, through both promoting good health and preventing ill-health, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs and reduce health inequalities between the most and least deprived communities".
410. Healthy communities encourage preventative health behaviours, thereby reducing the incidence of chronic diseases. Access to nature has numerous benefits for health and wellbeing, including improved mental health and reduced isolation. Such outcomes can reduce the demand for acute and emergency services, and allow older adults to remain independent for longer, the implications of which are lower healthcare costs, reduced strain on NHS services, and improved population health outcomes.
411. Further, healthy communities are more climate resilient, and people are able to live longer, healthier lives.

Policy Direction

412. Any policy will support proposals that reduce health inequalities, promote healthier lifestyles and improve the health and well-being of existing and new communities. Policies will prioritise inclusive planning that addresses health inequalities and ensures that all residents – regardless of age, ability, or income – can benefit from healthy environments. Particular attention will be given to vulnerable groups who may be disproportionately affected by climate-related health risks, such as older people, children, and those with pre-existing health conditions.
413. The preferred policy direction will set out that development will be expected to contribute positively to physical and mental health outcomes through the provision of walkable neighbourhoods, access to nature, high-quality housing, open space, recreational and community facilities. Recognising the growing impacts of climate change on health, such as heat stress, poor air quality, and increased flood risk. planning policies will ensure mutual benefits for health and wellbeing, the environment, and the economy. For example, the council recognise that climate change has been shown to disproportionately affect certain societal groups such as the very young (0-5), the elderly, and those in deprived areas. Therefore, policies that aim to tackle the flooding and air quality impacts of climate change can also have significant benefits for public health.
414. The Policy may also introduce thresholds above which development proposals will be required to undertake Health Impact Assessments and will outline what these Health Impact Assessments should include. It is important that new development considers the physical and mental wellbeing of its future users or occupants.

Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency

Aim and Objectives

415. The Local Plan can support the District's transition toward renewable energy and increased energy efficiency by embedding strategic, spatial, and community-led approaches into Local Plan policies. While the transition may not be absolute in the short term, significant progress will be needed to meet Net Zero targets by 2050 or earlier. For example, meeting even 50% of the District's energy needs through renewables would require substantial investment in infrastructure such as solar farms, wind turbines, and energy storage. This has potential land use implications, including the need to identify suitable sites, balance competing priorities (e.g. landscape, biodiversity, agricultural use), and ensure integration with the wider green infrastructure network. Ambitious but realistic targets, supported by robust evidence and spatial planning, will be essential to guide this transition effectively. With this in mind, the Local Plan will seek to identify broad areas which are suitable for renewable energy generation and where possible, identify strategic sites for renewable energy generation. It will also aim to ensure that all new development contributes to the district's transition to a low-carbon future by minimising energy demand and maximising energy efficiency.

What you told us

416. Respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation typically felt that solar panels should be utilised across the Plan area, particularly on residential roofs, public buildings and NFDC assets. There was a general consensus that all types of energy generation be considered, but only where this would not adversely impact the landscape character, environment or nature recovery. It was also proposed that agricultural land should not be used for energy generation, though conversely agrivoltaics schemes were also advocated. Small modular nuclear energy generation, harnessing tidal energy, and use of biogas were also suggested by a small number of respondents. Wind turbines were a controversial topic for respondents, with some in favour of both on- and off-shore wind turbines, and others opposing them. A small number of respondents felt that renewable energy is unreliable and that it should not be considered.

417. With regard to working towards net-zero, respondents had mixed views on how the District could work to achieve this by 2050. Suggestions were wide-ranging, with the majority of suggestions falling into the categories of renewable energy generation; education; building efficiency; public transport and reduced reliance on the private car; environmental protection and enhancement; and waste and recycling. A small number of respondents did not feel it was necessary to do so, or felt that efforts to work towards the goal of net zero by 2050 would not make a tangible impact.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

418. The UK has made a legally binding commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions and meet increased energy demand from renewable resources. While local planning authorities are encouraged to design policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy, there is no quota that needs to be met under the Local Plan.

419. Paragraphs 165 and 166 of the NPPF outline the requirement of local development plans to consider renewable energy generation, stating that Local Plans should provide a positive strategy for the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy sources, thereby maximising the potential for sustainable development. This includes identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources and any supporting infrastructure. It also requires Local Plans to identify opportunities for developments to draw their energy from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply.

420. Further, Paragraph 167 of the NPPF requires plans to give 'significant weight' to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings. The NPPF additionally requires that local planning authorities recognise the value of small-scale community led projects and the repowering and life-extension of existing sites.

Policy Direction

Renewable Energy

421. It is proposed that the Local Plan will contain a policy that encourages and supports the principle of renewable energy generation in appropriate locations, ensuring such proposals take account of local constraints, including, but not limited to, landscape and visual impact. In doing so, the policy will also seek to align with the priorities and spatial strategies set out in Neighbourhood Plans, recognising the role of local communities in shaping how and where renewable energy infrastructure is delivered. This approach will help ensure that proposals are locally responsive, contribute positively to place-making, and reflect community aspirations for sustainability and environmental stewardship.

422. The preferred policy direction will seek to identify areas which are suitable for renewable energy generation and identify strategic sites for renewable energy generation. The policy will also support neighbourhood plan identification of renewable energy sites including community renewable energy schemes.

423. The policy will set out ambitious yet achievable targets that developers will be expected to meet, and will outline a presumption in favour of clean and/or renewable technologies incorporated into building design, for example, solar panels on private dwellings, and lower emission heating systems such as heat pumps.

Energy Efficiency

424. The preferred policy approach will require high energy efficiency standards in new developments, and encourage retrofit programmes for existing buildings. Policy will support low carbon heating systems, such as heat pumps or district heating. Furthermore, the preferred approach will promote sustainable transport infrastructure, including EV charging points and active travel routes.

425. The proposed policy approach will also require developments to demonstrate appropriate consideration of the **Planning for Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document**, which was adopted in April 2024.

Human Air Quality

Aim and Objectives

426. Air quality across the Plan Area is generally good, and in compliance with the legal limits set by the UK Government. The District currently does not have any Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), which are legally required to be designated where exceedances of the legal limits are identified.

427. The pollutants of concern in the New Forest district are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂). Traffic produces both NO₂ and particulate emissions, whilst local industry may produce NO₂, particulate and SO₂ emissions. Monitoring of pollutants within the New Forest district has not shown an exceedance of the Air Quality Objectives (AQO) at any monitoring location during the 2023 monitoring year, with a general declining trend noted across the District.

428. The Council have recently published a new Air Quality Strategy, which identifies 6 key action areas: public awareness and behaviour change; reducing health inequalities; improving our understanding of particulate matter pollution; wood burning and indoor air pollution; reducing road traffic emissions; and reducing the impact of new developments.

What you told us

429. Air quality was noted by several respondents to the Issues and Scope consultation as an issue of concern, with several noting that air quality in town centre areas could be improved.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

430. Air pollution in the UK has seen significant improvements in recent decades due to the introduction of policies and measures designed to reduce emissions from transport, industry, businesses, and homes. However, although ambient air quality in the UK is generally considered good, elevated pollution levels still occur in many towns and cities across the country; the **Office for Health Improvement and Disparities** estimates that human-made air pollution in the UK leads to 28,000 to 36,000 premature deaths every year.

431. The NPPF outlines that, with regard to air quality, planning policies and decisions should “sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants”, ensuring that the presence of AQMA(s) and Clean Air Zones are also considered. Opportunities for air quality improvements or mitigation for air quality impacts should also be identified, and considered at the plan making stage where possible; such a strategic approach is encouraged to limit the need to consider air quality on a case-by-case basis.

Policy Direction

432. It is proposed to introduce a policy to set out specific requirements for development in relation to air quality, and signpost to guidance developed by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM), with which developers will be expected to adhere. This guidance sets out standards for air quality assessment and the management of emissions from all sources, during both the construction and operational phases of all types of new development.
433. The proposed policy will outline when an air quality assessment is required, and when it would be appropriate to screen out such an assessment. Development proposals which could impact on a potential AQMA must have regard to any relevant Air Quality Action Plans (AQAP) and seek improvements in air quality through implementation of measures in the AQAP.
434. The proposed policy direction will address air quality impacts on the natural environment, and will direct developers to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)'s Advisory Note on the **Ecological Assessment of Air Quality Impacts** and require compliance with the IAQM's guidance on the **Assessment of Air Quality Impacts on Designated Nature Conservation Sites**.
435. Further, in addition to setting out the requirement for air quality assessments, the policy is likely to set out how the council intends to secure proportionate contributions from developers for the mitigation and monitoring of air quality impacts on designated international conservation sites, from all types of new development.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

436. **Policy CCC1** of the current local plan includes provisions aimed at preventing pollution or hazards that could prejudice the health or safety of communities. While it does not specifically focus on air quality in detail, it provides a general framework under which air quality concerns can be considered as part of planning decisions. The NPPF encourages a strategic approach to air quality at the plan-making stage. Without a policy, we may need to assess air quality impacts on a case-by-case basis, which is less efficient and more reactive. Without a policy there would be a lack of clarity for developers but also a reduced ability to secure mitigation.

Contaminated Land

Aim and Objectives

437. Land contamination can pose significant risk and harm to human health; drinking water supplies, groundwater and surface water; soils; ecosystems including wildlife, animals and wetlands; and property. It can also affect the current and future land use.

438. Dealing with land contamination helps make the environment clean and safe. Through regeneration, it can enhance the health and wellbeing of all and add to the economic, ecological and amenity value of the area.

What you told us

439. It has been recommended by the Environment Agency that suitable assessments of groundwater contamination risks from historic uses should be a policy requirement for new allocations.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

440. The NPPF requires that planning policies ensure sites are suitable for their proposed use which includes taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from instability and contamination. It is required that, following remediation, any land should not be capable of being determined contaminated under the Environmental Protection Act (1990).

Policy Direction

441. Policy DM5 of the adopted Local Plan considers land contamination, however the policy requires review to ensure its efficacy.
442. Assessment of ground conditions involves a tiered approach; the first tier involves a preliminary desk-based risk assessment. The policy will require any application on brownfield land or near to another significant source of contamination to begin the site assessment process by submitting a detailed preliminary, qualitative, desk-based assessment. If this identifies any significant risk, then this will need to be progressed to an intrusive site investigation which can then be used to draw quantitative conclusions on the safety of the site.
443. An alternative option to this policy approach would be to have no policy which we consider to be deficient. Most sites are low risk and a first phase investigation is only required if the constraints layer shows an issue. Further investigations can take time. We want to streamline this process and make it clear what information is required and what guidance should be used.
444. A proposed revision to policy DM5 is below.

Proposed Policy: Contaminated Land

Planning permission will only be granted for development on land with known or potential contamination where the council is satisfied that all necessary works, including investigations into the nature and extent of contamination, can be carried out safely, without releasing harmful substances that could endanger public health, the natural environment, or pose an unacceptable risk of such outcomes.

Where contamination is suspected, a detailed site investigation and risk assessment must be submitted with the planning application. In some cases, a significant part of this process must be completed prior to submission to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed development.

All assessments must follow the Environment Agency's Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM) guidance and must:

- identify and assess any unacceptable risks

- evaluate suitable remediation options
- plan and carry out remediation
- verify that remediation has been successfully completed

Where contamination is identified, development proposals must incorporate appropriate remediation and mitigation measures to remove or manage risks to:

- human health
- groundwater and surface water bodies
- the wider environment

Remediation must be completed prior to the commencement of development, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The developer must provide robust evidence that remediation has been completed to the required standard.

Development must not result in the contamination of any watercourse, water body, or aquifer. Specific measures must be incorporated into the design and construction phases to prevent pollution and protect water quality.

Where land is despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable, appropriate remediation and mitigation must be completed prior to the commencement of development. The developer will be required to submit evidence of this as part of the planning application.

The council will require post-remediation monitoring and verification to ensure the long-term efficacy of remediation measures. Planning conditions or legal agreements may be used to secure ongoing monitoring and management where necessary.

Developers must refer to and utilise the Environment Agency's Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM) guidance in preparing site assessments and remediation strategies. The council may also refer to additional technical guidance and best practice documents as appropriate.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

- **Climate Change Adaptation Report**
- **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan - Waterside**
- **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – New Forest District (excluding Waterside) and New Forest National Park**
- **Local Transport Plan 4**
- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**
- **Selsey Bill to Hurst Spit Shoreline Management Plan**
- **Hurst Spit to Durlston Head Shoreline Management Plan**
- **Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM) Guidance**
- **NFDC Air Quality Strategy 2025**
- **Hampshire’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**
- **IAQM Construction Dust Guidance**
- **IAQM Designated Nature Conservation Sites Guidance**
- **IAQM Planning for Air Quality Guidance**
- **CIEEM Ecological Assessment of Air Quality Impacts**
- **NFDC Health and Wellbeing Plan 2022-2025**
- **Planning for Climate Change SPD**

Consultation questions

- 38) Do you agree with our policy approaches for climate change? Is there anything else you would like to see considered here?
- 39) Do you agree with our approach to flooding and coastal change? Is there anything we have missed?
- 40) Do you agree with our approach towards managing pollution, environmental risks and public health?

- 41) Do you agree with our proposed policy approach to improve health and wellbeing?
- 42) What do you think about our proposed policy on contaminated land?

Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity

Economy and Employment Land

Aim and Objectives

445. The Local Plan has an important role to play in helping to stimulate and maintain a prosperous and balanced local economy. It will need to provide policies that ensure sufficient quality and quantity of sites and premises for businesses and other uses to meet identified economic needs and provide employment for local communities. It should also encourage the provision of relevant employment skills, training and support to meet the needs and aspirations of existing and potential companies and the local workforce, both now and in the future.

446. The Local Plan must support and encourage economic development by identifying key locations for employment development to meet objectively assessed economic needs for office and industrial uses, as well as protect well-functioning existing employment sites from other uses, and encourage environmentally appropriate growth of the rural economy and tourism.

What you told us

447. Comments received to the Issues and Scope consultation included the view that jobs should be located close to housing, that planning policy should support local businesses and that there is a need to create additional employment opportunities in the Plan Area to reduce out-commuting. Some comments received also suggested relocating smaller industrial estates within towns to larger industrial estates or integrating smaller industrial estates into larger ones so that the smaller ones can be repurposed for housing development.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

448. Encouraging a strong local economy and appropriately addressing economic/employment floorspace need is important because a strong local economy can create employment opportunities, bring inward investment, and contribute to creating sustainable and prosperous communities.

449. The NPPF requires that local plans promote a pattern of development that seeks to meet the development needs of their area and set out an overall strategy that makes sufficient provision for employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development. Further, the NPPF states that local plans should set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth and that meets anticipated needs. The NPPF states that policies should also be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and allow for new and flexible working practices and spaces to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

450. The government published its **Industrial Strategy** in June 2025 (updated December 2025). The strategy places emphasis on and sets out how the government plans to support high-growth sectors such as clean energy, creative industries, digital technologies, and advanced manufacturing. Whilst not formally part of national planning policy, it is nevertheless important that our Local Plan review considers the key aims of the Industrial Strategy when planning for economic development in the Plan Area.

Economic Characteristics of the District

451. New Forest District Council published an **Economic Profile of the District in 2022**. The Profile highlights that the New Forest District as a whole has a comparatively small high-skilled workforce compared to Hampshire and the UK and almost twice as many people in the New Forest District work in low-skilled occupations compared to the Hampshire average. The leading business sectors are marine, land-based activities, hospitality & leisure, advanced manufacturing and the care sector.

452. Compared to the **regional picture**, within the New Forest District as a whole there is a slightly lower representation of large businesses, that is, those that employ 250 or more employees. The majority (97.7 %) of businesses within the District are categorised as micro (less than 10 employees – 86.1 %) or small (10 to 49 employees – 11.6 %).

Economic Needs Assessment (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2025)

453. Our Economic Needs Assessment identifies a gross employment floorspace need of up to 142,600sqm (which equates to a need for around 34ha of employment development land) for general employment uses for the period 2025-2043. The indicative employment need is further broken down into a need for up to around 25,790sqm office floorspace (around 4.3ha of land) and up to around 116,810sqm industrial floorspace (around 29.4ha of land).

454. The need figure includes an allowance as a ‘safety margin’ to provide a degree of contingency for any delays in sites coming forward for development and an additional buffer to enable the reprovision of floorspace that is currently anticipated to be lost over the course of the Plan period. Should the amount of employment floorspace that is projected to be lost to other uses change, it will be important to ensure that this is reflected and accounted for in the new employment floorspace/land provision target in the Local Plan review.

455. The projected general employment floorspace need is separate from the potential demand for port uses which is assessed separately by the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment.

Existing employment land supply

456. Table 6 below sets out a summary of the total existing employment floorspace supply by sub-area as of 1 April 2024 compared to the potential indicative assessed need. Need figures for individual sub-areas requires greater caution as data at a more local level can be more volatile and subject to outliers. The sub-area need figures should therefore be regarded as indicative rather than requirements.

Source of Supply	Totton and the Waterside	South Coastal Towns and Villages	Avon Valley and Downlands	Total
Extant Planning Permissions on allocated and non-allocated land	2,649sqm	7,389sqm	8,859sqm	18,897sqm
Non-permissioned adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014) Allocations	n/a	6,200sqm	12,520sqm	18,720sqm
Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 Allocations	60,000sqm	n/a	12,000sqm	72,000sqm
Total existing employment land supply	62,649sqm	13,589sqm	33,379sqm	109,617sqm
Assessed employment land need	41,650sqm (around 10.3ha)	46,350sqm (around 11.3ha)	54,600sqm (around 12.1ha)	142,600sqm (around 33.7ha)
Potential residual employment land need to be identified through the Local Plan review	Potential 20,999sqm surplus against need. However, potential supply concentrated at two sites	32,761sqm (around 8ha)	21,221sqm (around 5ha)	32,983sqm (around 8ha)

Table 6 Existing potential employment floorspace supply 2025-2043

457. The table shows that the majority of the existing potential supply is concentrated in the Totton and the Waterside sub-area, primarily at two allocated sites – Strategic Site 1 North Totton and Strategic Site 4 Former Fawley Power Station (known as Fawley Waterside, which has known delivery challenges and is discussed in more detail in the Port and Marine Business section of this document). Existing potential supply is lowest in the South Coastal Towns and Villages. The table also shows that the deficit against need is greatest in the South Coastal Towns and Villages, and Avon Valley and Downlands sub-areas.

458. It is important therefore that the Local Plan review not only meets the overall quantitative requirements but also provides for greater flexibility and choice for existing and future businesses. This can be achieved by ensuring there is an appropriately balanced range of employment land opportunities across all three sub-areas of the Plan Area that supports the interests of meeting business needs across the area.

459. Meeting economic needs will involve consideration of additional employment land allocations in all three sub-areas. Based on the evidence, the Local Plan review will need to propose an appropriate spatial distribution of any new employment allocations across the Plan Area to seek to ensure that economic needs in each sub-area are appropriately addressed.

Policy Direction

Sustainable economic growth

460. The NPPF requires Local Plans to set out a clear strategy for employment and the economy that positively and proactively promotes sustainable economic growth. To do nothing, or to attempt to set out a strategy that restricts economic growth or seeks to not address the identified economic need, would not meet any of the requirements of the NPPF and therefore is not considered a reasonable strategic approach to propose.

461. A possible strategic approach for sustainable economic growth in the context of this Plan Area is to maintain and enable a vibrant and prosperous local economy that meets local economic needs in a manner that is appropriate to the environmental context of the Plan Area. The approach would aim to offer a diverse range of local employment opportunities that supports existing business sectors, and provides sufficient and suitable opportunities for new businesses to form and grow in appropriate locations.

462. To achieve this, a potential strategic policy approach is set out below:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach to Sustainable Economic Growth

A possible approach is to:

- make provision of sufficient suitable land to meet the identified need for up to around 142,600sqm employment floorspace
- safeguard opportunities for future businesses by retaining key employment sites and site allocations that are suitable and viable for continued employment use
- encourage a greater presence of higher value, knowledge-based businesses
- support the port and marine industries sectors and ensuring that direct access to the coast for commercial marine uses and vessels is maintained if sites that currently provide access are redeveloped
- work with key businesses, transport authorities and other partners in the Plan Area to ensure that its transport infrastructure and capacity is resilient to planned and other potentially significant growth
- support a sustainable rural economy including low environmental impact businesses and tourism
- promote development or programmes that provide skills or vocational training, business incubation and mentoring, flexible workspace and conference and meeting facilities, or that support flexible working

463. An alternative to this approach would be to set out a strategic policy approach which seeks to attract significant inward investment and large-scale business development, make provision for employment space significantly greater than the projected need, and pursue significant economic growth. Such an approach might bring economic benefits to the area but may also not be compatible with the environmentally constrained and sensitive nature of the Plan Area.

464. Both approaches will be assessed and tested through the Sustainability Appraisal in order to establish an appropriate strategic approach for sustainable economic growth. These approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. An appropriate strategy for sustainable economic growth may involve a combination of or elements of both approaches.

Meeting economic needs

465. A potential strategic approach to meeting the identified need for employment floorspace/land is set out below:

Possible Strategic Approach to meeting economic needs

The Local Plan review will positively address the identified economic need and seek to provide additional employment opportunities. This is proposed to be achieved through:

- retaining developable employment land remaining at the Local Plan Part 2 (2014) allocations and the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 allocations
- the provision of new employment land in appropriate locations in each of the three sub-areas in order to address the identified need for office/industrial floorspace/land in each sub-area and to achieve a balanced spatial distribution of employment land/floorspace supply

466. The Local Plan review will consider making provision of appropriate new land for employment development suitable for office/industrial/warehousing uses within some of the potential SDGOs, if proposed for allocation in the Local Plan review. If taken forward, we will need to assess which of the SDGOs would be most appropriate to accommodate employment land provision. To achieve sustainable growth, it is also necessary for the Local Plan review to balance the provision of employment land with the provision of housing. Some sites were put forward for employment development during the 2024 Call for Sites and 2025 Further Call for Sites and their suitability for employment development is also being assessed by the interim HELAA.
467. It is currently considered that, through a combination of existing supply and if some additional allocations in appropriate locations are proposed, it can be possible for the Local Plan review to meet the identified need for office and industrial floorspace/land. This will be kept under review as the Local Plan review progresses and may be affected by conclusions reached over whether to propose to allocate any or part of the potential SDGOs.
468. The aim of the proposed strategy for meeting economic needs for both office and industrial land/floorspace is to provide for a range and choice of sites in sustainable locations for a variety of business sectors, to provide jobs close to people's homes, and to enable the replacement of business premises that transition to alternative non-employment uses. It also proposes to respond to the findings of the Economic Needs Assessment by seeking to achieve an appropriate distribution of new office/industrial employment land across all three sub-areas to ensure that the identified economic need in each can be met.

Determining proposals for employment development (Non-strategic Policy Matter)

469. This Local Plan will seek to continue to positively provide opportunities for businesses to develop, expand and meet their own needs by making effective use and re-use of existing employment sites, and facilitating and supporting new employment development in locations which are environmentally appropriate. In order to achieve this, it is proposed to continue the criteria-based approach set out in **Policy ECON1** of the current adopted Local Plan, as this policy remains appropriate and remains consistent with the 2024 NPPF. The wording of clause iii will need to be reviewed to update the policy references.

Retention of existing employment sites

470. In addition to supporting appropriate new employment development, Local Plan employment objectives will also be met by ensuring that existing suitable and viable employment sites in the Plan Area are retained, where it is possible and reasonable to do so. Retaining viable existing sites is an important part of meeting economic needs.

471. The Economic Needs Assessment recommends that it is important for the Local Plan review to give protection to key employment sites, generally protect viable undesignated employment sites, and that policy should generally seek to carefully manage future losses.

472. It is important that through the Local Plan review we balance protecting sufficient suitable and viable employment sites to ensure a well-functioning local economy with the need to ensure that policies can also enable and support an effective use of land. The NPPF (paragraph 124) states policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. The NPPF (paragraph 128) also states that local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs.

473. Policy approaches being considered in relation to the retention of existing employment sites therefore include:

- seeking to safeguard all employment sites by placing a presumption against the loss of any employment site and not supporting any alternative uses. This option is not considered appropriate as it could result in land and which is no longer suitable and viable for employment / business needs remaining undeveloped (potentially having a negative impact on providing new dwellings or other development uses, and on the local townscape and landscape). It is too rigid and inflexible considering the requirements of the NPPF (especially paragraphs 127 and 128).
- having no policies in the new Local Plan that protect existing employment sites and therefore allowing employment land to be changed to other uses without restriction. This option is also not considered appropriate as it provides no protection for employment sites and would risk the loss of land that continues to be suitable and viable, reduce the choice, mix and quantity of land, limit opportunities for businesses to develop, expand or relocate and have detrimental impacts on the strength of the local economy. This would not be considered consistent with the objectives of paragraphs 85-86 of the NPPF.
- rolling forward the existing adopted Local Plan policy (Policy ECON2) covering the retention of existing employment sites with no changes. This policy is both important and relevant, as it identifies in what circumstances employment sites will be protected and in what circumstances alternative non-employment uses will be permitted. Large parts of it remain up-to-date and appropriate for an updated policy in the Local Plan review. However, the policy does not currently identify key employment sites in the Plan Area. Furthermore, the adopted policy does not provide a framework for managing the redevelopment of employment sites where it can be demonstrated that redevelopment would enable an effective use of land and bring social/environmental/economic benefits.

474. A potential policy approach to address this is therefore set out below. We are considering updating Policy ECON2 to identify and protect key employment sites in the Plan Area, and to also update the policy to seek to additionally provide a framework to enable redevelopments where it can be demonstrated that redevelopment would enable a more effective use of land and bring significant social/environmental/economic benefits. This potential policy approach is considered to be consistent with the NPPF (especially paragraphs 85, 124 and 128). It is considered capable of achieving a balanced approach to the retention of existing employment sites that balance supporting a strong economy with enabling the re-use/redevelopment of sites for other uses where it is appropriate.

Possible Policy Approach: Retention of Employment Sites

The proposed policy approach is to:

- set out appropriate uses on employment sites
- identify and protect the Plan Area's key employment sites for the uses set out in this policy
- for sites not identified as key employment sites, the policy will seek to retain in employment use those sites where the site remains suitable for that use, but enable transition to alternative beneficial and appropriate use where an existing site is demonstrated to be:
 - a. no longer suitable or viable for any appropriate employment use; or
 - b. there is evidence of a lack of commercial demand for the site despite reasonable efforts to sell or let it for business use on fair terms and at a realistic price. It is proposed to continue the current adopted Local Plan approach that a minimum of 12 months marketing should be required to help to ensure that employment re-use and re-development options are properly tested and not unduly affected by short-term market fluctuations; or
 - c. where redevelopment would enable a more effective use of land and bring significant social/environmental/economic benefits or the employment land/floorspace lost would be appropriately re-provided on-site as part of mixed-use scheme

475. Uses that will be appropriate on employment sites include office, research and development, light industrial, general industrial, storage and distribution, and uses of a similar character.
476. Other uses that can be appropriate on employment sites are uses where the primary purpose of the use is to provide a supporting service to businesses or to the workforce/residents in the locality, and it will not lead to a concentration of non-employment uses on the site. Such uses can help to make business sites more attractive to incoming firms and can improve the quality of the working environment for employees.
477. Supporting services include crèche facilities, training, meeting space and conference facilities, cafés, recreation and sports facilities, and medical facilities. The test that will be applied is whether their primary purpose is to provide a supporting service to businesses or to the workforce/residents in the locality, rather than servicing general demand or passing trade.

Local employment and skills plans

478. It is important that sufficient provision of employment and skills training is available for local communities to support economic resilience and reduce out-commuting. This approach aligns with national guidance on supporting inclusive growth and local labour markets, and with the council's adopted **Skills Action Plan**. To achieve this, it is important for the Local Plan review to consider how development can help to build community wealth by increasing local employment and training opportunities such that wealth is redirected back into the local economy.
479. A possible way of doing this could be to require, where appropriate, development proposals to be supported by the submission and implementation of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP). The ESP would set out measures to maximise job opportunities, including apprenticeships, work placements, and training with the objective of improving employment, training and skills for local residents to support the local economy.

480. We will therefore consider whether to introduce such a policy in the Local Plan review to seek to support development that can demonstrate its contribution to building community wealth and fair work by offering employment and training opportunities to local people. Such a policy could set out the requirement for an ESP to help to secure local employment at all stages of development and how the policy would secure ESPs from new development, where appropriate. We will also need to consider on what scale of development this potential policy requirement would apply.

481. Such a policy could also be impacted by viability considerations. The Whole Plan Viability Assessment will need to consider all the requirements set out in the policies in the Local Plan and advise whether different types of sites can realistically be developed under those requirements. The assessment will help to identify the extent to which ESPs can be secured so that other development requirements, such as infrastructure contributions, are able to be secured.

Rural economy

Aim and Objectives

482. To promote a positive future for rural areas and to help secure their economic prosperity and social well-being by supporting farming and traditional commoning practices including back-up grazing, agricultural and rural enterprise, and the diversification of the rural economy in ways which are compatible with environmental and landscape objectives.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

483. In order to support a prosperous rural economy, the NPPF (paragraph 88) sets out that planning policies should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings; the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities.

484. Significant parts of the Plan Area are rural in nature, and the rural economy is a valued aspect of the District. There are numerous national and international environmental designations both within and adjacent to the Plan Area. The Local Plan review policy for the rural economy will therefore need to be mindful that these should be protected whilst seeking to support rural businesses and employment.

Policy Direction

Rural Economy

485. The Local Plan will set the approach to employment development in rural areas. Impacts relating to visual intrusion in the landscape, industrial traffic on rural roads, and availability of local employment opportunities for rural residents are important factors to consider. Policy will support the sustainable growth of rural businesses, defining what is sustainable in the context of the Plan Area.

486. The proposed policy approach will look to update and bring together Saved Policy CS21 of the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy (2009) and Saved Policy DM22-24 of the adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014). Existing adopted Local Plan policies focus primarily on agricultural, horticultural and forestry enterprises, farm diversification projects and established rural enterprises. Existing policy will need to be updated to set out the policy approach for all types of business in rural areas in order to be consistent with NPPF paragraph 88.

487. A possible strategic policy approach to supporting the rural economy is set out below:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach: Supporting the Rural Economy

The aim of this proposed policy approach is to support the sustainable growth and diversification of the rural economy in a manner that is compatible with environmental and landscape objectives. The proposed approach recognises the importance of agriculture, commoning, rural employment, and local services to the character and resilience of the Plan Area's rural communities.

The approach proposes:

- to support the appropriate growth, diversification, and long-term viability of agricultural, horticultural and forestry enterprises that contribute to the rural economy
- to support infrastructure and facilities that support commoning and the provision of back-up grazing land
- to support appropriate proposals for improvement, intensification or redevelopment of rural employment sites which sustain or enhance rural employment opportunities
- to support the appropriate conversion or adaptation of existing rural buildings for employment, commercial or community uses provided that the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial rebuilding
- to support new environmentally appropriate small-scale development for employment, commercial or community uses where the proposal contributes positively to the local economy or provides for the needs of the local community
- to support appropriate development proposals that support the local delivery of services essential to the rural workforce and communities, including:
 - a. the retention of local shops, public houses, and community facilities, and supporting proposals that can enhance them. For development proposals that would result in the loss of such uses, it is proposed that a minimum of 12 months marketing should be required which demonstrates the existing use is not commercially sustainable
 - b. infrastructure proposals that support digital connectivity, sustainable transport, and access to services

In all cases, any development or redevelopment proposed should be of an appropriate design, scale and appearance and should not have an adverse effect on the natural environment, biodiversity, landscape or the rural character of the area, or local amenity by reason of visual impact, traffic and other activity generated or any other impacts.

488. This proposed policy approach is considered to achieve the right balance between supporting sustaining the social and economic needs of rural communities and maintaining the environmental qualities of the countryside.

489. An alternative option to this policy approach would be to have no policy and rely solely on the NPPF. This is not considered a preferable approach as it would not provide a local strategy that would support and encourage sustainable rural economic growth in the context of this Plan Area. Moreover, it would also increase the possibility of inappropriate development being permitted in locations or in a form that are not appropriate or sustainable in the context of this Plan Area. A much more restrictive policy approach is not considered a realistic option as it would not be consistent with the NPPF.

Port and Marine Business

Aim and Objectives

490. To support the Solent port and marine industries sector whilst ensuring that development is managed effectively and that adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated. Another key aim is to seek to ensure that the opportunities from the Solent Freeport designation are made available to all New Forest residents.

What you told us

491. Most responses stated that they were not sure what the benefits of the Freeport are or expressed concern about environmental impacts. However, the principle of the Freeport designation has been established by the government and is not a matter that the council can influence.

492. Suggestions that were made regarding how the council could ensure that the opportunities from the Solent Freeport designation are made available to all New Forest residents included improving public transport to provide access to Freeport employment opportunities for residents across the District, and to ensure that training for residents is available and opportunities are advertised on the council's website.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

493. The Solent Freeport was officially designated in December 2022. Within the Plan Area there are four Freeport tax sites: Fawley Waterside, Fawley refinery complex, Marchwood Port and Solent Gateway 2. Marchwood Port is also a Freeport customs site. The **Solent Freeport Business Case** identifies that the initiative has the potential to unlock significant investment, create thousands of new jobs and enhance the region's credentials as a global gateway into the UK.

494. The international deep-sea gateway Port of Southampton is of national and international economic importance and plays a central role in the economy of southern Hampshire. The main landside operational area is located within the City of Southampton, but the port operator – Associated British Ports (ABP) – owns a significant undeveloped landholding within New Forest District: Solent Gateway 2 (formerly known as the Marchwood Strategic Land Reserve). ABP have published their **emerging proposals** for this site and undertook a 4-week Non-Statutory Public Consultation in September to October 2025.

[NFDC Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment \(Prior + Partners, 2025\)](#)

495. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment considers the future potential demand for port-related uses on the Waterside. The report also assesses five sites and considers how appropriate (operationally) and viable it would be to accommodate the range of activities supported by the port. The sites assessed are:

- Eling Wharf;
- Solent Gateway – Marchwood Port;
- Solent Gateway 2 (Marchwood Strategic Land Reserve);
- Fawley Refinery Complex; and
- Fawley Waterside.

496. Port of Southampton is one of only three ports in the UK (alongside Port of Felixstowe and London Gateway) capable of handling ultra large container vessels. The report suggests that to guarantee effective competition for ultra large container vessels and other large vessels, these three ports should ensure that they have sufficient spare capacity. The report suggests that effective competition requires sufficient spare capacity to ensure real choices for port users. It also requires ports to operate at efficient levels, which is not the same as operating at full physical capacity.
497. Three scenarios of future demand forecasts for port volumes were developed to assess the parameters for growth of each commodity and cruise passengers at the Port of Southampton to 2043. The future growth scenarios have then been translated into land requirements over the Local Plan Review plan period to 2043. This results in a potential overall increase in land required at the Port of Southampton of between 151ha and 258ha, with the medium scenario being 198.5ha. Given the imperative to support future growth at the Port of Southampton, reflecting its national economic importance as one of only three ports capable of handling ultra large container vessels, the report recommends that the Council considers the medium scenario of 198.5ha of additional port land by 2043.
498. The report concludes that Solent Gateway 2 is the most suitable (operationally) and only viable location to accommodate the identified potential demand for port land. This is due to the site's ability to accommodate large vessels and ability to accommodate deep water berths. The strategic land reserve is 222.4ha in size and could accommodate the indicative potential future land requirement. Under the low and medium scenarios there is the potential to accommodate the existing port-related industries currently located within Eling Wharf, should this site come forward for an alternative use.

499. It is important to caveat that the indicative port need forecasts in the report are 'at a point in time' and that the report necessarily undertook a high-level approach, which provides the indicative scale of potential land demand associated to 2043, rather than a detailed model which would comprise specific and robust assumptions for each commodity type. The assessment is also unable to make adjustments for efficiency improvements within the Port of Southampton. There is potential for some efficiency improvements to be made to accommodate future demand and provide spare capacity. These factors may affect the scale and nature of any proposals for Solent Gateway 2.

500. The Solent Freeport is a major economic intervention with expected significant future impact on the New Forest. Whilst planning applications for nationally significant development proposals would be likely to be determined by the government, there are likely to be implications for the local economy beyond the Freeport boundaries. A new strategic policy setting out the council's priorities in relation to the Freeport is therefore needed in this Local Plan review.

501. Site-specific policies are also needed to guide future development for the following sites which are either wholly or partly designated in the Freeport:

- Solent Gateway – Marchwood Port
- Solent Gateway 2
- Fawley Refinery Complex
- Fawley Waterside

502. Up-to-date site-specific policies will also be required for the following other sites that are currently in use for port-related activities:

- Eling Wharf, Totton
- Marchwood Industrial Park
- Cracknore Hard Industrial Park, Marchwood

503. Given the importance of marine business to the local economy, a policy on marine related business and access to the water is also needed to ensure that local opportunities for economic development and recreation that are reliant on access to the water are facilitated and protected.

Policy Direction

The Solent Freeport

504. As highlighted, given the significance of the Freeport designation, a strategic policy on the Solent Freeport setting out the council's priorities is needed. Given the Solent Freeport designation (formally designated at a national level), it is considered that the appropriate role for the Local Plan review is to seek to ensure that development is managed effectively and that adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated. It is considered that there are no other realistic policy options available.

505. A potential strategic policy approach to this is set out below:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach: Solent Freeport

The policy approach will need to explicitly reference the Solent Freeport designated tax and customs sites, show the extent of these on a map and explain that site-specific policies will guide future development on these Freeport sites. The council's priorities will be to seek the best outcome for the District and in particular for directly affected communities. These priorities include:

- transport/wider infrastructure: Ensuring Freeport development proposals provide and are supported by the necessary transport and wider infrastructure.
- employment and skills: Ensuring Freeport development proposals provide opportunities/pathways to jobs and skills training, and resource to enable local communities to benefit from any future development arising in the Freeport sites.
- prosperous communities: Seeking to ensure that local communities within and adjacent to where growth may take place are supported and benefit from the Freeport
- environmental sustainability: Ensuring any Freeport development proposals avoid or mitigate their environmental impacts (including potential adverse effects on international/national/local nature conservation designations)

Site-specific policies

Solent Gateway – Marchwood Port

506. Marchwood Port previously served as the UK government’s largest military port. The site continues to be owned by the Ministry of Defence, but since 2017 Solent Gateway (now part of ABP) has the head lease to operate the site to 2051, including managing military movements through the port. As of 2025, the port conducts both military and commercial operations. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment (Prior + Partners, 2025) concludes that the site’s adjacency to ABP proposed Solent Gateway 2 will support the wider expansion of the Port of Southampton. The site’s connection to the rail freight network and berth access suggests the site is suitable to handle a variety of commodities. However, this site is considered part of the existing baseline of land uses, meaning it would not be able to accommodate significant future port demand and therefore would not be able to meet the need identified in the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment.

507. The current adopted Local Plan policy (Policy ECON3) safeguards the site for port and port-related uses. This policy seeks to enable the effective and efficient use of the site and port facility for commercial, economic and local employment generating purposes whilst ensuring that development is managed effectively and that adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated.

Policy ECON3 is considered to remain appropriate and to be consistent with national policies. The Local Plan review proposes to roll this policy forward with some updating to make explicit reference to the site’s status as a Freeport tax and customs site.

Solent Gateway 2

508. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment (Prior + Partners, 2025) concludes that Solent Gateway 2 is the most suitable (operationally) and only viable location to accommodate the identified demand for port land. This is due to the site’s ability to accommodate large vessels.

509. Solent Gateway 2 adjoins the New Forest National Park. The reclaimed land area is designated the Dibden Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Dibden Bay foreshore is part of the Hythe to Calshot SSSI, forming part of the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site.
510. Given that an application for port development at the proposed Solent Gateway 2 is likely to be of a scale that would qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the 2008 Planning Act and thereby require an application to be submitted for a Development Consent Order, it is not appropriate for the Local Plan review itself to allocate the site or to take a position on the merits or otherwise of proposed port development. These are matters for the NSIP process. ABP have published their **emerging proposals** for this site and undertook a 4-week Non-Statutory Public Consultation in September to October 2025.
511. In relation to potential nationally significant infrastructure projects, it is the appropriate role of the local planning authority to seek the best outcome for the District and in particular for directly affected communities, if significant port development is consented. As part of the examination of a NSIP the Council would submit a Local Impact Report to the examiner, giving details of the likely positive and negative impacts of the proposed development on the local area and its communities. To do this, it is important that there is a specific policy in the Local Plan.
512. The existing adopted Local Plan policy (Policy ECON4) sets out that if a Development Consent Order (DCO) is sought for port operations in the Strategic Land Reserve the Council will work to seek the best outcome for the District and directly affected communities. This will be achieved by preparing a Local Impact Report addressing the matters, as identified in Table 7, to set out the likely impact of the proposed development on the District and its communities, and for any negative impacts to identify how and to what extent they may be resolved, mitigated or compensated for.

513. Adopted **Policy ECON4** is considered to remain appropriate and to be consistent with national policies. It is essential that the policy continues to set out how development will be managed effectively and that adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated. The Local Plan review proposes to roll this policy approach forward. The policy will need to be reviewed and updated to reference that part of the site is a designated tax site in the Solent Freeport. It will also need to be reviewed to ensure that all the issues and constraints that a future port NSIP application will need to address are fully covered by the policy. The matters identified in Table 7 below will be the starting point for this.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the proposals are consistent with national and local policies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in terms of the likely direct, cumulative and in-combination effects of construction and operation of a port on International Nature Conservation sites: the Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar Site and SPA, on the Solent Maritime SAC, and on the New Forest SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The likely positive or negative effects of the construction and operation of a port facility on the following matters, taking into account proposed mitigation, compensatory measures or potential planning conditions. • the amenity of local residents and communities including noise and light pollution • the capacity and safe and efficient operation of the transport network including by road, rail, ferry, walking and cycling • landscape character including significant views and the statutory duty to the further the purposes of the New Forest National Park • air quality in the District and wider area, with particular regard to Air Quality Management Areas/Clean Air Zone, human health, and in-combination effects on international nature conservation sites • marine water quality, the marine environment and effects on the foreshore including from ship wash • the local environment, wildlife, ecology and habitats • the local economy and employment including impacts on local businesses (including tourism) and local employment opportunities • the housing market and local housing supply, including the implications of demand for workforce accommodation in both construction and operational phases • infrastructure and utilities' capacity including community facilities and services

- flood risk and other climatic factors
- soil and freshwater bodies
- architectural and archaeological heritage
- green infrastructure, recreation and open space including public access to the coast.

Table 7 Matters to be addressed in a Local Impact Report on proposals for a nationally significant scale of port development in the Solent waterside

Fawley Refinery Complex

514. Fawley Complex, covering an area of 747 hectares, is home to the Fawley Oil Refinery. Owned by a subsidiary of ExxonMobil, it is the largest oil refinery in the UK, operating integrated facilities to produce a range of petrochemical related products. The site hosts logistical capacity to integrate with national and international supply chains and serves as a key employer in the locality. Selected areas of the Fawley Complex site are designated as part of the Solent Gateway tax site within the Solent Freeport. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment concludes that due to the location, nature of infrastructure, safety buffers, operational structures, and potential contamination constraints it is likely that this site would only be able to accommodate liquid bulk, hydrogen production or associated port-related activities. Any future uses would need to be activities that could safely be carried within close proximity to the existing refinery.

515. The complex is currently covered by Saved Policy FAW1 of the **adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** which states that within the Fawley Oil Refinery and petrochemicals complex, land may be developed for uses directly related to the petrochemical industry. Given the findings of the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment regarding future uses on this site, this policy is considered to be relevant, necessary, in accordance with national policies and does not need to be significantly amended. Some updating taking into consideration the recommendations in the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment will be considered, and factual changes to update policy references will be needed.

Fawley Waterside

516. Fawley Waterside is the site of a former oil-fired power station. The site is currently allocated in the adopted Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 for residential-led mixed development, 10ha employment land and up to around 10,000 square metres of ancillary community, retail, leisure and service uses under Policy SS4. However, the outline planning application 19/10581 for 1,380 new homes and 95,300sqm of new commercial, civic and employment space (for which a resolution to grant subject to s.106 was given in July 2020) was withdrawn in July 2024 due to a lack of viability. The site is now a designated tax site within the Solent Freeport.
517. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment concludes that the physical constraints and channel depths mean that berth access for large vessels to the site is not viable for port activities. The location and transport infrastructure means there is limited potential for port-related industries.
518. The mixed-use development for which the site is currently allocated by Policy SS4 of the adopted Local Plan is also not considered achievable as the development would not be feasible or viable. For the same reasons, the 1,380 dwellings originally envisaged to be delivered at this site have already been removed from the council's housing land supply.
519. The promoter is currently proposing a scheme for renewable energy generation and marine focussed employment development on the site. Redevelopment of the site will follow the regularisation and management of 'meanwhile' storage and distribution uses. The council is currently working with the site promoter to ensure a feasible, viable and appropriate future for this brownfield site.
520. Policy SS4 will need to be replaced by a new policy in the Local Plan review to reflect the most likely (subject to appropriateness and viability) redevelopment use(s) of the site. The council will work with the landowner and other key stakeholders to prepare an appropriate updated Local Plan policy for this site.

Eling Wharf

521. This site is currently used for port-related industries and storage of shipping containers (transported via highways). The site is well utilised with limited potential for further expansion. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment concludes that Eling Wharf has the potential to continue to be used in its current function to support 'port-related industries', storage of shipping containers, or alternatively transition to residential, mixed-use or light industrial uses subject to contamination remediation. The physical constraints and channel depths mean that berth access to the site is not viable.
522. Saved Policy TOT11 of the current **adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** allocated the site for mixed-use development including employment, residential, commercial, community and leisure subject to the policy criteria. Should the site in the future no longer be required to accommodate the operational needs of the port-related industry, the site continues to have potential for comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment in the longer-term.
523. The site's location on the edge of Totton town centre means that this is an appropriate location for mixed use development and that there is also potential for residential development as part of a comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment, while significantly improving the local environment and the appearance of the area. However, there are significant issues that would need to be addressed before site could be redeveloped (notably, the contamination issues and addressing potential impacts of development on the adjacent international nature conservation designations).
524. Consideration of what will therefore be the most appropriate use(s) of the site will therefore be undertaken through this Local Plan review process taking into account the appropriateness, suitability and achievability of any development option proposals. The council will work with the landowner and other key stakeholders to update Saved Policy TOT11 and prepare an appropriate Local Plan policy approach to this site for both the short-term and the long-term.

Marchwood Industrial Park and Cracknore Hard Industrial Park

525. Marchwood Industrial Park is a well-established industrial site of 54.8ha. Parcels of the site may have potential for intensification or redevelopment. The site comprises businesses operating in waste management, energy generation, logistics, storage and distribution of automobiles. Cracknore Industrial Park is a 12.2ha site which accommodates businesses in haulage and logistics, storage and distribution of automobiles, equipment rental and shipyard activities. Although smaller in size than Marchwood Industrial Park, areas of the site have potential for intensification or redevelopment.

526. Saved policies MAR5 and MAR6 of the current **adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** encourage and set out the site-specific criteria for any new employment development, redevelopment or intensification of employment uses at Marchwood Industrial Park and Cracknore Hard Industrial Park. These policies are considered to be relevant, necessary, in accordance with national policies and do not need to be significantly amended. Some minor updating taking into consideration the recommendations in the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment will be considered, and factual changes to update policy references are needed.

Marine related business and access to the water (Non-strategic Policy Matter)

527. A policy on marine related business and access to the water is helpful to ensure that local opportunities for economic development and recreation that are reliant on access to the water are facilitated and protected.

528. Saved policies DM11 and DM12 of the **adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** currently set out the approach for this:

- Saved Policy DM11 identifies existing sites that provide wharves or other boat launching facilities, which make them particularly suitable for marine-related businesses and states that new development should be designed to ensure the retention of wharves, boat launching facilities and vehicular access thereto
- Saved Policy DM12 sets out that development proposals should be designed to enable the continued use of slipways, including public hards, to access inland and coastal waters

529. The existing policies for marine related business and access to the water are considered to be appropriate to facilitate the benefits of an important local resource and are in line with national policy. It is therefore proposed to broadly roll forward the approach set out in saved policies DM11 and DM12 into the Local Plan review. However, the sites listed (a-i) in Saved Policy DM11 will be reviewed to ensure they are still appropriate for inclusion in the policy and to review whether there are other/additional sites that should be included within the updated policy for the Local Plan review.

530. Marine businesses and opportunities for recreation provide key economic and health and wellbeing benefits for residents. The wharves, boat launching facilities and slipways are essential for marine business and recreation and an integral part of the historic character and landscape of the plan area.

Approach to town and local centres

Aim and Objectives

531. The Local Plan has an important role to play in helping to stimulate and enhance the vitality of town and village centres which, in addition to their economic benefits, can form a key part of creating vibrant places where people wish to live and spend their time. It will need to ensure that policies support the provision of an appropriate mixture of town centre uses to best serve the local community and create flourishing places.

What you told us

532. Respondents to the Issues and Scope Consultation were eager to see the council take an active approach to town and local centres to reduce vacancies and make them attractive places to be.

533. Suggestions included reducing business rates, pedestrianising areas, providing free parking and better transport, improving communal areas, encouraging activity, and improving seating and access to green areas. There was also a strong sense that local businesses with a New Forest brand should be encouraged.

534. Respondents also supported converting vacant units to residential ones, where appropriate.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

535. The NPPF 2024, paragraph 90 requires planning policies to support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities by defining a network and hierarchy of town centres; promoting their vitality and viability; defining the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas; making clear what uses are permitted; allocating a range of suitable town centre sites; and encouraging residential development on appropriate town centre sites. The NPPF also requires a **sequential approach** to be taken towards proposals for town centre uses in out-of-centre locations.
536. As of 2024, the average vacancy rate for the New Forest District Town Centres is 7.1% (calculated from monitoring surveys of the defined shopping frontages in town centres undertaken by the council in autumn 2024) which is substantially lower than **published figures** for national vacancies across England which indicate an average vacancy rate of 13.9% for 2023. The average vacancy rate for New Forest District Village and Local Shopping Frontages was 4.2% in 2024, which is consistent with vacancy rates since 2021.
537. We anticipate commissioning a Retail Needs Assessment to better understand the Plan Area's retail and other town centre uses need and inform future policy options. Additionally, we will be reviewing current Town Centre and Shopping Frontage boundaries to ensure they are up-to-date and consistent with national policy.

Policy Direction

538. It is proposed that the Local Plan will set the approach to town and village centres with an aim to maintain, revitalise, and regenerate where appropriate. Policy will support the sustainability and flexibility of town and village centre locations to help preserve their vitality and viability.
539. The policy will define shopping frontage boundaries as well as the boundaries of town and village centres. Appropriate locations for various uses will be considered, with town centre uses being subject to the sequential test when assessing appropriate site locations.

540. Proposed development should be of an appropriate design, scale and appearance for its proposed location and should not have an adverse effect on the character, viability, or vitality of relevant town and village centres.

541. An alternative option to this policy approach would be to have no policy and rely solely on the NPPF. This is not considered a preferable approach as it would not provide a local strategy that would support and encourage the revitalisation of the town and village centres of this Plan Area.

Approach to tourism

Aim and Objectives

542. Tourism is an important part of the District's local economy. The National Park, whilst out of our Plan Area, is a major tourist attraction for day visitors and those who stay overnight in the many hotels and campsites. Businesses and residents from outside the National Park benefit from the economic and employment opportunities generated within it. Additionally, parts of the Plan Area including the historic towns and villages, coast, and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape generate substantial tourist activity.

543. The Local Plan aims to support tourism in the Plan Area by supporting the appropriate provision of tourist accommodation, and other tourist and visitor facilities. However, it will also take account of the potential negative impacts of tourist activities upon local communities as well as the most sensitive areas of the National Park and other protected areas.

What you told us

544. The majority of respondents to the Issues and Scope Consultation appeared to believe that the level of tourist provision was adequate, though elements of it could be enhanced, with a handful of respondents specifically noting that more could be made of the history of the area. There was a theme throughout of a desire to protect the New Forest as well as prevent second homes and Airbnb's from dominating communities.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

545. Compared to the regional average, there is a significantly higher proportion of workers in the 'Accommodation and Food Services' and 'Arts, Entertainment and Recreation' industries, which is likely attributable to the popularity of the District for tourism.
546. Employment within the 'Accommodation and Food Services' industry reflects the importance of tourism within the District. The New Forest National Park, whilst outside of the Plan Area, is a major tourist destination. The New Forest has a vibrant visitor economy, which **data** shows is worth in excess of £491 million per year and supports approximately 9,000 local jobs. Over 15 million visitor days are spent in the Park **each year**. The coast and historic towns of the Plan Area are also attractive to tourists, as is the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL), although the CCNL is less well-known and accessible.

Policy Direction

547. The Local Plan will likely set the approach to tourism and associated development in the Plan Area. The benefits of proposed development will be weighed against the potential negative impacts upon local character, amenity, housing balance, and the protection and conservation of the National Park and other sensitive areas.
548. The proposed policy approach will build upon existing saved policies CS19 and DM13, seeking to provide a criteria-based approach to determining where new tourism development is appropriate. Considerations will include:

Possible Policy Approach: Tourism

The proposed approach is to support the local tourism industry by:

- (a) encouraging tourism and provision for visitors which is appropriate to the Plan Area's settlements and countryside and consistent with environmental objectives;

- (b) retaining and enhancing existing serviced (e.g., hotels) and non-serviced (e.g., campsites and caravan parks) accommodation. For development proposals that would result in the loss of such uses, it is proposed that a minimum of 12 months marketing should be required which demonstrates the existing use is not commercially sustainable;
- (c) maintaining and enhancing existing tourist and visitor facilities;
- (d) supporting new tourist provision and initiatives in towns and villages, and also appropriate small-scale tourist provision in the countryside where it is appropriate to the site, location and setting and supports the local economy;
- (e) supporting measures that help manage visitor pressure on the most sensitive areas of the New Forest National Park, including initiatives that redirect activity to less vulnerable locations, enhance visitor education, and protect habitats and landscapes;
- (f) enhancing the visitor appeal of coastal environments and the coastal settlements of Barton, Milford, Lymington, Hythe and Eling. Improve the quality of recreational opportunities and managed access to the coast where this would be consistent with the protection of nature conservation interests;
- (g) supporting car-free tourism initiatives that benefit tourists and local communities.

Further information/ evidence base weblinks

- 549. Economic Needs Assessment (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2025)
- 550. Existing Employment Sites Quality Assessment (NFDC, 2025)
- 551. Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment (Prior + Partners, 2025)

Consultation questions

- 43) How should the Local Plan seek to meet the identified need for business land/floorspace? Are there any business sectors we should focus on?

- 44) Do you agree with our proposed approach to retaining existing employment sites? Do you think there are circumstances where we should allow redevelopment or alternative uses to be considered?
- 45) How should we encourage the use of local employment in new developments? Are there any measures that would be most effective in supporting local employment and skills?
- 46) How should the Local Plan support the rural economy, including agriculture, commoning, and rural enterprise? Are there specific measures or types of rural development you would like to see encouraged or restricted?
- 47) What are your views on the proposed approach to supporting port and marine industries, including the Solent Freeport and Solent Gateway 2? Are there particular issues or opportunities you think should be addressed?
- 48) How do you think the Local Plan best support the vitality and viability of town and village centres? Are there particular uses, improvements, or initiatives you would like to see prioritised?
- 49) Do you agree with the proposed approach to supporting tourism and visitor facilities?

Planning for and Delivering Infrastructure

Aim and Objectives

552. Infrastructure can be categorised into 3 broad types:

- physical (necessary to connect homes and workplaces to the wider environment such as transport, waste and utilities to meet the day- to-day needs)
- green (to maximise ecosystem services that support wild and human life, including blue infrastructure)
- social (to ensure that the communities can function effectively and covers a wide range of assets such as affordable housing, education, healthcare, sports facilities, and libraries).

553. The key aim and objectives of the new Local Plan will be to secure appropriate provision of, or contribution towards, the social and physical infrastructure necessary to manage the impact of new development on existing services and communities. The new Local Plan will seek to protect existing community facilities and services and to ensure that new facilities are located where they are accessible. It will also ensure that development is permitted only where either there is sufficient capacity in the existing local infrastructure to meet the demands arising from that development, or any necessary new or improved facilities will be provided at the time they are needed. The Local Plan will also ensure that **green infrastructure** is appropriately provided or enhanced, with further detail set out in the Green Infrastructure section.

What you told us

554. A large number of respondents expressed concerns over infrastructure capacity for existing settlements which would be stretched even further by future development. There was an overwhelming sentiment among respondents for more GPs and NHS local services including dentists. Concerns regarding there being sufficient school places to support new development were raised. There were also concerns raised over wastewater treatment and drainage, particularly in relation to flooding and water quality. Additionally, a minority of respondents expressed concerns relating to electricity provision.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

555. The NPPF identifies that all plans should align growth and infrastructure, and strategic policies should make sufficient provision for infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure). The NPPF also requires that plans should set out the contributions expected from development, including for infrastructure, although such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.

556. Most infrastructure is provided by **organisations** other than the council. It can be provided by private companies (for example, electricity or sewage) or the public sector (for example, health, transport, and education). The council's responsibility is to ensure that new development is located and designed to minimise its demand on existing infrastructure and to work with those other organisations to ensure that any additional impacts arising because of development can be effectively mitigated through delivery of new or expanded, high quality infrastructure.

557. There are currently three main mechanisms used to secure infrastructure funding and provision from development:

- **Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Planning Act:** Planning obligations are used to secure the delivery of measures necessary to make a development acceptable. Planning obligations secured through **s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990** (as amended) are entered into as legal agreements between local planning authorities, landowners, developers and any others with an interest in the land. In certain circumstances an applicant/developer may submit a **unilateral undertaking** in respect of a planning obligation.
- **the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge placed on development, such as new homes and extensions to homes, according to their floor area.
- **Section 278 of the Highways Act:** Where development requires work to be carried out on the existing adopted highway, an Agreement will need to be completed between the developer and either the Secretary of State for Transport (for the strategic road network for which Highways England is responsible), or Hampshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority (for the local road network), under **s278 of the Highways Act 1980**.

558. Section 106 Agreements and Section 278 Agreements are used to address the site-specific impacts of a development whereas CIL contributes towards the costs of infrastructure connected with the wider growth of the Plan Area. All eligible development must contribute to any site-specific requirements secured through s106 Agreements and additionally pay CIL. CIL is therefore an appropriate delivery mechanism for infrastructure to support the sustainable development and growth of an area, rather than to make individual planning applications acceptable in planning terms.

559. Planning conditions may also be used to secure non-financial mitigation, to define timing or apply standards. They cannot be used to secure financial contributions but can be used to ensure that certain elements related to the development are provided and therefore enable development proposals to proceed where it would otherwise have been necessary to refuse planning permission. **Paragraph 57 of the NPPF** makes clear that Planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.
560. It is important to understand the limitations of the planning system in relation to infrastructure provision. National policy is that planning obligations, such as to require developer contributions (either through direct provision by way of financial contribution) for infrastructure, should only be placed on developers where they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, and they must also be directly related to the development, and be fair and reasonable in scale and kind. For a development impact to be 'acceptable in planning terms' does not mean that the current situation must be improved upon or made no worse, and it is not the role of the local planning authority, potentially via developer contributions/obligations, to make up historic deficiencies – these are the responsibility of the infrastructure provider and beyond the scope of the planning system.
561. We are preparing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which will identify the infrastructure that is needed to deliver the Local Plan strategy, when it is needed, and how much it would cost. It will also set out infrastructure requirements of any new allocations proposed in the Local Plan review.
562. An early emerging draft IDP has been published as part of the supporting evidence base for this consultation which sets out the position with regard to known infrastructure issues based on information available from infrastructure providers to date. The emerging draft IDP has been developed following engagement with infrastructure providers, prior to and during the Issues and Scope Consultation in spring 2025.

563. The emerging draft IDP summarises that in relation to existing infrastructure capacity, based on information available from infrastructure providers to date, there are no current absolute infrastructure barriers to development overall but that there will be infrastructure requirements associated with proposed new development in the Plan Area in order to ensure future infrastructure capacity can accommodate proposed growth. These requirements could affect the timing of when new development can be delivered, particularly on larger sites. At this stage, given that the scale and locations of development are yet to be selected, it is not possible to establish the extent and type of infrastructure that will be required and when it will be required.

564. As the detail of the amount and location of development to be proposed in the Local Plan review progresses the full IDP will be prepared, working constructively with infrastructure providers, to identify the infrastructure requirements and facilities development sites will need to provide or contribute towards providing, and how/when it should be provided.

565. The timing of infrastructure relative to the development is very important to the community, as people are concerned about pressure on existing communities. While desirable, it is not always practicable to deliver all the planned infrastructure upfront before development starts, but a phased approach is needed so that it becomes available in a timely manner as the development progresses. Further work will be required in terms of viability assessment to ensure that the level of infrastructure provision needed to support development, together with other planning policy requirements, does not undermine the deliverability of the Local Plan.

Policy Direction

Infrastructure, community services and facilities

566. The strategic policy approach is to ensure that all developments provide, or contribute proportionately to the provision of, any on-site and off-site infrastructure, facilities, affordable housing, public open space and habitat mitigation measures that are necessary and reasonably required to support the development and mitigate its impacts to achieve a sustainable development. The mechanism to secure developer contributions will depend on the type of infrastructure and the site circumstances for requirements currently identified to be needed.
567. For proposed site allocations that are owned or will be developed by more than one developer or brought forward in more than one planning application, the various developers/applicants will be required to collaborate on the provision of the infrastructure and facilities which are needed to serve them all. To do this it is proposed that equalisation agreements (or an effective alternative) will be required where the proportionate impacts and costs are fairly distributed across the separate land parcels in advance of making planning applications.
568. It is proposed that the strategic policy will support the development of new infrastructure, including community facilities, in appropriate locations where there is a local need for the infrastructure, and they are in close proximity and accessible to all sectors of the local community.
569. It is proposed that the strategic policy will seek to retain existing services by setting out a presumption against any development that involves the loss of education, health, social and other community services, unless the use of the site or building is redundant, or the service will be provided in another way following a service review.
570. An alternative option to this policy approach would be to have no policy and rely solely on the NPPF. This is not a justifiable option as this would not provide sufficient clarity regarding the requirement of developers to mitigate the impacts of their developments, what infrastructure was needed and when, and how it would be secured.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

571. Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Consultation questions

- 50) What are your views on the proposed approach to existing infrastructure and infrastructure provision?
- 51) What types of infrastructure (physical, green/blue, or social) do you think should be prioritised to support new development in the Plan Area?
- 52) What approaches would you support to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with growth?
- 53) How can we best involve local communities and service providers in planning for and delivering the infrastructure needed to support new development?

Sustainable Transport

Sustainable Transport and Movement

Aim and Objectives

572. The integration of land use and transport planning, including public transport, is essential to delivering communities that are sustainable, healthy, and inclusive. This strategic policy will set out how the transport impact of development should be managed, and how new development should be connected to the transport network.

What you told us

Transport and Connectivity

573. Consultation responses highlighted a clear and consistent need to improve transport infrastructure across the District, particularly in relation to public transport, active travel, and road capacity. Many respondents expressed concern over the reliability and frequency of public transport services, especially in smaller settlements and the Waterside area. The cessation of the Hythe Ferry and lack of rail services on the Waterside line were identified as significant barriers to connectivity and employment access. There was strong support for reinstating these services and for exploring flexible transport models such as dial-a-bus or community minibus schemes to serve more remote areas. Respondents also emphasised the importance of integrating different transport modes to create a joined-up network that supports sustainable travel choices.

Active Travel and Infrastructure Planning

574. The need for safe and accessible active travel routes was a recurring theme, with calls for improved cycleways, pedestrian crossings, and footpaths that cater to all users, including those with disabilities. Respondents advocated for embedding active travel infrastructure into new developments and ensuring connectivity to local services such as schools and shops. Concerns were raised about the adequacy of existing road networks, particularly the A326, and whether they can accommodate future growth. Infrastructure providers and statutory consultees echoed these concerns, stressing the importance of aligning development with transport capacity and ensuring that infrastructure is delivered in step with growth. The Local Plan will therefore explore policy options that prioritise sustainable transport, safeguard strategic transport corridors, and where practicable support modal shift away from private car use.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

575. Sustainable transport is a key component of sustainable development. Both national and local planning policy promote the idea of sustainable development. Locating jobs and services close to new and existing residential development will help reduce the need to travel by private car and support active travel. The current Local Plan includes policies that support sustainable transport, and the review provides an opportunity to strengthen these in the light of new evidence and priorities.

576. Transport-related emissions are one of the largest contributors to climate change and also impact local air quality. The council is working with Hampshire County Council (as the local transport authority) and other partners to understand the capacity of the transport network and to develop a coordinated approach to transport planning, which will include the preparation of a comprehensive Transport Assessment reflecting the development proposed through the Local Plan review. This policy will also seek to complement schemes proposed by Transport for the South East and align with the Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).

577. A key element set out in the LTP4, is the development and application of a Movement and Place Framework to manage the transport network in accordance with its function in different location. This will encompass the principles of 'Healthy Streets' - a holistic framework, based around ten Healthy Streets Indicators, for creating environments that feel welcoming, comfortable, and safe for walking and cycling, regardless of confidence, age and ability.

578. In terms of specific projects and proposals that sit alongside the LTP4, Town access plans have been developed by HCC with district and borough councils and set out a shared vision for making the best use of roads and public spaces with the aim of improving access to services and facilities. Currently no adopted versions exist for our Plan Area.

579. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), as set out in the government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, are a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. Two LCWIPs cover our Plan Area - one for the Waterside area of New Forest District, and the second covering the remaining District that has been prepared jointly between Hampshire County Council (HCC), New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) and Forestry England.

Policy direction

580. Our proposed approach is to give local effect to national policy and retain elements of the existing approach that are in conformity with national guidance. It will be updated to reflect key transport schemes and priorities for the District, reflecting existing and emerging Town Access Plans and LCWIPs. The policy will aim to improve accessibility and widen transport choices by requiring, as far as possible, all new developments to be served by an attractive choice of transport modes, including public transport, cycle routes, bridleways, and footpaths. The policy will promote healthier lifestyles, the principles of healthy streets and behavioural change by encouraging development that reduces the need to travel. Future development will be focused on the most accessible and sustainable locations. Travel Statements or Plans will be required for major developments to demonstrate trip generation, impacts, and how sustainable travel will be maximised.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

581. No Policy: This is not considered a reasonable option as it would mean relying solely on national policy or the Local Transport Plan, which would not provide sufficient detail on the local context or address site-specific planning considerations.

Parking Standards

Aim and Objectives

582. This policy will set out the requirements for managing vehicle and cycle parking, including ensuring that the transition to electric vehicles is supported through the provision of charging infrastructure. New development will be expected to contribute to a greener, more sustainable district by facilitating movement by walking and cycling and reducing reliance on private car use.

What you told us

583. While the Issues and Scope consultation did not directly reference car parking standards, there were indirect references in relation to:

- **Town Centres:** Some respondents noted that a lack of free parking in town centres discourages residents from visiting and spending time there.
- **Sustainable Transport:** A strong emphasis was placed on reducing reliance on private cars and encouraging modal shift, which implies a need to review parking standards in the context of development and transport planning.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

584. Managing parking provision is a key factor in influencing travel behaviour. While technological advances such as autonomous vehicles may transform transport in the long term, parking will continue to be a critical issue during the Local Plan period, particularly in relation to congestion and air quality concerns in parts of the District.

585. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows local authorities to set parking standards where there is clear and compelling justification.

Paragraph 107 of the NPPF requires that parking standards take into account:

- accessibility of the development
- type, mix and use of development
- availability of and opportunities for public transport
- local car ownership levels
- the need to ensure adequate provision of charging infrastructure for plug-in and ultra-low emission vehicles

586. Current parking standards used in the Plan Area are based on our adopted **Parking Standards SPD**. A design-led, site-by-site approach may offer greater flexibility and better reflect the diverse character and accessibility of locations across the Plan Area.

587. The council's climate change evidence identifies road transport as a major contributor to carbon emissions. A significant proportion of residents commute outside the Plan Area, and while locating development near public transport can help reduce emissions, more ambitious requirements for both on-street and off-street EV charging infrastructure will be needed to support the transition to cleaner vehicles.

588. Cycling and walking are zero-emission modes of travel and will play a key role in meeting net-zero targets. Provision of charging infrastructure for electric cycles may also encourage uptake for longer journeys.

Policy Direction

589. Parking standards will be updated to reflect national policy and local needs. The council will ensure standards are flexible and responsive to the mix of land uses, location, and accessibility. While active travel will be prioritised, vehicle transport will remain necessary, and electric vehicles will play a key role in reducing emissions.

590. The Local Plan policy will require:

- Taking in to account the existing Building Regulation requirements, ensure EV charging points for all new dwellings (minimum one per unit) and rapid charging points (50kW+) in suitable locations, particularly in non-residential developments
- public charging facilities in accessible locations to serve existing communities and visitors

- design-led parking provision that responds to site context and supports modal shift

591. Cycle share schemes will be supported where appropriate, particularly near centres and transport hubs. In partnership with the relevant Highways Authority, the council will seek to manage these schemes to avoid cluttering the public realm and ensure safety and accessibility.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

592. No Policy: Not considered reasonable, as national policy requires local consideration of parking standards.

593. No EV Charging Requirements: Not considered reasonable to rely solely on Building Regulations due to the need to support the transition to low-emission vehicles and meet climate targets.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

- **[New Forest Waterside – Local cycling and walking infrastructure plan](#)**
- **[New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)**
- **[Healthy Streets](#)**

Consultation questions

- 54) How should we improve public transport and connectivity across our Plan Area? Are there specific services, routes, or areas you feel should be prioritised?
- 55) How can the Local Plan best support safe and accessible walking and cycling routes? Are there particular locations or types of infrastructure you think should be prioritised?
- 56) What measures would help encourage a shift away from private car use towards other transport options including active travel and public transport? How can different forms of transport be better integrated?
- 57) Do you agree with our approach to updating parking standards and increasing provision for electric vehicle charging?

- 58) Are there particular standards or locations you think should be prioritised?
- 59) How can we ensure new development is well connected to sustainable transport options and doesn't significantly worsen existing traffic congestion and/or air quality?
- 60) How can we best involve local communities and stakeholders in planning for transport improvements and infrastructure delivery?
- 61) How should we manage schemes like bikes, e-bike and e-scooter hire schemes, so they encourage active travel but are kept in appropriate places and do not obstruct streets or public spaces?

Open Space, Recreation and Play

Informal Open Space

Aim and Objectives

594. The council aims to ensure that all communities benefit from high-quality, safe, and accessible informal open spaces. These spaces are intended to support health, wellbeing, biodiversity, and social interaction. The policy will seek to protect and enhance the network of informal open spaces, ensuring they are well-connected and integrated with both new and existing development. The overarching objective is to provide opportunities for informal recreation, relaxation, and contact with nature for people of all ages.

What you told us

595. The recent Issues and Scope consultation responses demonstrated strong support for accessible green and open spaces, which are seen as essential for health, wellbeing, and community life. Many respondents expressed a desire for informal open spaces to be accessible by active travel and public transport, and for such provision to be made within all new developments. Concerns were raised about the accessibility and connectivity of existing green spaces, with calls for better routes and safer access. Suggestions included the need for secure dog parks, dog-free areas, and spaces that are well-maintained and feel safe.

596. Delivering space that accommodates dog walking is a complex issue. Providing separate areas for every use risks over-provision, which can affect development viability or lead to imbalanced outcomes—such as more space for dogs than for children or other community needs. While secure ‘off-lead’ dog areas and dog-free zones can be delivered where appropriate, the Local Plan will advocate for flexible, landscape-led layouts that cater to a range of users. This includes designing spaces where well-behaved and properly controlled dog walking can coexist with high-quality, inclusive environments for all people—young or old, with or without pets.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

597. A policy on informal open space is needed because national policy (NPPF) requires planning for a network of high-quality open spaces to support healthy communities. This is in addition to the need to provide Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace (ANRG), which is specifically required to address recreational impacts on the New Forest protected sites. Evidence shows that informal open spaces contribute to physical and mental health, social cohesion, and biodiversity. The district's unique landscape and proximity to sensitive habitats require careful planning to balance recreation with nature conservation. There are also gaps in provision and accessibility, particularly in some settlements and new developments.

Policy direction

598. The council is considering several policy options. One option is to retain and update existing policies to protect and enhance informal open spaces, ensuring there is no net loss unless spaces are replaced by equivalent or better provision.

599. Another option is to introduce minimum accessibility standards, for example, requiring all homes to be within a set walking distance of informal open space. The council could also require all major new developments to provide informal open space on-site in addition to the ANRG, with design guidance to ensure safety, inclusivity, and biodiversity. Finally, the policy could support the creation of new informal open spaces, green corridors, and connections between spaces, especially where deficiencies are identified.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

600. No Policy: Not considered reasonable, as together with it being a requirement of national policy, it will ensure a strategic approach can be taken across the plan area, particular with regard to minimum accessibility standards.

Children and Young People Play

Aim and Objectives

601. The council's objective is to provide a range of safe, accessible, and inclusive play spaces for children and young people across the district. The policy will ensure that play provision meets the needs of different age groups and abilities and is integrated into both new and existing communities. The intention is to promote healthy, active lifestyles and social development through high-quality play opportunities.

What you told us

602. Feedback from the Issues and Scope consultation showed strong support for more play areas and youth facilities, with calls for provision in all new developments and for a mix of small local play spaces and larger destination play areas.

603. Respondents raised concerns about the lack of spaces for teenagers and emphasised the need for play areas to be safe, well-maintained, and accessible. The importance of inclusive design was highlighted, with a focus on ensuring play spaces cater for all abilities and are located where they are needed most. It was also noted that parks and play areas should be equally welcoming and suitable for all members of the community, recognising that some people can feel excluded or unsafe in some spaces due to poor design, maintenance, or lighting.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

604. A robust policy is needed because play is essential for children's physical, social, and emotional development. National policy requires robust evidence of need and provision for play and recreation. Evidence also shows gaps in play provision, particularly for older children and in some rural and urban fringe areas. Well-designed play spaces can help address health inequalities and support community cohesion.

Policy direction

605. Policy options under consideration include updating and strengthening our policy that requires play provision in all new residential developments over a certain size, by referencing proportion to the scale and location of the development.

606. The council may set minimum standards for accessibility, quality, and inclusivity of play spaces, with reference to national guidance. There is also the option to support the development of larger, destination play areas in strategic locations, alongside local play spaces. Finally, the council could encourage community involvement in the design and stewardship of play spaces.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

607. No Policy: Not considered reasonable, as together with it being a requirement of national policy as with wider open space requirements, it will ensure a strategic approach can be taken across the plan area, particular with regard to minimum accessibility standards.

Formal Playing Pitches and Indoor Facilities

Aim and Objectives

608. The council's objective is to ensure there is a sufficient quantity, quality, and accessibility of formal playing pitches to meet current and future needs for sport and physical activity. The policy will protect existing playing pitches from loss, unless they are replaced by equivalent or better provision, and will support the development of new and improved facilities, where appropriate in the landscape, taking into account the potential for their evolution and the impacts of such development including lighting, drainage and associated fencing and structures. This could include 4G pitches, to address identified existing shortfalls across the Plan Area for all development, having regard to context when lighting is require, and changing needs.

609. The council also aims to ensure that all residents have access to a range of high-quality, accessible indoor sports and leisure facilities. The policy will protect existing facilities and support new provision where evidence identifies a need. The intention is to promote healthy lifestyles, social inclusion, and community wellbeing through indoor recreation.

What you told us

610. Consultation responses highlighted the need for more sports pitches and courts, accessible to all ages and genders. There was support for new and improved facilities, including all-weather (4G) pitches to allow year-round use. Respondents also raised concerns about the adequacy and distribution of existing facilities, and the need for pitches to be accessible by active travel.

611. Consultation feedback also indicated concerns about the adequacy, affordability, and accessibility of indoor sports and leisure facilities, including swimming pools and leisure centres. There was support for new and improved facilities, particularly in areas of growth and where gaps in provision exist. Respondents also highlighted the importance of affordability and inclusivity.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

612. A policy is needed because formal playing pitches, together with indoor sports facilities are important for health, wellbeing, and community life. National policy requires robust evidence to protect and plan for sports facilities. There is a need to address gaps in provision, quality, and accessibility, and to respond to changing patterns of participation, the district's changing demographics and future growth areas will require a strategic approach to provision.

613. The Playing Pitch Strategy prepared jointly for the council and the National Park Authority, and identifies current and future needs, shortfalls, and priorities for investment. The Strategy highlights the main issues to address are around capacity constraints, quality of facilities, and future demand across a range of sports. Artificial Grass Pitches have identified shortfalls. Football pitches face notable shortfalls, particularly youth 11v11 pitches, with overplay and exported demand indicating unmet local needs. Rugby Union also shows significant overplay and lacks secure tenure at key sites. While Tennis and Bowls generally meet current demand, some clubs are oversubscribed and anticipate future growth that may strain existing infrastructure. Netball and Pickleball have limited venue availability, with clubs reporting waiting lists and aspirations for expansion.
614. Strategically, the report highlights the need to secure tenure agreements, upgrade poor-quality pitches, and plan for future population growth and housing development. Outside of the Plan area, environmental constraints within the National Park and surrounding protected areas limit opportunities for new facilities, requiring innovative solutions and cross-authority collaboration. Addressing latent and unmet demand, improving ancillary provision, and aligning with national sport strategies are essential to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and accessible sports provision across the Plan Area.
615. A policy is needed to support year-round physical activity and wellbeing through indoor facilities, addressing strategic challenges such as ageing leisure centres, uneven access, and growing demand from population growth and demographic change, with targeted interventions needed in areas of deprivation and inactivity.
616. To address these issues, the Indoor Built Facilities Strategy (IBFS) recommends:
- protecting existing facilities, especially ageing swimming pools and school-based sports halls, through refurbishment and improved community access
 - providing new or expanded facilities in growth areas, including feasibility studies for consolidated leisure centres in Totton and South Coastal Towns

- enhancing facility quality and programming, particularly fitness studios and health & fitness offers, to appeal to broader demographics
- targeting sport-specific gaps, such as squash, gymnastics, indoor climbing, and athletics, through partnerships with national governing bodies and local clubs
- improving accessibility and inclusion, especially in deprived areas, and integrating leisure with health services to support active wellbeing
- exploring new opportunities, such as indoor BMX/skate parks and compact athletics tracks, to meet emerging demand and support talent development.

Policy direction

617. The council is considering several policy options. These include retaining and updating policy to protect existing well used pitches and require replacement if lost to development; requiring new developments to contribute to playing pitch provision, either on-site or through financial contributions; supporting the development of new and improved facilities, including artificial grass pitches, in locations identified by the Playing Pitch Strategy; and promoting community use agreements and shared use of school and other facilities.

618. Policy options also include retaining and updating policy to protect existing indoor facilities and require replacement if lost; requiring new developments to contribute to indoor facility provision, either on-site or through financial contributions; supporting investment in new and improved facilities in areas of identified need, informed by evidence; and promoting community access to school and other facilities, as well as supporting inclusive and affordable provision.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

619. No Policy: Not considered reasonable, as together with it being a requirement of national policy, it will ensure a strategic approach can be taken across the plan area designed to meet the specific needs.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

- 620. Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report (2025)
- 621. New Forest Indoor Built Facilities Study (2025)
- 622. **Fields in Trust Standards**
- 623. **Green Infrastructure Standards - Natural England**

Consultation questions

- 62) What features or improvements would make informal open spaces in your local area more attractive to you and more accessible for you?
- 63) How important is it to provide for a range of play spaces in all new developments?
- 64) Are there particular types of play spaces or open space facilities you feel are missing or needed in your area? (for example, in relation to all inclusive - disabled access, more spaces for girls, improved pathways, natural play areas?)
- 65) Are the existing facilities in play areas and/or open spaces adequate? (For example, in areas such as parks, open spaces and commons)
- 66) Are there any particular types of open spaces you feel are either missing, inappropriate or inadequate in your area? (For example, this may include parks, woodland, gardens or other forms of green or blue spaces such as streams, river or coastal access)
- 67) Do you support the protection and improvement of existing playing pitches, and the creation of new facilities where there is evidence of need?
- 68) How important is it to ensure access to high-quality, affordable indoor sports and leisure facilities for all residents?
- 69) How can we improve access to high-quality, affordable indoor sports and leisure facilities for all residents across the Plan Area?
- 70) Are there any gaps in indoor sports or leisure provision in your area that you would like to see addressed?

71) Do you have any other comments or suggestions about how the Local Plan should address open space, play, sports, and recreation needs in the Plan Area?

Historic Environment

Aim and Objectives

624. The Plan Area is home to an abundance of designated and non-designated heritage assets, all of which contribute towards creating the District's unique character, charm and significance, in addition to its distinctive landscape. As set out in Paragraph 221 of the NPPF:

Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring, and the opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place

625. The council aims to conserve, manage and where possible enhance listed buildings and other built heritage assets in a manner that is appropriate to their significance, such that they remain for generations to come. Further, we aim to ensure that valued local character and distinctiveness is maintained, and that new development is well-designed and is appropriate in scale, density, form and character to its context and landscape setting. This includes recognising and protecting the contribution of registered parks and gardens, historic landscapes, and traditional field patterns to the heritage and identity of the area.

What you told us

626. There was a strong theme throughout most responses that the historical environment should be protected, preserved, maintained, and enhanced. Many felt that heritage asset locations should be enhanced, and that development should be sympathetic.

627. The majority of respondents felt that sympathetic development close to heritage assets was appropriate, though others felt that no development affecting heritage assets was appropriate. Some respondents felt that heritage assets should only be preserved where they were of benefit to the community and funding was available.

628. In terms of securing the long-term use of heritage assets, the majority of respondents felt that heritage assets should be protected, preserved, and maintained. Some suggested greater advertisement and education with historical maps of the forest made available. Some respondents suggested heritage assets be made into 'destinations' with more facilities whilst others felt that heritage should not be overcommercialised. The majority of respondents felt that development should be sympathetic to heritage assets. Some respondents suggested that archaeological sites should not be allocated for development or that developers be responsible for the costs of archaeological surveys and display any notable finds. However, there were other respondents that felt that archaeological sites should not be prioritised for protection.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

629. The NPPF outlines that heritage assets are “an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”. On this basis, it is important that policies be included in the Development Plan which seeks to protect and enhance our heritage assets, ensuring they continue to form an integral and valued part of the District’s unique character.

Policy direction

Strategic Policy on Heritage

630. Proposals affecting heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

631. The Local Plan will introduce a strategic policy on heritage that seeks to conserve and enhance the built, historic and natural environment within New Forest District, including local character, identity, cultural heritage, the variety of local landscapes and the special landscape character of the District. The policy will support such proposals and set out a presumption in favour of the retention and reuse of heritage assets to better conserve and enhance the historic environment.

632. The policy will consider non-designated heritage assets, and how to best preserve and enhance them in a manner appropriate to their significance. The policy will additionally set out how the council will work with partners, developers and the local community to ensure evidence-backed decision making on matters affecting heritage assets.

Development Management Policies on Heritage

633. The Local Plan may introduce development management policies to guide proposals affecting heritage assets, subject to the outcome of the Government's forthcoming consultation on a national suite of Development Management policies. These policies will be designed to complement national policy and provide locally specific guidance where appropriate.

634. Where proposals affect the significance of a heritage asset, applicants will be required to provide clear and proportionate evidence to justify any impacts. This includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, and locally valued rural and industrial heritage features. Policies may also address:

- Change of use and retrofit of heritage assets, ensuring proposals demonstrate a whole-building approach to climate resilience, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, and carbon reduction, while safeguarding heritage significance.
- Reuse of non-designated heritage assets in rural areas, where buildings are capable of conversion without significant structural alteration or replacement.

- Historic rural roads, paths and trackways, with development resisted where it would reduce their biodiversity, landscape, amenity value or historic character. Particular attention will be given to new access points and physical alterations, and to the impacts of additional traffic.

635. These policies will be subject to refinement following national consultation and may evolve to reflect the final scope of national DM policies. The direction of travel outlined here is intended to inform future policy development and stakeholder engagement.

636. Considerations for a policy could include the following:

Policy: Historic Environment

The council will conserve, and where appropriate enhance, the Plan Area's historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with national policy and legislation, including the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework. Development proposals must:

- preserve or, where appropriate, enhance the significance, setting, and contribution of designated heritage assets to local character.
- be supported by evidence proportionate to the scale of development and the significance of the asset, demonstrating:
 - a clear understanding of the asset's significance;
 - the impact of the proposed works on the asset's significance, including its historic fabric and setting;
 - justification for any harm, including how harm has been avoided or minimised, and how public benefits outweigh any residual harm;
 - efforts to retain, repair, or reinstate historic features where appropriate.
- be assessed using a balanced judgement, having regard to the scale of harm and the significance of the asset. Non-designated heritage assets will be identified through recognised sources such as local lists, Historic Landscape Characterisation, or expert evidence.
- prioritise the retention and, where appropriate, reuse of heritage assets over demolition, to better conserve and enhance the historic environment.

- support retrofitting of heritage assets to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, provided proposals take a whole-building approach and do not cause unacceptable harm to the asset's significance, in accordance with Historic England guidance.
- where a change of use is proposed, demonstrate that harm to the asset's significance has been avoided or minimised, and that the building cannot reasonably be used in a less harmful way. Any remaining harm must be justified and weighed against public benefits, including securing the optimum viable use.
- demonstrate the likely impact of development on archaeological remains and include appropriate mitigation measures. Findings from investigations should be made publicly accessible.

Consultation questions

- 72) Do you agree with the suggested policy direction for heritage?
- 73) National guidance sets the overall approach to non-designated heritage assets. How can the Local Plan give appropriate consideration to these?
- 74) Are there any key heritage considerations that you feel we have omitted?

Arts and Culture

Aim and Objectives

637. The council aims to foster a vibrant and inclusive cultural life across the district, recognising that arts and culture are vital to the wellbeing, identity, and economic prosperity of communities. The objectives are to support the creation, protection, and enhancement of cultural facilities and opportunities; to encourage public art and creative placemaking in new development; and to ensure that arts and culture are accessible to all residents and visitors, regardless of age, background, or ability.
638. The policy will seek to support the council's upcoming draft Creative and Cultural Strategy Framework (2026-2032), which aims to strengthen communities, enrich wellbeing and drive sustainable growth. This will be achieved by championing culture alongside nature and using creative and cultural activities to reflect the district's landscapes and distinct identities.

What You Told Us

639. Consultation responses on the Issues and Scope consultation highlighted a range of suggestions for incorporating arts and culture into the Local Plan. Respondents proposed the inclusion of public artworks in town centres, the creation of sculpture parks, and the development of multi-use art venues.
640. There was also support for additional funding and protection for local museums and art galleries. Several respondents felt that funding for arts and culture is often lacking or subject to cuts, and that more should be done to support these sectors. A small number of respondents questioned whether arts and culture should be a priority for the council, suggesting that the focus should remain on housing and essential services. However, there was a clear theme that valued cultural facilities should be supported and protected, and that new provision should be encouraged where possible.

Why is this needed, what is the evidence telling us?

641. A policy on arts and culture is needed to ensure that the district's cultural assets, which are currently spread across the district, are protected and enhanced through collaboration, so that opportunities for creative expression and participation are available to all. National planning policy recognises the importance of cultural wellbeing and the role of cultural facilities in creating healthy, inclusive, and sustainable communities.

642. Arts and culture contribute to economic growth, tourism, education, and social cohesion, and can help to create distinctive and attractive places. Evidence and consultation feedback indicate that there are gaps in provision, risks to existing facilities, and opportunities to do more to support cultural life in the district. Without a clear policy, there is a risk that arts and culture may be overlooked in the face of competing priorities.

Policy direction

643. The council is considering a range of policy options to support arts and culture in the Local Plan. These include:

- Introducing a policy to safeguard existing cultural facilities and support their enhancement or replacement where necessary.
- Encouraging the inclusion of, or contributions towards, public art and creative placemaking in new development through CIL and S106, not only in town centres and public spaces but also along key routes such as promoted long-distance footpaths, gateways, and other strategic locations where art trails, sculptures, or landscape features can enhance character, wayfinding, and community engagement. Which will align with the ambitions of the draft Creative and Cultural Framework Strategy (2026-2032).
- Supporting the development of new cultural venues, such as galleries, performance spaces, and community arts hubs, especially in areas of identified need.
- Working in partnership with local artists, cultural organisations, and communities to promote access to arts and culture for all.
- Considering the use of planning obligations or developer contributions to fund public art or cultural infrastructure as part of major developments.

Consultation questions

- 75) What can the Local Plan do to protect arts and cultural venues like museums, exhibitions and theatres?
- 76) Do you have any other comments or suggestions about how the Local Plan should address arts and culture in the Plan Area?

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Cabinet - 4 February 2026

Draft New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The New Forest does not currently have a Cultural Strategy. This draft Creative and Cultural Framework sets out a shared vision for how culture can strengthen our communities, help drive economic growth and enhance wellbeing. It aims to ensure that cultural activity is inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with local, regional, and national priorities, making the sector more resilient and investable.</p> <p>The framework is not owned by the Council, and therefore it is not responsible for the implementation. However, it will be a member of the Creative Forest Steering Group with a role in monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the outcomes.</p> <p>Following a consultation process, and consideration of the responses, it will be recommended that the framework is adopted and endorsed by all key stakeholders.</p>
Recommendation	That Cabinet approves the draft Creative and Cultural Framework for public consultation.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	Without a framework, opportunities for collaboration, funding, and impact are fragmented, whereas a clear plan helps unlock resources, attract tourism, and embed culture at the heart of place-making and identity.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Dan Poole – Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing

Strategic Director	Peter Matthew – Housing and Communities
Officer Contact	Joanne McClay Service Manager – Environmental and Regulation 02380 285325 joanne.mcclay@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction

1. This report outlines the development of a draft Creative and Cultural Framework, which has been designed to provide a unified approach and strong advocacy for culture across the New Forest over the next 6 years.
2. Although the Council has led the development of this draft framework, it has been shaped through extensive consultation with key stakeholders, Members, the creative sector and the public, to ensure priorities reflect a shared vision for culture in the New Forest.
3. The report and draft framework will be presented to the Housing and Community Panel for review prior to Cabinet consideration. At this stage, recommendations will be sought to proceed with public consultation on the draft framework.
4. An eight-week public consultation will follow. Feedback following the consultation will be reviewed and the framework amended where required, after which Council will be asked to formally adopt the framework.

Background

5. Local Government reorganisation, devolution, and a challenging funding environment make it critical, for the New Forest’s creative and cultural sector to speak with one voice through a shared framework.
6. The New Forest has benefited from significant Arts Council England investment in recent years (£2 million), with the latest success being a £1 million grant for Culture in Common to continue to deliver the Creative People & Places programme from 2026–2029. This marks a new level of cultural activity for the district and highlights the need for a strong strategic framework to sustain and support this growth.

7. Whilst the district has rich cultural assets, they are dispersed, and greater collaboration is needed to maximise impact. Culture is a key driver across multiple policy agendas—health and wellbeing, economic growth, skills development, environmental sustainability, and placemaking—making a unified strategy essential.
8. This framework is underpinned by a robust foundation of evidence drawn from studies commissioned by NFDC, Arts Council England, and Culture in Common in the past 3 years. Together, these reports offer a comprehensive understanding of cultural life in the New Forest—its strengths, challenges, and opportunities. The evidence includes extensive community engagement, detailed data and insights research, and in-depth cultural analysis.
9. The SWOT analysis from this data has given us a clear understanding of our strengths and challenges which has enabled us to identify and prioritise opportunities for growth. By building on our unique cultural assets, strong sense of place, and active networks, while addressing barriers such as access, skills gaps, and resource constraints, we can unlock the full potential of culture in the New Forest. This strategic approach ensures that opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity are maximised to deliver lasting benefits for communities and the local economy.

Overview of the draft Cultural and Creative Framework

10. The mission and vision statements set out a shared ambition for culture in the New Forest—defining what we want to achieve and how we will work together to get there. They provide a clear direction for strengthening the cultural sector, ensuring it is inclusive, resilient, and positioned to deliver social, economic, and environmental benefits for our communities.
11. These shared ambitions are underpinned by core values to ensure culture in the New Forest is inclusive, sustainable, and authentic. There is a commitment to equality and access for all, environmental responsibility and stewardship, and celebrating the area’s distinct heritage and identity. These principles will shape decisions and partnerships, aiming to create a cultural future that is fair, resilient, and rooted in place.
12. The following four ambitions set out how culture in the New Forest will grow and thrive over the coming years. They are:
 - High quality arts and culture for all
 - Drive sector growth through ambitious partnerships
 - Champion culture and creativity in balance with nature

- Culture and creativity for health and wellbeing
13. The draft Framework is aligned with local, regional, and national priorities, ensuring culture contributes to health, wellbeing, skills, sustainability, and economic growth. It reflects priorities in the Councils Corporate Plan and the National Park's Partnership Plan while connecting to national frameworks such as Arts Council England's *Let's Create* and the Creative Health agenda.
 14. The draft is attached (**Appendix 1**).

Initial Consultation and Review

15. In June and July 2024 Chris Rolls from Collective Sense was engaged by NFDC and Culture in Common to carry out action research public engagement activity with different stakeholder and community groups across the New Forest.
16. The workshops were Town and Parish Councillors, after school workshop with young people and 5 community engagement sessions in Totton and Eling, Waterside – Fawley, Lyndhurst, New Milton and Ringwood.
17. Attendees were invited to share their views on the concept of culture, its potential to support priority areas within the corporate plan, and the local challenges facing arts and culture. They also contributed ideas and solutions to address these challenges. Recommendations from these workshops have informed the foundations of this framework.
18. The Cultural Development Manager previously employed by NFDC played a key role in drafting this framework.
19. The strategic working group (members from NFDC, NFNPA, St Barbes, Culture in Common, Hampshire Cultural Trust) was reconvened to review the final draft of the cultural framework before public consultation. This feedback has helped refine the document and shape future actions, ensuring it reflects shared priorities and sector needs.

Governance and Action Plan

20. Governance of the framework will sit with the Creative Forest Steering Group, a new structure which will bring together representatives from across the district's cultural ecosystem. The group will include members from each of the key engagement groups (page 20 of the draft Framework) meeting twice yearly to review progress, share insight and oversee implementation.

21. It will be coordinated by Creative Forest (formerly Folio), which is currently reorganising and building capacity following new Arts Council England investment in October 2025. Creative Forest will continue to champion and advocate for culture, connect and support creative activity across the district, and coordinate monitoring of the New Forest Cultural Framework and its Action Plan.
22. A single Action Plan will set out the shared programme of activity for the district. It will be held and overseen by the Creative Forest Compact, ensuring accountability, alignment and collaboration across all partners. The group will review progress and update the plan regularly, supporting a joined-up approach to cultural development and impact reporting.
23. NFDC's role will be to champion culture at a strategic level for our communities, act as an active partner within Creative Forest, and use the framework as guiding principles for funding decisions. We will also report annually on our actions to evidence impact and progress against the framework.
24. A one page cultural framework summary is also attached (Appendix 2).

Corporate plan priorities

25. Adoption of the Creative and Cultural Framework for the New Forest District is a priority for the Council and relates to the following corporate priority themes.
26. **Theme:**
Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives and protecting our climate.
Shaping our place now and for future generations.
Championing skills and access to job opportunities.
27. **Corporate Plan Objective:**
Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.
28. **Service Objective:**
Adoption and support partners in the implementation of a Cultural Framework for the New Forest.

Options appraisal

29. **Option 1:**
It is recommended that Cabinet approves the draft Creative and Cultural Framework and recommend that it progresses to public consultation. It is noted that publication of the framework, and

subsequent handover to the cultural sector to deliver its aims, meets with the council's reprioritisation of corporate plan objectives.

30. Option 2:

The alternative is to not prioritise the publication of the Creative and Cultural Framework. However, significant work has been undertaken in developing this with partners and there would be risks to our communities, the cultural sector and the council's reputation in not progressing this framework. This option was not considered appropriate given the Council's corporate plan commitments to the health of its residents and to leaving a cultural legacy for the district.

Consultation undertaken

31. In summer 2024, NFDC and Culture in Common commissioned Chris Rolls to lead action research and public engagement through workshops with Councillors, young people, and community groups across the district. These sessions explored the role of culture, local challenges, and solutions, with recommendations forming the foundation of the framework. This final draft was refined through input from the strategic working group, ensuring it reflects shared priorities and sector needs.
32. There is no legal requirement to consult further, however it is recommended prior to approval. All comments received will be reviewed and the draft Framework amended as required prior to final adoption.
33. The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the draft Framework and supported it for public consultation.

Financial and resource implications

34. The cost to develop the draft Creative and Cultural Framework has been funded from existing budgets and with funding from Arts Council England of £15,000. Implementation of the framework and action plan will be by the Creative Cultural Compact.
35. CIL funding provided for Arts and Cultural projects and programmes across the New Forest will be assessed in line with the ambitions in Cultural Framework.

Legal implications

36. It is not a statutory requirement for councils to have a cultural strategy. However, The Council has identified the need for this

Cultural Framework to deliver the priorities in the Corporate Plan and councils also have a general duty under the Local Government Act 2000 and 1999 to promote the economic, social, and environmental well-being of their area. The cultural framework can be used as evidence of fulfilling these duties.

Risk assessment

37. There is no requirement for the council to undertake a formal risk assessment. Governance of the Framework will be handed to Creative Forest with the support of implementation, monitoring and reporting through a Creative Forest Compact.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

38. The draft cultural framework champions creativity in harmony with the natural environment, embedding sustainability and environmental consciousness at the heart of cultural activity. By celebrating the New Forest's landscapes and biodiversity, it promotes sustainable practices, inspires stewardship, and demonstrates how cultural life can protect and enhance the places we live. This approach ensures that creativity and nature thrive together, positioning the New Forest as a leader in low-impact cultural delivery and environmental responsibility.

Equalities implications

39. The draft framework promotes Equality, Inclusivity, and Access by ensuring cultural opportunities are open to all, regardless of background, age, or circumstance. By leading the way in rural co-creation, it tackles isolation and geographic barriers, bringing culture to underserved communities through mobile, touring, and participatory models. These actions improve health and wellbeing, foster social cohesion, and create a more equitable cultural ecosystem where everyone can engage, contribute, and benefit.

Crime and disorder implications

40. A cultural framework can help reduce crime and disorder by fostering pride in place and a strong sense of identity, which are proven drivers of community cohesion and resilience. When people feel connected to their local heritage and cultural life, they are more likely to engage positively with their community, reducing isolation and anti-social behaviour. Cultural initiatives—such as festivals, creative projects, and heritage activities—create shared experiences, strengthen social bonds, and give residents a stake in their environment, which in turn discourages vandalism, crime, and disorder by promoting belonging and responsibility.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

41. No specific implications.

New Forest National Park implications

42. Ambition 3: in the Framework is to Champion culture and creativity in balance with nature and the Creative and Cultural Framework covers both the New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park areas.

43. The inclusion of the New Forest National Park in the development and initial review of the Framework has ensured their priorities are addressed and they will be a key member on the future steering group for development of the action plan and governance.

Conclusion

44. The draft Framework has been consulted on with many stakeholders and we are now seeking approval to consult more widely on the document.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Draft Creative and Cultural Framework
Appendix 2 - One page cultural framework summary

Background Papers:

None



New Forest

Creative and Cultural Framework

2026–2032

A shared vision for culture & creativity across the New Forest district



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During our community consultations, we collaborated with local poets to co-create a series of poems that captured local voices and experiences. These poems reflect the pride, identity, and shared hopes of people across the New Forest, and excerpts feature throughout this strategy.

“Everyone is invited, everywhere is invited to open their doors and join the chorus of creativity learning laughter and celebrating song as libraries and live spaces erupt alike in art and joy as fabulous fringe fuels fun all across the forest.”

Poem excerpt co-created by Steven Mizen and residents of Totton



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New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Commissioned by New Forest District Council and Arts Council England

Written by Kealy Whenray (Consultant) | Designed by Absolute Graphics

Foreword

Cllr Dan Poole
Portfolio Holder Housing and Communities NFDC



Alison Barnes
Chief Executive New Forest National Park Authority



Maria Ragan
Director St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery and Creative Forest Partner



Paul Sapwell
Chief Executive Hampshire Culture Trust



Jacqui Ibbotson
Programme Director Culture in Common



Introduction

The New Forest District is a landscape of striking contrasts, with ancient woodland and open heathland alongside working ports and modern industry, coastal villages beside historic market towns, and communities that range from rural hamlets to urban edges. At its heart lies the New Forest National Park, a designated protected landscape of global significance for its natural beauty, biodiversity and cultural heritage. For centuries it has been shaped by the practice of commoning, a unique way of life that continues to define local identity, stewardship and connection to place.

Home to more than 170,000 residents, the district is both historic and dynamic, a place where deep-rooted traditions sit alongside innovation and creativity. Culture here reflects this diversity. It can be found in festivals, community events, heritage sites, museums and galleries, as well as through a growing network of creative enterprises, studios and independent practitioners. From village halls and forest clearings to arts centres, shipyards and coastlines, creativity thrives in unexpected places, connecting people across generations, sectors and landscapes.

The population of the New Forest is older than the national average, with nearly a quarter aged 65 or over. Around 60 per cent of residents live in rural villages, hamlets or dispersed settlements, shaping both the rhythm of community life and access to services. The area has a smaller proportion of young people and working-age residents, and many local businesses face challenges in attracting and retaining younger talent, including within the creative and cultural industries. These dynamics create both challenges and opportunities, balancing conservation and change, protecting heritage while embracing innovation, and ensuring that culture remains relevant, inclusive and future-focused.



The Mycelium Network

In nature, trees don't stand alone. Beneath the forest floor, a hidden web of mycelium connects roots, passing nutrients, information, and energy across the whole ecosystem.

We see culture in the New Forest in the same way. We are stronger as a network of networks, creative practitioners, organisations, community groups, schools, and partners; all connected, all sharing, all supporting each other, working together.

Rather than relying on one big tree or central trunk, our strength lies in the richness of the whole forest. Each connection makes the system healthier, more resilient, and more creative.

Together, like the mycelium, we can make the New Forest's cultural life grow and thrive in ways no single organisation could achieve alone.

Executive Summary

Culture and creativity are vital to the New Forest's identity, wellbeing, and prosperity. They connect communities, support the visitor economy, nurture talent, and enrich everyday life. This strategy sets out a shared vision for how culture will strengthen our district, ensuring it is locally grounded, regionally connected, and nationally recognised.

Like the mycelium that connects and sustains a forest, the New Forest's cultural strength comes from being a network of networks; creative practitioners, organisations, communities, businesses and partners working together. This collective approach makes our cultural life more resilient, more creative, and better able to deliver for our people and place.

Why now?

- Local Government Reorganisation, devolution, and a challenging funding landscape makes it essential that the New Forest Creative and Cultural sector speak with one voice.
- The district's cultural assets are rich but dispersed, and collaboration is needed to maximise impact.
- Culture delivers across key policy agendas: health and wellbeing, economic growth, skills, environment, and place.

Our vision

A thriving New Forest where culture and creativity strengthen community, enrich wellbeing, and drive sustainable growth.

Our four ambitions

- 1. High-quality arts and culture for all**
Position the New Forest as a place where everyone can experience and contribute to exceptional, high-quality creative and cultural activity – in ways that reflect the district's landscapes, communities, and distinct identity.
- 2. Drive sector growth through ambitious partnerships**
We will strengthen the creative economy by building partnerships, developing career pathways, and embedding culture in development and investment. This will grow prosperity, support the visitor economy, and make the New Forest a thriving place to live and work as a creative.
- 3. Champion culture in balance with nature**
We will embed sustainability in cultural delivery, create opportunities that connect people with the Forest's landscapes, and work with environmental partners. Culture will support stewardship of the natural environment and demonstrate national leadership in sustainable practice.
- 4. Culture for health and wellbeing**
We will place culture at the heart of healthier communities, tackling isolation, improving mental and physical health, and strengthening resilience. By aligning with health and care partners, culture can contribute to preventative outcomes and assist in reducing pressures on services.

How we will deliver

- Creative Forest will oversee delivery, ensuring accountability and alignment with local, regional, and national priorities.
- Actions are designed to be high-level, district-wide, and achievable within existing resources, enabling many organisations and businesses to align and contribute existing and new projects and programmes.
- Shared approaches to evidence and impact will underpin all ambitions, demonstrating the collective value of culture to our people, place, economy, environment, and health.

A Definition of Culture and Creativity

We align with Arts Council England's definition of culture and creativity and adopt this as the basis for our own strategy.

Our definition of culture

'Culture' means many things to many people and is sometimes used to describe food, religion or heritage. In this strategy, we use it to describe a wide range of activity across artforms and organisations: collections, combined arts, dance, libraries, literature, museums, music, theatre and the visual arts.

By bringing these activities together under the single term 'culture', rather than separating them out as 'the arts', 'museums' or 'libraries', we aim to reflect the full breadth of creative life in the New Forest. Research and consultation for this strategy also showed that the public often associate the word 'the arts' narrowly with classical music, opera, ballet or fine art, so a broader term helps ensure inclusivity.

We are using the term creative practitioners as an umbrella for everyone who creates, interprets or reshapes cultural content, rather than using the word 'artist' alone.

Our definition of creativity

'Creativity' describes the process of applying knowledge, skills and imagination to bring something new into being.

Although creativity is part of everyday life, in this strategy we use it specifically to describe the process of making, producing or taking part in cultural activity. We also recognise that traditional boundaries between artforms are dissolving as new technologies and social changes reshape how culture is created and shared.

We welcome these shifts, which are likely to accelerate in the coming decade, and will remain flexible and open to the evolving forms of cultural activity that emerge.

Source: Arts Council England.



Stretching down the Solent along the Waterside you have stunning places Fawley, Calshot, Hythe and many more villages and towns along way picturesque postcards thriving in the Solent spray.'

Poem excerpt co-created by Steven Mizen with residents from the Waterside



Creativity and Culture in the New Forest – Current Picture

The New Forest has a diverse cultural and creative ecology, though it is dispersed and often fragile. Together these assets represent a significant but under-recognised strength for the district.

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Arts Centres & Venues
such as Forest Arts Centre (New Milton), Hanger Farm Arts Centre (Totton), SPUDWORKS (Sway) and CODA Music and Art Trust (New Milton).

Creative People & Places (CPP):
Culture in Common, supporting community-led projects and participation. With over £2million of Arts Council England investment since 2022.

Many Festivals & Events such as New Forest Show, Milford Music Festival, local carnivals and village shows.

Museums & Heritage Sites
such as St Barbe Museum & Art Gallery, Hurst Castle, Buckler's Hard, New Forest Heritage Centre.

A network of **libraries & community hubs** across towns and villages, many hosting cultural activity.

Employment is often freelance, with many senior-level practitioners choosing to live in the Forest but working regionally/nationally.

The creative and cultural economy contributes around **8% of local GVA**, comparable in scale to construction, manufacturing and business administration, and continues to grow at a faster rate than all three.

Around **370 creative businesses**, the highest concentration in the Solent region.

The sector is dominated by **sole traders and microbusinesses**, especially in crafts, design, film, and digital content.

Home to the National Motor Museum, a large scale cultural institution, plus a strong patchwork of **small creative hubs, studios, rehearsal spaces and galleries**.

Infrastructure challenges include lack of affordable workspaces and studios, limited digital capacity, and transport barriers that restrict access.

Creative Forest network, formerly Folio, connects creative practitioners, venues and organisations across the district.

Engagement is uneven: Lymington and central Forest areas skew averages upwards, while Totton, Waterside and New Milton show lower participation.

The district contributes to the **Southampton creative cluster**, with cross-boundary flows of audiences, workers and opportunities.

A high number of **community clubs, associations and voluntary groups** underpin the district's cultural life; from choirs, amateur dramatics, bands and dance schools to village halls

This grassroots energy **sustains many local cultural assets** and provides vital social connections, especially in rural communities.

Volunteering has long been a defining feature of the New Forest, sustaining events, venues, museums, festivals and local traditions. However, volunteer numbers are in decline, creating a significant threat to the future viability.

Cultural participation is **above national averages:** 95% of residents engaged with arts in the past year vs. 90% England average.

Residents show the strongest appetite for more **live music (66%)** and **cinema (43%)**, with both seen as major gaps in the current offer. Alongside this, people value opportunities for **outdoor cultural activities**.

Organisations & Provision

Creative & Cultural Businesses

Infrastructure and Networks

Community & Voluntary Activity

Participation & Demand

A Case for Creativity and Culture

This strategy is built on a strong foundation of evidence gathered across three major studies carried out between 2022 and 2025, commissioned by NFDC, Arts Council England and Culture in Common. Together, these reports provide a comprehensive picture of cultural life in the New Forest, its strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

Community consultation

(Forging Culture Rights in the New Forest, 2024) captured the voices of residents, councillors, young people and sector professionals exploring how local people experience culture, what they value, and what they want for the future.

Data and insights research

(New Forest Culture Insights Report, 2024) provided detailed evidence on creative industries, workforce, participation patterns, and the wider impacts of culture on economy, health, and place.

Cultural situational analysis

(Culture in Common Situational Analysis, 2022–23) mapped the wider demographic, geographic, and cultural landscape of the district, identifying key trends, gaps, and barriers to engagement.

Taken together, these reports reveal a consistent set of themes: the power of culture to shape identity and wellbeing; uneven access and participation across the district; pressures from an ageing population, rurality, and transport; and the need for stronger collaboration, innovation, and sustainability.

This evidence base underpins the case for culture in the New Forest; demonstrating why investment in cultural life matters, how it contributes to health, wellbeing, economy, tourism, and community cohesion, and why now is the right time to act.

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What We've Learnt



- Unique natural environment and heritage, with the New Forest's landscapes, history, and traditions central to local identity and provide a powerful cultural brand.
- Our distinct sense of place; a nationally recognised name associated with quality of life, creativity, and stewardship of the natural world.
- Strong community pride and participation with residents valuing their local identity, volunteering, and community-led events such as carnivals, fetes, and shows.
- Rich and varied cultural assets, from museums and heritage sites to creative hubs, alongside iconic events.
- Dispersed but diverse provision. Cultural activity exists in many towns and villages, offering breadth across the district even if geographically spread.
- A growing creative economy. The New Forest has the highest concentration of creative businesses in the Solent region, driven by a strong freelance and microbusiness base.
- Skilled and active creative practitioners such as artists, makers and producers contribute to a high-quality, locally rooted creative scene with national connections.
- Plenty of outdoor and participatory culture, our festivals, carnivals, and open-air events are deeply embedded in local life and celebrated across generations.
- Established networks and partnerships such as Creative Forest and Culture in Common who have strengthened coordination, capacity, and shared learning.
- Appetite for everyday creativity. Residents express a strong desire for participatory and hands-on cultural experiences, reflecting an inclusive, community-driven cultural spirit.



- Ageing population, shrinking working-age group, and limited ethnic diversity.
- High levels of loneliness, long-term health conditions, and poor mental health, particularly among young and older residents.
- Disparities between high-engagement areas (e.g. Lymington) and low-engagement areas (e.g. Totton, Waterside, New Milton).
- Limited public transport, long travel times, and lack of confidence in travelling at night.
- Few dedicated spaces, activities, or career pathways for young people; many feel there is "nothing for them."
- Many assets but poorly connected; weak cross-sector collaboration; limited data capture and sharing.
- Employers highlight skills shortages (digital, project management, leadership); high housing costs and limited career routes make it hard to retain creative talent.
- Risk of exclusion or narrow definitions of culture; limited representation of diverse narratives and voices.
- Limited financial capacity and infrastructure to deliver bold ambitions.



- Use the New Forest's landscapes, heritage, and traditions as the foundation for cultural identity, storytelling, and tourism.
- Expand programmes tackling isolation, supporting mental health, and building intergenerational/community bonds.
- Focus new provision in areas with low engagement, improving access through mobile, touring, and pop-up models.
- Invest in youth-led spaces, creative opportunities, and skills pathways; create career routes to retain local talent.
- Build on networks (e.g. FOLIO), empower councillors and local champions, and encourage shared leadership of strategy
- Support microbusinesses and freelancers, align with Solent Creative Strategy, and foster sustainable creative enterprise.
- Position the New Forest as a national exemplar for embedding environmental awareness and low-impact cultural practice.
- Embrace everyday creativity, new artforms, and co-creation to broaden participation and reflect a wider range of voices.
- Use technology to reach isolated communities, expand access, and engage new audiences while addressing the digital divide.
- Use arts and culture to help people explore, communicate and make sense of complex issues, from global challenges to local change, strengthening empathy, dialogue and shared perspective.

Aligning with Local, Regional and National Strategy

Our evidence base aligns strongly with the policy local, regional and national landscape and provides a clear route to delivery.

LOCAL (New Forest)

New Forest District Council – Corporate Plan

Our actions contribute to community wellbeing, resilient places, and a vibrant local economy. We will focus on equitable access, achieving health and wellbeing outcomes, town/village vitality, and skills pathways that support local businesses and freelancers.

New Forest National Park Authority – Partnership Plan

We will connect culture with nature recovery, landscape stewardship, sustainable tourism, and access for all. Programming will champion environmental awareness and low-impact delivery models, using outdoor and place-based work to deepen people's relationship with the Forest.

Solent Cultural Plan

We will plug the New Forest into the Solent's creative cluster, supporting microbusinesses and freelancers, growing the talent pipeline, improving workspace and connectivity, and brokering

REGIONAL (Hampshire)

Hampshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2035

The Hampshire strategy emphasises reducing inequalities, using a community asset approach, and embedding health across all policies. Our strategy aligns by reinforcing culture's role in promoting equity, place-based strengths, and wellbeing across Hampshire's communities.

Cultural Connects – Hampshire Cultural Trust

We'll align with county-wide ambitions to coordinate cultural delivery, share learning and resources, and evidence impact, positioning the New Forest as a strong contributor to a joined-up Hampshire offer.

NATIONAL (UK wide)

Arts Council England - Let's Create

We will deliver against ACE's three outcomes Creative People, Cultural Communities, a Creative & Cultural country and embed the four Investment Principles of Inclusivity & Relevance, Environmental Responsibility, Ambition & Quality, Dynamism. Priorities include youth-led opportunities, co-creation with underserved places and sector capacity-building through partnerships and skills.

National Centre for Creative Health - Creative Health Review

We align with the National Creative Health agenda, which calls for creativity to be embedded across health and social care to reduce inequalities, improve quality of life, and relieve pressure on services. Our strategy responds by strengthening cultural partnerships with health and care providers, ensuring creative opportunities contribute directly to healthier, more connected communities.



Readiness for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

To represent the New Forest effectively in upcoming LGR discussions, we will:

- **Speak with one voice:** Creative Forest will convene cultural stakeholders to ensure the sector is represented clearly and efficiently, articulating shared priorities and pipeline projects aligned to ACE, NFDC, NFNPA, Solent, and Hampshire.
- **Show clear alignment:** Keep up to date with the changing regional and national policy landscape and respond appropriately, ensuring that local priorities remain connected to wider agendas such as wellbeing, engagement, skills, sustainability, and the visitor economy.
- **Evidence impact:** Using this shared strategic framework and Action Plan for evaluation, we will produce an annual impact report for the district that demonstrates how culture delivers for people, place, economy, environment, and health.

We will ensure the New Forest has an investable cultural proposition that is locally grounded, regionally connected, and nationally aligned, ready to shape and thrive within any new governance arrangements.



“ Tweenies need to try out things, local and low cost
You can't get there by pony if there ain't no car or bus.
Mentors share their knowledge "light attracting light"
yes, it's rough around the edges but with help we'll get it right
*Poem excerpt co-created by Damian Kelly-Basher
and residents of Lyndhurst* ”



The Impact of Culture

The cultural sector plays a vital role in shaping the future of the New Forest. Its impact reaches beyond the arts, touching every aspect of life, place, and community. By nurturing creativity and cultural activity, we can deliver meaningful benefits across five key areas:



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Our Vision and Mission

Statement

A thriving New Forest where culture and creativity strengthen community, enrich wellbeing, and drive sustainable growth.

Vision

Our vision is for the New Forest to be a place where culture and creativity flourish at the heart of community life. The cultural sector will celebrate the Forest's unique heritage and identity, enrich everyday experiences, and open up opportunities for all. By strengthening cultural participation and supporting creative practitioners and organisations, we will drive economic growth, attract and sustain tourism, and enhance the health, wellbeing, and cohesion of our communities. Through strong partnerships and shared ambition, we will nurture an inclusive and sustainable cultural ecosystem that ensures the New Forest is known as a place where creativity, nature, and people thrive together.

Mission

Our mission is to strengthen the New Forest's cultural sector for the benefit of our people and place, by working collectively with creative practitioners, organisations, and communities. By positioning ourselves as a united cultural voice ahead of local government reorganisation, we will ensure our sector is visible, resilient, and ready to play a central role in shaping the future of the New Forest.



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Our Values

Our mission is underpinned by a set of core values that shape the way we work and the outcomes we seek to achieve. These principles ensure that culture in the New Forest is not only vibrant, but also fair, sustainable, and rooted in place. They guide our decisions, partnerships, and cultural activities, ensuring the New Forest's cultural future is inclusive, resilient, and authentic.

Equality, Inclusivity and Access

We believe culture should belong to everyone. We are committed to removing barriers and ensuring opportunities for participation, expression, and enjoyment are open to all people, regardless of background, race, age, or circumstance.

Environmental Sustainability and Stewardship

We are dedicated to building a cultural sector that is environmentally responsible and future-focused, protecting the Forest's landscapes and communities for generations to come.

Celebrating our Distinct Local Identity

We are rooted in the uniqueness and special nature of the New Forest. Our work celebrates the area's diverse communities, heritage, and creativity, fostering pride of place and strengthening social bonds.

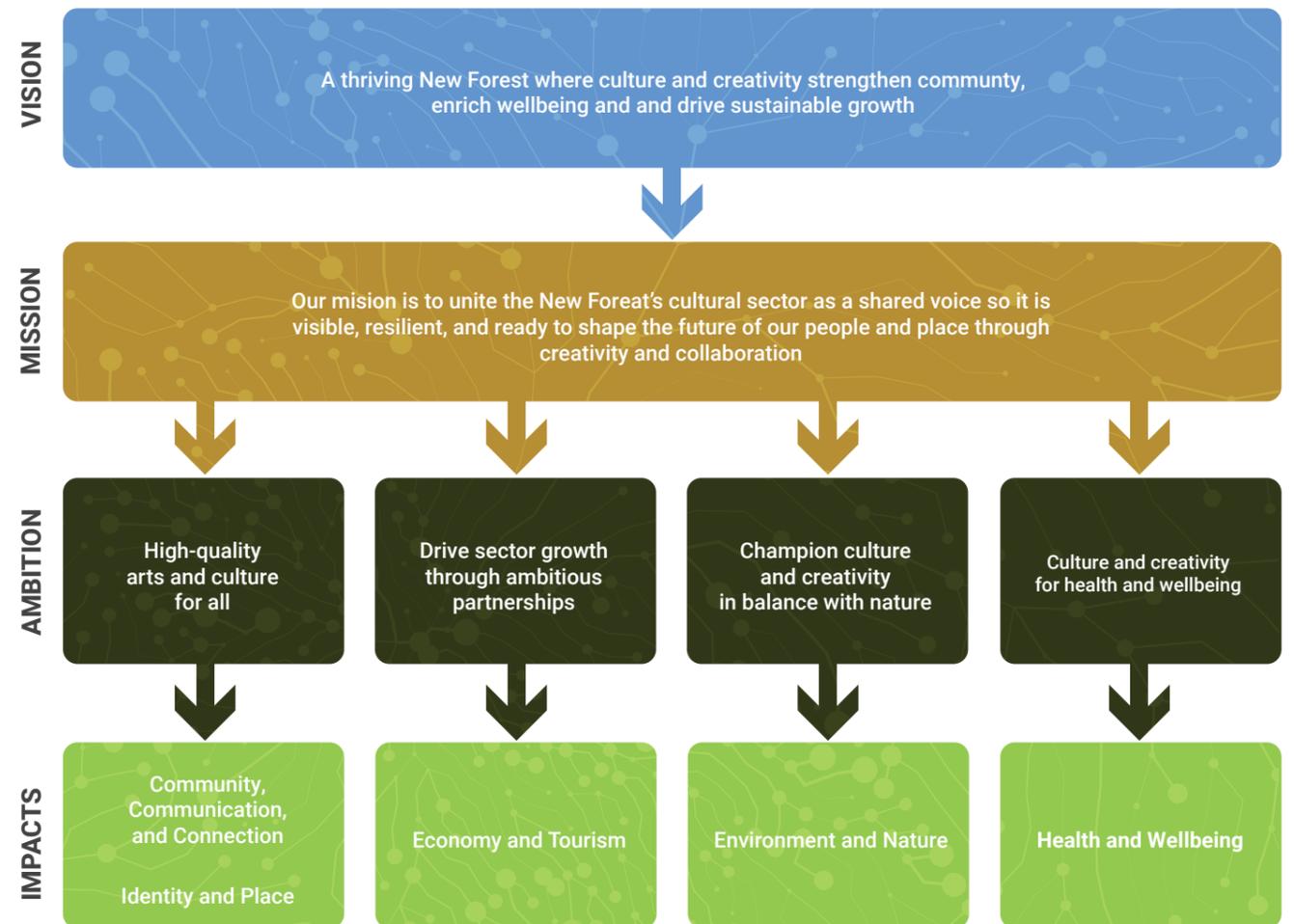


“ Let’s knead the dough until it starts to rise.
 Let’s warm up the cold spots be pleasantly surprised
 when we flood the algorithms with solutions and good news
 and when people create the changes we’ll re-invent, continue..re-invent, continue.
 Poem excerpt co-created by Damian Kelly-Basher and residents of Ringwood ”

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Our Ambitions

The following four ambitions set out how culture in the New Forest will grow and thrive over the coming years. Developed from community consultation, local insight, and national policy, they respond directly to the district's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Together they provide a clear framework for action: positioning the New Forest as a leader in rural co-creation, driving innovation through ambitious partnerships, championing culture in balance with nature, and harnessing culture to improve health and wellbeing.



Ambition 1: High-quality arts and culture for all

Position the New Forest as a place where everyone can experience and contribute to exceptional, high-quality creative and cultural activity – in ways that reflect the district’s landscapes, communities, and distinct identity. We will champion excellence and inclusion side by side: ensuring that outstanding creative work is made with, by and for local people, and that every resident has the opportunity to take part, experience, and feel pride in the cultural life of their place. Culture in the New Forest will be ambitious, participatory, and rooted in place – connecting high-calibre artists and organisations with communities, and demonstrating how rural areas can lead in quality as well as innovation.

What we know:



Strong community pride, active volunteering, outdoor culture, and deep local identity.



Uneven participation, underserved young people, narrow definitions of culture, limited inclusion.



Empower communities and young people, diversify cultural narratives, broaden participation, grow ambition and quality.

Our actions:

- **Lead the way in rural co-creation** – embedding high-quality creative practice within communities through shared making, learning, and collaboration.
- **Take culture out into communities** through pop-ups, touring, and local activity, meeting people where they are and making participation easy and accessible.
- **Support creative ambition** by connecting local talent with professional artists, training, and commissioning opportunities that raise quality and confidence.
- **Celebrate local stories and traditions** through collaborative projects that connect cultural and community partners, linking identity with placemaking.
- **Adopt shared ways of evidencing community impact** to demonstrate how high-quality rural culture enriches lives and strengthens place.

What is co-creation?

Co-creation is about working together as equals. Creative practitioners and communities share ideas, skills and decisions to create something meaningful. It is built on trust and active listening, so that everyone involved feels ownership, pride and value in what is made.

“If “teamwork is dreamwork” imagine a new pronoun, beyond ‘me’ or ‘us & them’, “Hi, I’m ‘Co’ for co-operate, co-create, co-evolve, letting all ideas grow at the same time.
Poem excerpt co-created by Damian Kelly-Basher and residents of New Milton”

Ambition 2: Drive sector growth through ambitious partnerships

Grow the New Forest’s cultural and creative economy through ambitious partnerships that unlock investment, drive innovation and build resilience. By connecting organisations, venues, and businesses we will amplify impact, strengthen digital capability, and create new opportunities for learning and collaboration. Through shared training, aligned infrastructure, and coordinated communication, we will support a thriving, visible, and future-ready cultural sector that contributes to local vitality, supports the visitor economy, and makes the New Forest a great place to live and work as a creative.

What we know:



Rich but dispersed cultural assets, growing creative economy, existing networks like Creative Forest.



Fragmented sector, weak collaboration, limited data and insight, poor digital connectivity and communications, resource constraints.



Strengthen collaboration, connect venues and organisations, align training and skills, grow the creative economy, share knowledge and digital innovation.

Our actions:

- **Broker cross-sector collaborations linking culture** with business, tourism, environment, and education initiatives to unlock new investment and innovation.
- **Align training and skills programmes across artforms and sectors** – including creative, digital, tourism, and green industries – to create a coherent local talent pipeline.
- **Develop creative career pathways for young people and emerging talent**, investing in a skills audit and data-led approach to future workforce planning.
- **Strengthen digital infrastructure and communications**, improving connectivity, data sharing, and digital literacy across cultural organisations and freelancers.
- **Work with partners to embed culture from the outset** in district development plans, business growth initiatives, and regional investment projects to ensure culture shapes long-term prosperity.
- **Establish shared measures for data and insight** to build a collective evidence base on the cultural sector’s economic and social value, including its impact on the visitor economy and workforce development.



Ambition 3: Champion culture and creativity in balance with nature

Embed sustainability and environmental consciousness at the heart of cultural activity, ensuring creativity and nature thrive together. By celebrating the Forest's unique landscapes and biodiversity, we will promote sustainable practice, inspire stewardship of the natural environment, and show how cultural life can protect and enhance the places we live in.

What we know:



National Park status, global natural heritage and biodiversity.



Transport barriers, environmental pressures, limited sustainable practice in cultural delivery.



Embed environmental stewardship, use outdoor and place-based culture, lead nationally on low-impact cultural practice.

Our actions:

- Embed environmental responsibility across cultural practice, ensuring sustainability and low-impact delivery are integral to how cultural activity is planned, produced and experienced across the New Forest.
- **Champion place-based cultural work rooted in landscape and ecology**, using creativity to celebrate the Forest's natural environment, deepen connection to place, and inspire care for its biodiversity and heritage.
- **Strengthen culture-nature partnerships**, aligning cultural organisations with environmental, conservation, tourism and land-management partners to support shared goals for stewardship and sustainable visitor experience.
- **Build shared understanding and evidence of environmental impact**, capturing learning, data and stories that show how cultural activity supports environmental awareness, behavior change and long-term protection of place.



Ambition 4: Culture and creativity for health and wellbeing

Build healthier, more connected communities across the New Forest by placing culture at the heart of wellbeing. Cultural programmes support people of all ages – tackling isolation and loneliness, improving mental health, and encouraging physical activity. By bringing people together through shared creative experiences, culture can foster stronger relationships, resilience, and a greater sense of belonging. Crucially, culture also delivers preventative benefits – helping to reduce health inequalities, ease pressure on services, and support people to live well for longer.

What we know:



Strong sense of community pride, volunteering, and appetite for participatory culture.



Higher levels of loneliness and isolation among older residents; significant health inequalities; limited provision for mental health support through culture.



Expand cultural programmes that reduce isolation, support mental and physical wellbeing, and create intergenerational connections. Strengthen partnerships with health, care, and voluntary sectors to embed culture as part of local wellbeing strategies.

Our actions:

- **Position culture at the heart of wellbeing**, recognising creativity as a vital contributor to physical and mental health, prevention, and quality of life for people of all ages across the New Forest.
- **Connect cultural projects with health and care partners**, including social prescribing, care networks and voluntary sector organisations, to embed culture within preventative health and wellbeing agendas.
- **Promote inclusive and accessible cultural opportunities**, encouraging everyday creativity, offering low-cost or free entry points, and ensuring people can take part in ways that support their wellbeing and life circumstances.
- **Bring people together through shared creative experiences**, strengthening connection, belonging and resilience by reducing loneliness, supporting intergenerational activity and building stronger community relationships.
- **Build shared understanding and evidence of culture's preventative value**, demonstrating how cultural participation supports healthier lives, reduces pressure on services and contributes to long-term wellbeing outcomes.

“

Overcoming challenges, daily struggles of accessibility and aging through the kindness of creativity sending sparks of incredible colour through brilliant, mindful expression

Poem excerpt co-created by Steven Mizen and residents of Totton

”



Governance

Governance of the strategy will sit with Creative Forest (formerly Folio), a new structure bringing together representatives from across the district's cultural ecosystem. Creative Forest will include members from each of the key engagement groups, meeting twice yearly to review progress, share insight and oversee implementation. It will be coordinated by Creative Forest, which is currently reorganising and building capacity following new Arts Council England investment in October 2025. Creative Forest will continue to champion and advocate for culture, connect and support creative activity across the district, and coordinate monitoring of the New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework and its Action Plan.

The governance model has three tiers of engagement:

Creative Forest

Representatives from each engagement group will make up the Creative Forest, managing governance, monitoring and development of the New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework.

1

Creative Forest Partners

A core group of cultural organisations who provide leadership, delivery capacity, and act as the backbone of the cultural ecology in the district:

- African Activities
- Coda Music & Arts Trust
- Fluid Motion Theatre Company
- Forest Arts Centre
- Forest Forge Theatre Company
- New Forest Heritage Centre
- SPUD
- St Barbe Museum & Art Gallery

2

Key Stakeholders

Strategic partners who connect culture to wider agendas including health, wellbeing, economy, environment, and education:

- Arts Council England
- Energize Me / Culture in Common
- Hampshire Cultural Trust (HCT)
- New Forest District Council (NFDC)
- New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA)

3

Wider Network

A broad network of over 200 individual creative practitioners, community groups, and cultural organisations across the New Forest who contribute to cultural life, feed into planning and evaluation, and collaborate on delivery.

Looking ahead, there are ambitions to develop a cross-sector engagement plan that introduces key stakeholders from health, education, tourism, business, public services, and community charities. This will strengthen collaboration, embed culture within wider systems of policy and practice, and open up new opportunities for investment and impact.

Creative Forest will convene these groups to provide strategic leadership, coordination, and advocacy, ensuring alignment with local, regional and national priorities. It will also oversee monitoring, evaluation and impact reporting, working to embed culture as a driver of wellbeing, identity, economic growth and sustainability across the district.

During uncertain times, and with impending local government reorganisation, Creative Forest will remain responsive and agile while maintaining integrity, and its commitment to creativity and culture. Each year at the time of impact reporting, Creative Forest, together with key stakeholders, will review the effectiveness and relevance of the strategy. This process will ensure that progress is measured, learning is shared, and the strategy is updated as required to remain responsive to local needs and changing circumstances.



Action Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

Our four ambitions provide a clear framework for culture in the New Forest. They are more than statements of intent: they shape how we work, where we focus effort, and how we define success. This framework ensures that ambitions translate into coordinated action and measurable impact across the district.

A single Action Plan will set out the shared programme of activity for the district. It will be held and overseen by Creative Forest, ensuring accountability, alignment and collaboration across all partners. Creative Forest will review progress and update the plan regularly, supporting a joined-up approach to cultural development and impact reporting.

Each ambition will be supported by specific actions developed with communities, cultural organisations and stakeholders, identifying who will lead, when activity will take place and what difference it will make. Many of these activities are already happening across the district but lack a clear framework for visibility, coordination and shared impact measurement. Recognising the importance of demonstrating value, an annual impact report will evidence how culture contributes to people, place, economy, environment and health, helping to strengthen cross-sector partnerships and attract future investment.

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Appendix

[Culture in Common – Situational Analysis \(2022–23\)](#)

[Forging Culture Rights in the New Forest \(2024\)](#)

[New Forest Culture Insights Report \(2024\)](#)

[Arts Council England – Let’s Create \(2020–30\)](#)

[New Forest District Council – Corporate Plan \(2024–28\)](#)

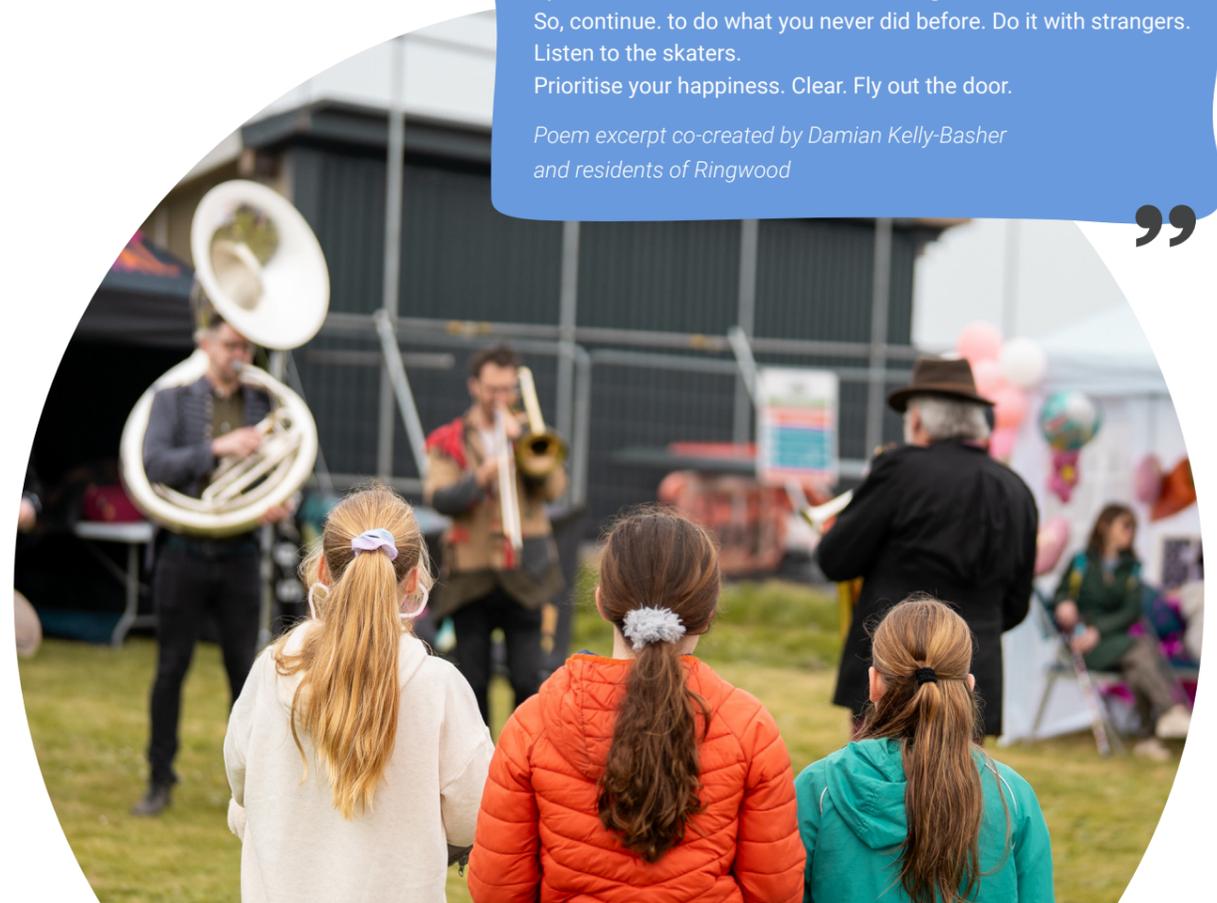
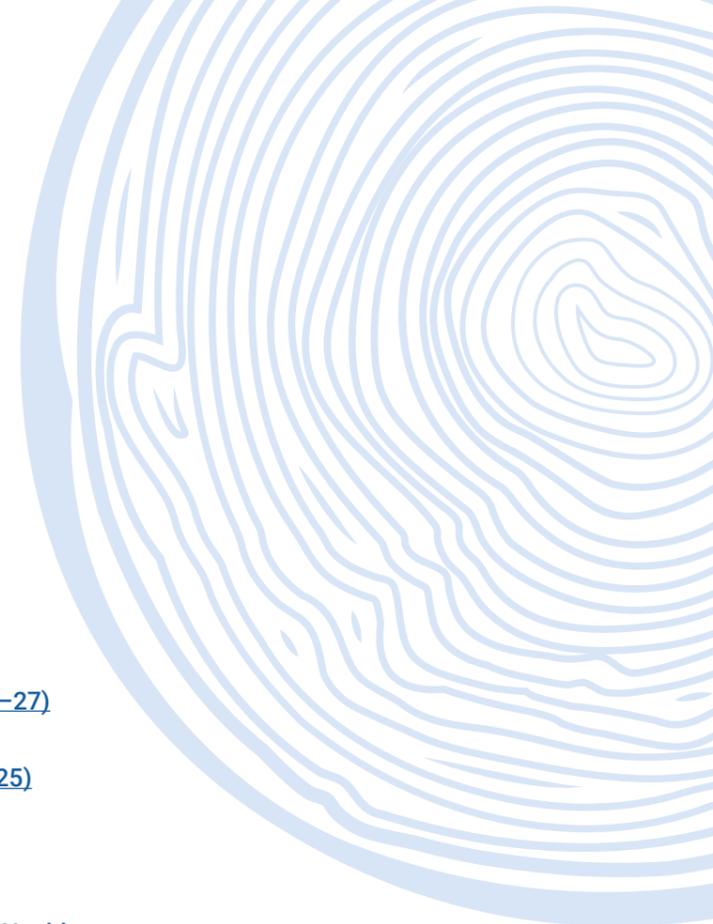
[New Forest National Park Authority – Partnership Plan \(2022–27\)](#)

[Solent Cultural Plan 2025–29 \(Solent Growth Partnership, 2025\)](#)

[Hampshire Cultural Trust – Cultural Connects](#)

[Creative Health Review \(2024\) – National Centre for Creative Health](#)

[Hampshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy \(2025–35\)](#)



“
Empty churches open for creative congregations. And after-school Sports Halls host DJs and dance evenings. So, continue. to do what you never did before. Do it with strangers. Listen to the skaters. Prioritise your happiness. Clear. Fly out the door.
Poem excerpt co-created by Damian Kelly-Basher and residents of Ringwood
”



New Forest

Creative and Cultural Framework

2026–2032



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Funded by
UK Government



New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

New Forest Creative and Cultural Framework 2026-2032

The New Forest is alive with creativity; from festivals and gigs to local makers, storytellers, and community projects. Culture is part of who we are and how we connect. This strategy is about building on that energy, joining things up, and making the Forest an even more inspiring place to live, work, and create.

Why now

Change is on the horizon; in government, funding, and how people spend their time. If we come together as a creative community, we can have a stronger voice, support each other, and make sure the New Forest's culture is seen, celebrated, and invested in.

Our vision

A Forest where creativity is woven into everyday life – rooted in place, open to everyone, and celebrated far and wide.

Our four ambitions

1

High-quality arts and culture for all

Position the New Forest as a place where everyone can experience and contribute to exceptional, high-quality creative and cultural activity – in ways that reflect the district's landscapes, communities, and distinct identity.

2

Drive sector growth through ambitious partnerships

Grow opportunities for creative practitioners, freelancers, and young creatives. Build career pathways, connect with business and tourism, and make the Forest a thriving place to live and work as a creative.

3

Champion culture in balance with nature

Create sustainably, celebrate our landscapes, and work with nature. Let's show how the Forest can be a national example of culture and creativity in tune with the environment.

4

Culture for health and wellbeing

Use creativity to connect people, tackle loneliness, boost mental health, and get people moving. Culture can help us all feel healthier, happier, and more connected.

How we will deliver

- Creative Forest will bring creative practitioners, organisations, and communities together to make this happen.
- Everyone can play their part; from local makers and musicians to community groups, venues, and volunteers.
- By working together, sharing stories, and evidencing impact, we'll show how creativity strengthens the New Forest for everyone.

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Cabinet – 4 February 2026

Corporate Plan: Key Performance Data for quarter 2 2025-2026

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report presents the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Quarter 2 (July to September 2025).
Recommendation(s)	<p>1. That Cabinet approve the Q2 2025-2026 dashboard; and</p> <p>2. That Cabinet consider any matters arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.</p>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are a core component of our Corporate Plan 2024–2028. The processes for reporting progress and ensuring accountability against the commitments outlined in the plan are detailed in our Performance Management Framework.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jill Cleary, Leader
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune, Strategic Director Corporate Resources (S151 Officer)
Officer Contact	<p>Saqib Yasin</p> <p>Performance and Insight Manager</p> <p>023 8028 5495</p> <p>Email address: saqib.yasin@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction and background

1. The Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) dashboard is presented for review and approval. The latest dashboard presents

data for Q2 covering July 2025 to the end of September 2025, where available.

2. As per our Performance Management Framework, following EMT approval, the dashboard is passed through to panels with associated covering reports. These reports will focus attention to the measures aligned to each panel. Further feedback from panels will be presented to Cabinet as approval is sought.
3. The following should be read in conjunction with the Q2 dashboard referenced in appendix 1.

Layout of the dashboard

4. The layout is unchanged from last quarter, key metadata is provided below as a reminder:
 - Target – shows the desired value
 - Desired direction of travel – indicates whether good performance is typified by an increasing or decreasing value
 - Return format – shows the unit of the value being reported
 - Frequency – shows how often the KPI is to be reported
 - RAG status is as per our Performance Management Framework
 - Green, on target or above target
 - Amber, up to 10% below target
 - Red, over 10% below target

Quarter 2 2025/2026

5. Data is presented for 30 of the KPIs. Q1 data is now also available for some of the KPIs:
 - a. KPI 007 - Investment in and rollout of public space CCTV system.
 - b. KPI 009 - Number of positive interventions in response to Public Spaces Protection Orders (1 and 2).
 - c. KPI 021 - Kilogrammes of non-recycled waste produced per household
 - d. KPI 024 - Percentage of household waste sent for recycling.

Highlights

ID	Observation
Housing and Communities	
1	The number of homelessness duty cases successfully prevented has shown a substantial improvement in performance. This represents the highest level recorded in the past four quarters, despite ongoing challenges posed by the reduction in available properties within the Private Sector
2	Despite progress in preventing homelessness, EA numbers remain a challenge. Targeted work with families to secure private sector and NFDC-owned temporary accommodation is expected to reduce EA placements.
3	<p>Number of households with children under 16 in external emergency shared accommodation over 6 weeks.</p> <p>This KPI has been green over four quarters with improving performance.</p>
4	Number of Appletree Careline customers. Performance has dipped although it is still green and above target.
7	Investment in and rollout of public space CCTV system. – both Q1 and Q2 figures are now available for this monitored KPI.
8	Education and awareness sessions – Education and awareness sessions were delivered to 280 young students, fostering broader engagement with teachers and parents.
9	PSPOs – both Q1 and Q2 figures are now available. Intervention numbers fell from the Q1 peak for this monitored KPI.
10	Number of cultural events and activities supported by New Forest District Council. – There were a further 12 cultural events in the last quarter which represents good performance.
15	Our five safety and compliance management measures performed very well, covering gas, fire, asbestos, water and lift safety.

Place and Sustainability	
16-19	<p>Planning measures performed very well again, above local and government targets despite a small dip in minor applications in time. This was still well above the government target.</p> <p>Only 1 appeal was allowed of 217 decisions made in the same period.</p>
20	Total outstanding net dwelling supply, annual figure is now available for 2024-25 – 182 dwellings were delivered during the year, falling short of anticipated targets. Members have been kept regularly informed on this issue.
21	Kilogrammes of non-recycled waste – Q1 and Q2 data is now available and has been green-rated over the last 4 quarters. This can be attributed to the waste collection changes in the phase 1 area only (30,000 properties) and the impact of restricted general waste capacity.
22	Households using our chargeable garden waste service has remained amber. An extended dry spell from spring through summer limited garden growth, which may have affected both resubscription rates and new sign-ups. See para. 28 for more details.
24	Percentage of household waste sent for recycling. – Q1 and Q2 data is now available and has moved from amber to green-rated. This again can be attributed to the waste collection changes in the phase 1 area only (30,000 properties). This is mostly made up of high food waste recycling tonnages as well as the impact of restricted general waste capacity.
25	918 fly-tipping incidents were recorded in the last quarter, up from 870 in Quarter 1, and 670 in the same quarter last year, largely at council bring sites. Enforcement cases continue to be successful and a new set up at a New Milton Bring Site is underway including new signage and CCTV.
27	Equivalent number of 0.5 litre bottles filled at water-filling stations. Performance is green-rated with the units being non-operational over the winter.

28	Squared metres of industrial/employment land developed. – the 2024-25 year-end position has been added for this monitor KPI.
Resources and Transformation	
37	Vacancies filled first time has been green-rated over the last four quarters.
38	Although this is an annual measure and not reported this quarter, follow-up actions have continued from the year-end position. HR is actively pursuing leaver questionnaires and has introduced a new dashboard providing greater insight into this KPI, which is now regularly presented to the HR Committee.
39	Sickness days moves from green to amber. The average sickness days is attributed to a small number of long-term sickness cases. HR work closely with managers to support returns to work.
41 and 42	Financial Monitoring is within range and is taken separately to Cabinet.
43 and 44	Council tax and rate collection. Both perform consistently close to the target profiles.
45	Benefits realisation from ICT investment is performing well and continues to be green-rated.
46	ICT incidents resolved within the SLA remains green-rated despite a higher than normal number of incidents in the last quarter.
47	93% of annual ICT work programme is forecast to be delivered on time and within budget, being green-rated through the year.

Overview and Scrutiny panel comments

6. The quarter 2 dashboard was presented to all three panels:
 - 15/01/2026 – Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny panel

- 21/01/2026 – Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny panel
 - 22/01/2026 – Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel
7. **Place and Sustainability** – Panel members were presented with additional insight regarding the nature of fly-tipping, in particular at our bring sites and the potential extent of garden waste fly-tipping arising from below target take-up of our garden waste service. These questions from last panel were responded to in the covering report.
 8. The Panel were provided with detail of the types of fly-tipping seen at bring sites, this being a significant factor in the observed increase in fly-tipping across the district. Officers clarified that fly-tipping is defined as any impermissible disposal of waste. A substantial rise in such incidents has been observed at bring sites. The service continues to respond promptly and effectively, often clearing waste before it is formally reported by members of the public. It was noted that the recent waste service rollout may be highlighting previously unmanaged waste streams from holiday lets, thereby contributing to the rise in recorded incidents. Addressing these challenges will require continued efforts in education, enforcement, and behavioural change, supported by ongoing monitoring and targeted interventions at identified hotspots. Complementing this, the Waste and Transport Service Manager, provided an operational update on Phase 3 of the waste and recycling programme.
 9. With respect to garden waste, the analysis suggests that garden waste is not being diverted to tips in greater quantities, nor are we seeing increased fly-tipping of garden waste. This supports the view that slower uptake is primarily due to seasonal growth patterns.
 10. Panel members thanked officers for the detail in the report.
 11. **Housing and Communities** – Panel members raised the issue of Emergency Accommodation (EA) pressures. The service is often working with people in complex circumstances, which can extend the time needed to identify suitable solutions. It is anticipated that, as a result of the additional targeted prevention work currently underway, improvements in homelessness prevention will subsequently lead to reductions in EA demand.
 12. The service also outlined the support being provided in response to forthcoming changes under the Renters’ Rights Act. Concerns have been raised that the new legislation may prompt some landlords to leave the sector. In preparation, a proactive engagement plan has been implemented to ensure both landlords and tenants receive

clear information about the Act and the practical steps required to adapt to the new regulatory environment. Additional landlord forums have been convened to offer direct support and guidance, with the aim of promoting confidence and maintaining stability within the local rental market.

13. **Resources and Transformation** – Panel members asked for further details relating to KPI 47, The percentage of annual ICT work programme delivered. Officers agreed to provide this directly.
14. The Panel had previously requested additional information regarding complaints and the relative impact of the waste-service rollout. Further insight was provided within the covering report.

Corporate plan priorities

15. The dashboard presents the KPIs ordered by our new corporate plan priorities.

Options appraisal

16. The KPI list 2024-2028 has been developed following extensive work and consideration of alternative KPIs and targets. This work was completed in conjunction with the development of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Consultation undertaken

17. The performance team have worked closely with data owners, responsible service managers and Strategic Directors to form the KPI list 2024 / 28. We have sought to identify KPIs which align with corporate plan objectives. Consideration was given to setting a baseline and reviewing benchmarking data (where applicable) for the setting of SMART targets.

Financial and resource implications

18. There are no financial or resource implications arising from this report.

Legal implications

19. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Risk assessment

20. There are no new risks arising from this report. The nature of KPI reporting means performance is scrutinised at a service level as

data becomes available and any associated risks and mitigation are put in place and reported in the KPI narrative as appropriate.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

21. There are no environmental / climate and nature implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications

22. There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Crime and disorder implications

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

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

24. There are no data protection / information governance / ICT implications arising from this report.

New Forest National Park implications

25. Visibility of our measures promotes good outcomes across the land within the National Park area. Measures within our direct control furthers the interests of the National Park/National Landscape. These include making appropriate planning decisions, dwelling supply, reducing homelessness, managing interventions where there are breaches of the Public Spaces Protection Orders, promoting recycling, garden waste removal, provision of water-filling stations and taking action on fly-tipping incidents.

Conclusion

26. Review of our key performance indicators ultimately provides a sense check of progress against our corporate plan commitments. Passing the dashboard through the levels of governance outlined in our Performance Management Framework promotes accountability.
27. Once approved at Cabinet, the dashboard will be published to our website.

Appendices:

Q2 Corporate Performance
Dashboard 202526

Background Papers:

None

2025/2026 Performance Summary

KPIs are rated RAG (Red, Amber, Green) according to the performance against target.

	On target or above target
	Below and up to 10% deviation from the lower threshold of the target
	Over 10% deviation from the lower threshold of the target
	KPI marked TBC due to lag in data availability, context and an estimated data availability is provided in these cases.
	KPI marked N/A due to performance being outside of our direct control and influence, or data not being collected during period.

PEOPLE	ID	KPI Name	RAG	Summary		
	1	Percentage of homelessness duty cases successfully prevented				
	2	Number of households in external emergency accommodation				
	3	Number of households with children under 16 in external emergency shared accommodation over 6wks				
	4	Number of Appletree careline services provided to customers				
	7	Investment in and rollout of public space CCTV system				
	8	Number of education and awareness sessions in relation to serious crime				
	9	Number of positive interventions in response to Public Spaces Protection Orders (1 and 2)				
	10	Number of cultural events and activities supported by New Forest District Council				
	11	Number of social housing homes delivered by NFDC and its partners			RED	1
	12	Number of affordable council homes delivered against the 2026 target set			AMBER	0
	13	Percentage score for the overall tenant satisfaction with the Council as a landlord (TSMs)			GREEN	5
	14	Number of council homes achieving Energy Performance Certification band C			TBC	0
	15	Percentage scores for the 5 safety and compliance management (TSMs)			N/A	7

PLACE	ID	KPI Name	RAG	Summary		
	16	Percentage of major planning applications determined in time				
	17	Percentage of minor planning applications determined in time				
	18	Percentage of other planning applications determined in time				
	19	Percentage of allowed planning appeals				
	20	The total outstanding net dwelling supply as set out in our development plan				
	21	Kilogrammes of non-recycled waste produced per household				
	22	Households using our chargeable garden waste service as a percentage of total properties in NFDC			RED	2
	23	Emissions from the council's vehicle fleet			AMBER	2
	24	Percentage of household waste sent for recycling			GREEN	6
	25	Number of fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 people			TBC	0
27	Equivalent number of 0.5 litre bottles filled at water-filling stations – waste averted			N/A	1	

PROSPERITY	ID	KPI Name	RAG	Summary		
	28	Squared metres of industrial/employment land developed			RED	0
	29	Level (£) of retained business rates (at source)			AMBER	0
	31	Vacancies of retail premises within town/local centres			GREEN	0
	32	Employment rate percentage of working age adults (aged 16-64)			TBC	0
	33	Proportion (in percentage terms) of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage			N/A	5

FUTURE NEW FOREST	ID	KPI Name	RAG	Summary		
	35	Staff satisfaction score with NFDC ICT services				
	37	Percentage of vacancies filled first time				
	38	Percentage staff turnover				
	39	Average number of days sickness absence per employee				
	40	Number of council apprenticeships				
	41	Percentage variance to Council budget +/- (General fund budget variations)				
	42	Percentage variance to Housing Revenue budget +/- (HRA budget variations)				
	43	Percentage of Council Tax collected in year				
	44	Percentage of Non-domestic Rates collected in year			RED	0
	45	Benefit realisation from ICT investment			AMBER	2
	46	Percentage of ICT incidents resolved within SLA			GREEN	8
47	Percentage of annual ICT work programme delivered on time and on budget			TBC	0	
48	Percentage unscheduled downtime for critical systems			N/A	3	

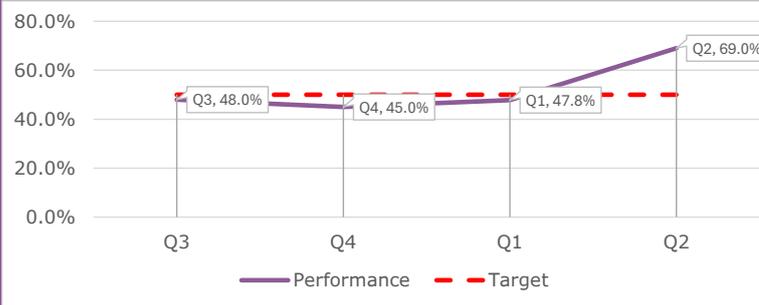
*NOTE KPIs No 5, 6, 26, 30, 34, 36 have been removed.

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny panel

People: Helping those in our community with the greatest need

NFDC ID NO.1: Percentage of homelessness duty cases successfully prevented

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
Performance	48.0%	45.0%	47.8%	69.0%	Target	>50%
Target	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	Desired DOT	▲
					Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Chris Pope
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
					Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		



Supporting narrative

2024/5 Q3	The current private rented sector remains challenging, with several factors affecting renters. Including the limited number of rental properties, changes to landlord circumstances resulting in sale of the property, increasing demands from letting agents, including rent advanced payments and rent guarantors, all creating barriers and difficulties for potential tenants.
2024/5 Q4	Despite the hard work of our teams to prevent homelessness and relieve those experiencing homelessness, it is recognised that this is a challenge due to the limited supply of both social and affordable private rented sector properties, especially family sized homes. To improve these figures, we have invested in training and are recruiting additional Homelessness Prevention Floating Support Workers to assist residents in sustaining tenancies.
2025/6 Q1	Preventing Homelessness remains a challenge with the reducing number of properties available in the Private Sector however a number of suitable properties were released and the team were able to utilise these by supporting applicants with rent in advance loans and deposit scheme.
2025/6 Q2	Prevention of homelessness has always been the priority. Working with private landlords and supporting families at an early stage has seen the prevention of homelessness increase despite the challenging number of private rented properties.

NFDC ID NO.2: Number of households in external emergency accommodation

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
Performance	48	51	56	61	Target	<50
Target	50	50	50	50	Desired DOT	▼
					Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Chris Pope
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Steve Davies
					Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		



Supporting narrative

2024/5 Q3	Significant due to increasingly larger families often with complex needs and affordability of private accommodation.
2024/5 Q4	Despite work to prevent and relieve homelessness, it is a significant challenge due to the limited supply of social/affordable private sector properties, especially family sized homes. To improve these figures, we have invested in training and are recruiting 2 Homelessness Prevention Floating Support Workers to assist residents in sustaining tenancies.
2025/6 Q1	Investment continues with the introduction of a Homelessness Prevention Team Leader, to focus on increasing quality, better managed caseload and outcomes. In total the team have increased support by introducing 4 Homelessness Prevention Floating Support Workers, on top of existing 3 Homelessness Prevention Officers to help people find new homes, liaise with landlords, help with rent deposits, and mediate between parties. On top of this we have provided grant funding to start a Homelessness Prevention drop-in service in Totton and continue to work closely with other voluntary sector services. We continue to explore ways to increase prevention services across the district to provide the right advice at the right time and place for the betterment of our communities.
2025/6 Q2	Despite the successes of preventing homelessness, this has yet to feed through to the number of people in EA. In depth work is being undertaken to work with families to source properties in the private sector as well as NFDC owned TA so it is expected that EA numbers will reduce.

NFDC ID NO.3: Number of households with children under 16 in external emergency shared accommodation over 6 weeks

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	Desired DOT
Performance	7	5	6	2	<7	▼
Target	7	7	7	7	Format	Numerical
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Chris Pope
					Portfolio holder	Clr Steve Davies
					Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		



Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	EA for households with children is only used when no other accommodation is available in the location that the family needs. Moving families in to accommodation with no shared facilities remains a priority. We must consider the needs of the family when seeking accommodation including school/education, doctor or health facilities, family support networks, employment factors or other complex needs.
2024/5 Q4	To reduce the number of households in EA a dedicated officer is tasked with liaising with landlords to identify possible family sized accommodation and to move families as quickly as possible. Performance is in line with target.
2025/6 Q1	Reducing the need to use shared facilities EA for families remains a key commitment. When keeping a family in shared accommodation, we take into consideration their support needs and local networks whilst searching for long term accommodation.
2025/6 Q2	This number of households in shared EA has reduced due to working hard with families to locate private sector properties. There are 7 families in EA shared accommodation currently but under the 6 weeks target.

NFDC ID NO.4: Number of Appletree careline services provided to customers

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	Desired DOT
Performance	3933	3839	4072	3922	3899	▲
Target	4089	4139	3869	3899	Format	Numerical
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Brian Byrne
					Portfolio holder	Clr Dan Poole
					Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		

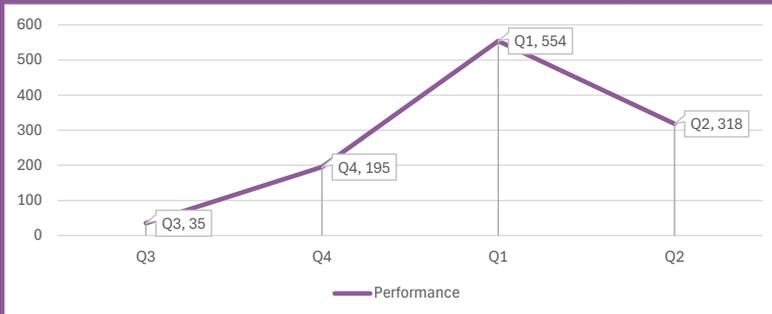


Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Although 52 new customers joined careline services in October and November, over the same period we experienced higher monthly averages in cancellations of 59 clients, with a reduction of 118 services. Of these 59 clients, 21 were deceased and 31 moved into full time residential or nursing care placements. This is in line with seasonal expectations i.e. flu etc. December in comparison, between cancellations and installations saw a positive uplift of 8 services overall.
2024/5 Q4	52 new customer installations with over 100 services combined during the quarter. Whilst the growth has continued alongside existing customers being retained and upgraded to digital services, this has been impacted by the death of 29 customers and 37 moving from independent to residential/nursing care accommodation, accounting for a combined loss of 130 services. Current team focus on retention and growth, dedicated resources contacting and managing the switchover from analogue to digital services for existing customers. All Appletree careline literature and promotional material has been refreshed and rebranded highlighting the benefits of digital careline units, in particular highlighting the cost savings to clients no longer requiring fixed telephone lines for service delivery.
2025/6 Q1	Appletree careline continues to transition existing careline customers from analogue to digital services, whilst creating opportunities for revenue growth through the attraction of a new customer base. Development of revised promotional material has been created and disseminated across the district, creating partnerships with age related community based services to promote the service locally.
2025/6 Q2	During quarter 2, 102 new services were added. August saw a higher than anticipated cancellations, with 16 clients resulting from death and 11 clients moving into full time residential care settings resulting in the loss of 54 services.

NFDC ID NO.7: Investment in and rollout of public space CCTV system																
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information											
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	Monitor towards £80,000										
Performance	£66,000	£66,000	£3,471.48	£20,075.73	Desired DOT	▲										
Target	£30,000	£40,000	MONITOR	MONITOR	Format	£										
<table border="1"> <caption>Performance Data for NFDC ID NO.7</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Performance (£)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3</td> <td>£66,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4</td> <td>£66,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1</td> <td>£3,471.48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2</td> <td>£20,075.73</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Quarter	Performance (£)	Q3	£66,000	Q4	£66,000	Q1	£3,471.48	Q2	£20,075.73	Frequency	Quarterly
Quarter	Performance (£)															
Q3	£66,000															
Q4	£66,000															
Q1	£3,471.48															
Q2	£20,075.73															
					Metric type	Cumulative/year to date										
					Leadership team member	Brian Byrne										
					Portfolio holder	CLr Dan Poole										
					Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities										
RAG Status																
		2024/5		2025/6												
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2											
				N/A	N/A											
Supporting narrative																
2024/5 Q3	The installation plan over Q3 has enabled a partnership to be developed with a large retail store, allowing siting of cameras on their buildings, simplifying the installation process and reducing costs. This will cover locations including Holbury, Bransgore and Fordingbridge. Additional locations have been secured in Fawley, Gangwarily and Ashley. 17 cameras from the Hardley depot have interlinked with the CCTV control room and it is anticipated a further 10 live monitored cameras will be installed by end of January.															
2024/5 Q4	Following full handover of the Hardley Depot, A further 10 cameras went live, increasing the total to 28. Fire and security alarms are also live monitored within the main CCTV control room. Electrification works have been confirmed on all proposed public space sites with these being prepared for full camera installation. Terms for a further location on a retail store were agreed in Brockenhurst and a site in Ringwood. Securing these locations provides optimum placement for monitoring whilst negating local disruption.															
2025/6 Q1	During the Q1 period, 9 additional cameras have been installed. Additional installations continue to progress. NEW - Expenditure has now been confirmed for Q1 as £3,471.48.															
2025/6 Q2	In year 24/25 Total expenditure was £66,960.00 for the purchase of cameras and server room upgrades for the increased storage of data. Expenditure in Quarter 2 primarily covers the installation costs for cameras. Quarter 3 has an additional 10 cameras scheduled for installation by November 30th.															

NFDC ID NO.8: Number of education and awareness sessions in relation to serious crime																
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information											
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	Monitor										
Performance	47	1	3	9	Desired DOT	N/A										
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR	MONITOR	MONITOR	Format	Numerical										
<table border="1"> <caption>Performance Data for NFDC ID NO.8</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Performance (Sessions)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3</td> <td>47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Quarter	Performance (Sessions)	Q3	47	Q4	1	Q1	3	Q2	9	Frequency	Quarterly
Quarter	Performance (Sessions)															
Q3	47															
Q4	1															
Q1	3															
Q2	9															
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time										
					Leadership team member	Brian Byrne										
					Portfolio holder	CLr Dan Poole										
					Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities										
RAG Status																
		2024/5		2025/6												
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2											
		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A											
Supporting narrative																
2024/5 Q3	47 sessions were delivered to 289 attendees with participant breakdown being 55% male and 45% female.															
2024/5 Q4	129 young people participated in a prevention of weapons education programme. Over the past 12 months, weapons prevention education has been delivered to 563 young people within either group or 1-2-1 sessions across the district.															
2025/6 Q1	During Q1, safer New Forest provided 3 days training and learning material for 18 employees of youth services, secondary education, colleges and community safety services. This approach aims to create and embed local resources, acting as points of contacts and accredited trainers to deliver weapons prevention training within local education and community based settings. Funding for delivery was supported by a 10k grant obtained from the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner.															
2025/6 Q2	Dedicated workshop on weapons, the law, social and medical implications. Educations awareness delivered to 280 year 8 students. Delivery was undertaken over a number of sessions with an average group consisting of 30 students. Comparing Year 8 students' age profile with early offenders (13-17) highlights the need for a targeted approach. Delivering education this way reinforces the law and consequences of carrying weapons, reducing the risk of unintentional offences. It also promotes wider discussion among teachers and parents, providing context and relevance for all learners.															

NFDC ID NO.9: Number of positive interventions in response to Public Spaces Protection Orders (1 and 2)						
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	Monitor
Performance	35	195	554	318	Desired DOT	N/A
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR	MONITOR	MONITOR	Format	Numerical
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Brian Byrne
					Portfolio holder	CIlr Dan Poole
					Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		



Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Quarter 3 showed a reduced number of interactions which is anticipated outside of the main holiday season. Of the 35 engagements, 2 related to fire with the remaining 33 relating to petting of animals. No interactions required escalation necessitating the issuing of any fixed penalty notices. Yearly fire data compiled for the Safer New Forest annual strategic assessment on crime and disorder, show incidents of fire have reduced over the past year since the order was approved. Further monitoring will continue to consider all aspects that have contributed to this reduction.
2024/5 Q4	Quarter 4 period resulted in 31 reports to services regarding concerns of compliance with the orders with Wednesday being the busiest of days. Direct engagement was held with 195 people, with 180 relating to animals and 15 to fire.
2025/6 Q1	NEW - 118 reports were received resulting in 554 people being spoken to in relation to the PSPOs, with 146 in relation to fire and 408 to animals. 2 FPNs were issued, both relating to fire. The three highest reported locations during the quarter were Bolton's Bench, Hatchet Pond and Wilverley Plain.
2025/6 Q2	NEW - During Q2, 318 members of the public were engaged with by delegated officers in relation to PSPO 1 or 2. During the same period, officers responded to 13 reports of fire related incidents, of this, 4 were fires and 9 relating to BBQ's. 43 reports were in response to the petting or feeding of animals.

NFDC ID NO.10: Number of cultural events and activities supported by New Forest District Council						
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	24 by end of year
Performance	22	34	31	43	Desired DOT	▲
Target	18	24	6	12	Format	Numerical
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
					Leadership team member	Joanne McClay
					Portfolio holder	CIlr Dan Poole
					Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		



Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Grant for new project Suitcase Stories in partnership with Forest Forge. Resource and support shared in supporting HCT take over the Folio network and sector support function. Funding allocated to the development of ROAM arts festival, bid writer funded by NFDC at this stage.
2024/5 Q4	5 Projects supported this quarter via SPF are Nightjar, Folio training programme, Folio transition support, Milford on Sea beach event and CODA celebration event. 6 cultural projects were supported by the Community Grants programme in 24/25. 1 project has received CIL funding of £142,000 to improve the access to cultural facilities, locally.
2025/6 Q1	Working with Culture in Common and local Folio Partners we have supported a number of smaller projects around the district. Working in partnership we delivered a series of small commissions which saw a number of activities reach new audiences and ensure that there was a spread of activity across the geographic and demographic communities of the district. A high number of one-off commissioned projects have occurred during the period which is reflected in the final data, these are unlikely to be repeated.
2025/6 Q2	The delivery of small commissioned projects and partnership work with organisations such as ICB, PCNs and parish councils, engaging targeted communities. 12 events and activities during the period.

People: Meeting housing needs

NFDC ID NO.11: Number of affordable homes delivered by NFDC and its partners

	2024/5	2025/6	Supporting information	
Performance	188	N/A*	Target	199 during period
Target	186	387	Desired DOT	On forecast
Supporting narrative			Format	Numerical
*Annual data for the 2025/26 period for KPI no.11 will be reported in the Q4 dashboard.			Frequency	Annually
			Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
			Leadership team member	Tim Davis
			Portfolio holder	Clr Steve Davies
			Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
			RAG Status	
			2024/5	2025/6
				N/A

NFDC ID NO.12: Number of affordable council homes delivered against the 2026 target set

	2024/5	2025/6	Supporting information	
Performance	375	N/A*	Target	87 during period
Target	373	462	Desired DOT	On forecast
Supporting narrative			Format	Numerical
*Annual data for the 2025/26 period for KPI no.12 will be reported in the Q4 dashboard.			Frequency	Annually
			Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
			Leadership team member	Tim Davis
			Portfolio holder	Clr Steve Davies
			Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
			RAG Status	
			2024/5	2025/6
				N/A

NFDC ID NO.13: Percentage score for overall tenant satisfaction with the Council as a landlord, as determined in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

	2024/4	2025/6	Supporting information	
Performance	84%	N/A	Target	82.1%
Target	81.6%	82.1%	Desired DOT	▲
Supporting narrative			Format	%
Annual data for KPI no.13 will be reported once the next tenant satisfaction survey has been completed and verified and inline with its submission to the Regulator of Social Housing.			Frequency	Annually
			Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
			Leadership team member	Kirsty Farmer
			Portfolio holder	Clr Steve Davies
			Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
			RAG Status	
			2024/5	2025/6
				N/A

NFDC ID NO.14: Number of council homes achieving Energy Performance Certification band C				
	2024/5		2025/6	
Performance	2744		N/A*	
Target	2646		2946	
Supporting narrative				
*Annual data for the 2025/26 period for KPI no.14 will be reported in the Q4 dashboard.				
			Supporting information	
			Target	2946
			Desired DOT	▲
			Format	Numerical
			Frequency	Annually
			Metric type	Cumulative/year to date
			Leadership team member	Sophie Tuffin
			Portfolio holder	Clr Steve Davies
			Overview and scrutiny	Housing and Communities
RAG Status				
			2024/5	2025/6
				N/A

NFDC ID NO.15: Percentage scores for the 5 safety and compliance management Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)																				
	2024/5		2025/6																	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2																
Performance	97.67%	100.00%	99.60%	99.80%																
Target	96.80%	96.80%	96.80%	96.80%																
Supporting narrative																				
<table border="1"> <caption>Performance Data for NFDC ID NO.15</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Performance (%)</th> <th>Target (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3</td> <td>97.67%</td> <td>96.80%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4</td> <td>100.00%</td> <td>96.80%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1</td> <td>99.60%</td> <td>96.80%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2</td> <td>99.80%</td> <td>96.80%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>						Quarter	Performance (%)	Target (%)	Q3	97.67%	96.80%	Q4	100.00%	96.80%	Q1	99.60%	96.80%	Q2	99.80%	96.80%
Quarter	Performance (%)	Target (%)																		
Q3	97.67%	96.80%																		
Q4	100.00%	96.80%																		
Q1	99.60%	96.80%																		
Q2	99.80%	96.80%																		
Supporting information																				
Target																				
96.80%																				
Desired DOT																				
▲																				
Format																				
%																				
Frequency																				
Quarterly																				
Metric type																				
Snapshot/point in time																				
Leadership team member																				
Sophie Tuffin																				
Portfolio holder																				
Clr Steve Davies																				
Overview and scrutiny																				
Housing and Communities																				
RAG Status																				
		2024/5		2025/6																
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2																

*NOTE KPIs No 5, 6 have been removed.

Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny panel

Place: Shaping our place for now and for future generations

NFDC ID NO.16: Percentage of major planning applications determined in time

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
Performance	83.0%	92.0%	100.0%	100.0%	Target	85.0%
Target	85.0%	85.0%	85.0%	85.0%	Desired DOT	▲
Gov. target	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%	Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Mark Wyatt
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		

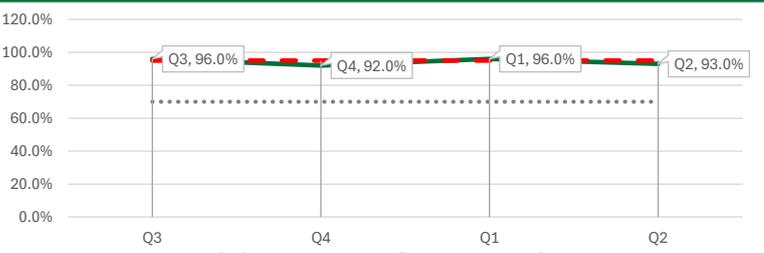


Supporting narrative

2024/5 Q3	Although flagged as amber, should be noted the local target is set at 25% above the Government target of 60%.
2024/5 Q4	Performance exceeds both local and Government targets.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above both government and locally set targets. An increase on last quarter.
2025/6 Q2	Performance exceeds both local and Government targets.

NFDC ID NO.17: Percentage of minor planning applications determined in time

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
Performance	96.0%	92.0%	96.0%	93.0%	Target	95.0%
Target	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	Desired DOT	▲
Gov. target	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%	70.0%	Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Mark Wyatt
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		



Supporting narrative

2024/5 Q3	Improvement on last quarter and above target.
2024/5 Q4	Although flagged as amber, should be noted the local target is set at 25% above the Government target of 70%. Our performance consistently exceeds Government set targets.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above both government and locally set targets. An increase on last quarter.
2025/6 Q2	Performance is above government set target but has fallen slightly below locally set target and is a decrease from last quarter.

NFDC ID NO.18: Percentage of other planning applications determined in time						
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	
Performance	95.0%	97.0%	95.0%	95.0%	Target	95.0%
Target	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	Desired DOT	▲
Gov. target	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Mark Wyatt
					Portfolio holder	CLlr Derek Tipp
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Performance is on target.
2024/5 Q4	Performance exceeds both local and Government targets.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above both government and locally set targets.
2025/6 Q2	Performance is above both government and locally set targets.

NFDC ID NO.19: Percentage of allowed planning appeals						
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	
Performance	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	Target	<10%
Target	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	Desired DOT	▼
					Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Mark Wyatt
					Portfolio holder	CLlr Derek Tipp
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability
RAG Status						
	2024/5		2025/6			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		

Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	3 appeals allowed, 2 appeals dismissed. Between October and December 2024 there were 195 decisions made, 173 granted and 22 refused.
2024/5 Q4	6 appeals, all dismissed.
2025/6 Q1	The total amount of planning decisions made was 255, 6 were appealed and all 6 were dismissed at appeal.
2025/6 Q2	1 appeal allowed of 217 decisions made.

NFDC ID NO.20: The total outstanding net dwelling supply as set out in our development plan							
	2023/4		2024/5		Supporting information		
Performance	8443		5974		Target	8059	
Target	8241		8059		Desired DOT	▼	
Supporting narrative					Format	Num	
Our 2016–2036 plan sets a target of 10,420 new dwellings by 2036. By the end of March 2025, 2,361 dwellings have been delivered, including 182 completed in 2024–25. This falls short of the baseline targets for this stage of the plan. This reflects slower-than-anticipated delivery due to economic uncertainty, viability issues, and site-specific challenges. Performance is rated red however members have been regularly briefed on ongoing progress.					Frequency	Annually	
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time	
					Leadership team member	Tim Guymer	
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Derek Tipp	
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability	
RAG Status							
			2023/4		2024/5		
			N/A				

Place: Protecting our climate, coast and natural world

NFDC ID NO.21: Kilogrammes of non-recycled waste produced per household																					
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information																
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	106.00Kg/per HH															
Performance	335.20	449.60	103.00	200.00	Desired DOT	▼															
Target	342.00	456.00	110.00	216.00	Format	kg															
<table border="1"> <caption>Waste Production Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Performance (kg)</th> <th>Target (kg)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2024/5</td> <td>335.20</td> <td>342.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4 2024/5</td> <td>449.60</td> <td>456.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 2025/6</td> <td>103.00</td> <td>110.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 2025/6</td> <td>200.00</td> <td>216.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Quarter	Performance (kg)	Target (kg)	Q3 2024/5	335.20	342.00	Q4 2024/5	449.60	456.00	Q1 2025/6	103.00	110.00	Q2 2025/6	200.00	216.00	Frequency	Quarterly
Quarter	Performance (kg)	Target (kg)																			
Q3 2024/5	335.20	342.00																			
Q4 2024/5	449.60	456.00																			
Q1 2025/6	103.00	110.00																			
Q2 2025/6	200.00	216.00																			
					Metric type	Cumulative/year to date															
					Leadership team member	Liz Mockeridge															
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden															
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability															
					RAG Status																
			2024/5		2025/6																
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2															
Supporting narrative																					
2024/5 Q3	-																				
2024/5 Q4	Performance is inline with target.																				
2025/6 Q1	NEW - Performance is inline with target.																				
2025/6 Q2	The impact of the new service is very positive. The reduction in the non-recycled waste and increased the recycling rate for Q2 is based on collection changes in the phase 1 area only (30,000 properties) and can be largely attributed to high food waste recycling tonnages and the impact of restricted general waste capacity. However, waste levels and composition do fluctuate throughout the year so at this stage of the phased roll out it is difficult accurately predict performance levels for Q3 and 4.																				

NFDC ID NO.22: Households using our chargeable garden waste service as percentage of total properties in NFDC										
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information					
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target					
Performance	29.0%	29.0%	28.0%	28.0%	Desired DOT	▲				
Target	27.0%	27.0%	29.0%	30.0%	Format	%				
					Frequency	Quarterly				
					Metric type	Cumulative/year to date				
					Leadership team member	Liz Mockleridge				
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden				
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability				
					RAG Status					
					2024/5		2025/6			
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2							
Supporting narrative										
2024/5 Q3	-									
2024/5 Q4	End of year performance exceeds target.									
2025/6 Q1	The subscription numbers for GW customers are down from Q4. This may have been impacted by the unusually dry spring and summer months causing a slow growth year. As the new service started in April 2024, Q1 is the point when most people will need to resubscribe. However, because the subscription is now a rolling year service, residents can join whenever they want throughout the year and still get a years service rather than previously have to join in April to receive a full year. Residents may have waited longer to rejoin with less garden waste to dispose of in the early part of the season.									
2025/6 Q2	Percentage of residents subscribed to the service remained steady on last quarter, however this is not in line with targeted service growth. This year saw an unusually dry period, which continued from spring throughout summer. This has limited garden growth and in turn may have impacted our resubscription take up and new subscriptions. Additionally the focus on the new service roll out has restricted opportunities for promotion of the Garden Waste Service this year.									

NFDC ID NO.23: Emissions from the council's vehicle fleet										
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information					
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target					
Performance	1658		N/A*		Desired DOT	▼				
Target	MONITOR		MONITOR		Format	Tonnes of CO2e				
Supporting narrative *Annual data for KPI no.23 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.					Frequency	Annual				
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time				
					Leadership team member	Chris Noble				
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden				
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability				
					RAG Status					
					2024/5		2025/6			
N/A		N/A								

NFDC ID NO.24: Percentage of household waste sent for recycling						
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	>41%
Performance	36.00%	32.40%	40.20%	42.80%	Desired DOT	▲
Target	38.50%	38.50%	41.00%	41.00%	Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Liz Mockridge
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability
RAG Status						
		2024/5		2025/6		
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	

Place: Caring for our facilities, neighbourhoods and open spaces in a modern and responsive way

NFDC ID NO.25: Number of fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 people (total population 175,942)						
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	14 by end of year
Performance	2.85	3.96	4.94	10.15	Desired DOT	▼
Target	13.94	13.94	4.11	7.66	Format	Numerical
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Leadership team member	Snapshot/point in time
					Data owner	Chris Noble
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden
					Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability
RAG Status						
		2024/5		2025/6		
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	

Supporting narrative

2024/5 Q3 The reported figure is based on the total of 502 fly-tipping incidents occurring in Q3.

2024/5 Q4 The reported figure is based on the total of 696 fly-tipping incidents occurring in Q4.

2025/6 Q1 Figure is based on 870 incidents of flytipping which operatives responded to during the quarter which is an increase of 182 from Q4 2024/5. This is a revised metric, to more closely reflect the councils desire to tackle fly tipping as an issue across the forest. After a period of review it was felt appropriate to lower the threshold and make the metric more challenging, given understandable concern over the issue. As has been reported to Council, there has been an increase in use of bring sites aligned to the waste roll out. Where this sees residents leaving glass and cardboard outside of the provided containers it is technically classed as a fly tip and is recorded as such. The figure does not relate to an uptick in fly tipping in the more readily defined sense (e.g. building waste/house clearance dumped in laybys/country lanes) and there has been no discernible increase in this aligned to the roll out. There are concerns that are being investigated by our enforcement teams over "commercial" use of our bring sites, which is understood to be a potential byproduct of the roll-out as "commercial" waste can no longer be as easily disguised in residential collections.

2025/6 Q2 The total number of reported incidents of fly-tipping rose to 918 in Q2, which is above target and a notable increase compared to the same period last year (670 in Q2 24/25). The reported figure as above equals the number of incidents per 1000 from both quarters. Ongoing concerns remain from the previous quarter including misuse of bring sites and operatives continue to respond to these issues.

NFDC ID NO.27: Number of 0.5 litre bottles filled at water-filling stations																					
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information																
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target																
Performance	25598	25598	16100	34558	Desired DOT	▲															
Target	23000	23000	9200	23000	Format	Numerical															
<table border="1"> <caption>Chart Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Performance</th> <th>Target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3</td> <td>25598</td> <td>23000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4</td> <td>25598</td> <td>23000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1</td> <td>16100</td> <td>9200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2</td> <td>34558</td> <td>23000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Quarter	Performance	Target	Q3	25598	23000	Q4	25598	23000	Q1	16100	9200	Q2	34558	23000	Frequency	Quarterly
					Quarter	Performance	Target														
					Q3	25598	23000														
					Q4	25598	23000														
					Q1	16100	9200														
Q2	34558	23000																			
Metric type	Cumulative/year to date																				
Leadership team member	Chris Noble																				
Portfolio holder	Cllr Geoffrey Blunden																				
Overview and scrutiny	Place and Sustainability																				
RAG Status																					
2024/5		2025/6																			
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2																		
Supporting narrative																					
2024/5 Q3	Short period of operation during Q3 before units turned off for winter. Units are not operational during winter months.																				
2024/5 Q4	Units are not operational during the winter months and therefore there is no additional data available for Q4.																				
2025/6 Q1	Usage of our water-filling stations during the period was equivalent to filling over 16,000 half-litre water bottles. High temperatures throughout the spring months may have contributed to higher usage rates.																				
2025/6 Q2	The final water bottle meter readings for Q2 shows the total water volume dispensed was 9.229m3, equivalent to 18,458 0.5l bottles. The units are now non-operational for the autumn/winter months and therefore the next available data will be reported in Q1 2026/27.																				

*NOTE KPI No 26 has been removed.

Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny panel

Prosperity: Maximising the benefits of inclusive economic growth and investment

NFDC ID NO.28: Squared metres of industrial/employment land developed				
	2023/4	2024/5	Supporting information	
Performance	21,209	23,809	Target Monitor	
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR	Desired DOT ▲	
Supporting narrative			Format Sqm	
There was a net addition of 2,600sqm employment floorspace completed in 2024/25.			Frequency Annually	
			Metric type Snapshot/point in time	
			Leadership team member Tim Guymer	
			Portfolio holder Cllr Derek Tipp	
			Overview and scrutiny Place and Sustainability	
			RAG Status	
			2023/4	
N/A		N/A		

NFDC ID NO.29: Level (£) of retained business rates (at source)				
	2024/5	2025/6	Supporting information	
Performance	£0	N/A*	Target £450,000	
Target	£0	£450,000	Desired DOT ▲	
Supporting narrative			Format £	
*Annual data for KPI no.29 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.			Frequency Annually	
			Metric type Snapshot/point in time	
			Leadership team member Ryan Stevens	
			Portfolio holder Cllr Derek Tipp	
			Overview and scrutiny Place and Sustainability	
			RAG Status	
			2024/5	
N/A		N/A		

Prosperity: Supporting our high-quality business base and economic centres to thrive and grow

NFDC ID NO.31: Vacancies of retail premises within town/local centres				
	2024/5	2025/6	Supporting information	
Performance	7.10%	N/A*	Target Monitor	
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR	Desired DOT ▼	
Supporting narrative			Format %	
*Annual data for KPI no.31 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.			Frequency Annually	
			Metric type Snapshot/point in time	
			Leadership team member Tim Guymer	
			Portfolio holder Cllr Derek Tipp	
			Overview and scrutiny Place and Sustainability	
			RAG Status	
			2024/5	
N/A		N/A		

Prosperity: Championing skills and access to job opportunities

NFDC ID NO.32: Employment rate percentage of working age adults (aged 16-64)				
	2023	2024	Supporting information	
Performance	82.3%	78%	Target Monitor	
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR	Desired DOT ▲	
Supporting narrative			Format %	
*2025 Annual data for KPI no.32 will be reported when available from the ONS.			Frequency Annually	
			Metric type Snapshot/point in time	
			Leadership team member Jeannie Satchell	
			Portfolio holder Cllr Derek Tipp	
			Overview and scrutiny Place and Sustainability	
			RAG Status	
			2023 N/A	2024 N/A

NFDC ID NO.33: Proportion (in percentage terms) of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage				
	2023	2024	Supporting information	
Performance	13.30%	14.20%	Target Monitor	
Target	MONITOR	MONITOR	Desired DOT ▼	
Supporting narrative			Format %	
*2025 Annual data for KPI no.33 will be reported when available from the ONS.			Frequency Annually	
			Metric type Snapshot/point in time	
			Leadership team member Jeannie Satchell	
			Portfolio holder Cllr Derek Tipp	
			Overview and scrutiny Place and Sustainability	
			RAG Status	
			2023 N/A	2024 N/A

*NOTE KPI No 30 has been removed.

Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny panel

Future New Forest: Putting our customers at the heart

NFDC ID NO.35: Staff satisfaction score with NFDC ICT services

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
Performance	88.5%		N/A*		Target	70%
Target	70.0%		70.0%		Desired DOT	Maintain
Supporting narrative					Format	%
					Frequency	Annually
*Data for KPI no.35 will be reported following the next ICT staff survey. It has been agreed by the service that the ICT staff survey will now be carried out every two years in a change from previously reported. It is anticipated this data will next be available during financial year 2027/28.					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Rich Bird/Kim Gray
					Portfolio holder	CLlr Jeremy Heron
					Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation
					RAG Status	
		2024/5	2025/6			
			N/A*			

Future New Forest: Being an employer of choice

NFDC ID NO.37: Percentage of vacancies filled first time

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
Performance	88.0%	81.0%	79.2%	82.0%	Target	80%
Target	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	Desired DOT	▲
					Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Heleana Aylett
					Portfolio holder	Leader CLlr Jill Cleary
Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation					
RAG Status						
		2024/5	2025/6			

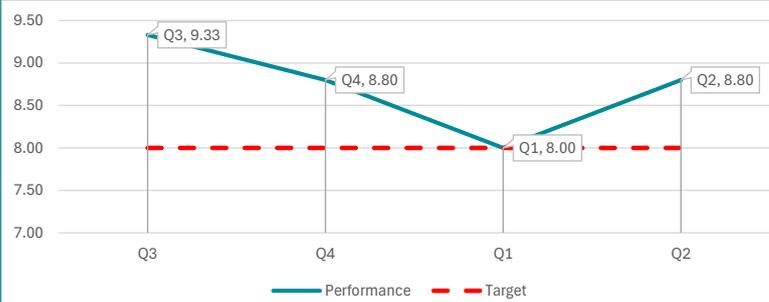
Supporting narrative

2024/5 Q3	33 vacancies were filled first time.
2024/5 Q4	End of year position exceeds target.
2025/6 Q1	We have had 24 vacancies and filled 19 first time.
2025/6 Q2	We have had 34 vacancies and filled 28 first time.

NFDC ID NO.38: Percentage staff turnover

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
Performance	13.00%		N/A*		Target	11%
Target	11.00%		11.00%		Desired DOT	▼
Supporting narrative					Format	%
					Frequency	Annually
*Annual data for KPI no.38 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Heleana Aylett
					Portfolio holder	Leader CLlr Jill Cleary
					Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation
					RAG Status	
		2024/5	2025/6			
			N/A*			

NFDC ID NO.39: Average number of days sickness absence per employee					
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Performance	9.33	8.80	8.00	8.80	Target 8
Target	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	Desired DOT ▼
					Format Numerical
					Frequency Quarterly
					Metric type Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member Heleana Aylett
					Portfolio holder Leader Cllr Jill Cleary
					Overview and scrutiny Resources & Transformation
RAG Status					
	2024/5		2025/6		
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	



Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	Whilst we are always finding ways to reduce sickness and absence levels to meet our targets, this is of largely out of our direct control. Every step is taken to be satisfied that sickness absence is genuine, that sickness is reducing and that we are managing sickness effectively to keep this figure reducing. HR work closely with managers to apply our policies effectively to manage sickness.
2024/5 Q4	Sickness per FTE has come down since last quarter and continues to come down as can be seen with historical data.
2025/6 Q1	Although sickness days have reduced since the end of last quarter, FTE has increased, resulting in a reported figure in line with previous performance.
2025/6 Q2	Historically, sickness has shown to increase between Q1 and Q2. Although short term sickness has not significantly increased during this period, the increase in the average number of sick days can be attributed to a increase in small number long term sickness cases spanning a period of over 6 months, which can have an impact on overall sickness levels.

NFDC ID NO.40: Number of council apprenticeships					
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Performance	18		N/A*		Target 15
Target	10		15		Desired DOT ▲
					Format Numerical
					Frequency Annually
					Metric type Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member Heleana Aylett
					Portfolio holder Leader Cllr Jill Cleary
					Overview and scrutiny Resources & Transformation
RAG Status					
	2024/4		2025/6		

Supporting narrative

*Annual data for KPI no.38 will be reported in the 2025/6 Q4 dashboard.

Future New Forest: Being financially responsible

NFDC ID NO.41: Percentage variance to Council budget +/- (General fund budget variations)

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	+/- 3%
Performance	0.0%	-10.09%	N/A	0.0%	Desired DOT	▲ or ▼
Upper range	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	Format	%
Lower range	-3.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%	-3.0%	Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Paul Whittles
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
					Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation
					RAG Status	
2024/5		2025/6				
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2			
Green	Red	Grey	Green			

Supporting narrative

2024/5 Q3	Indicative figures as at 21 January 2025, final figures will be confirmed as set out in the Financial Monitoring Report taken to Cabinet 5 February 2025.
2024/5 Q4	Figures subject to audit. Full details of variations will be set out in the Budget Monitoring report to be presented to Cabinet on 2 July 2025
2025/6 Q1	No financial monitoring report was released during Q1. The next scheduled report will be September 2025.
2025/6 Q2	Data from financial monitoring report which will be taken to Cabinet in November.

NFDC ID NO.42: Percentage variance to Housing Revenue budget +/- (HRA budget variations)

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	+/- 3%
Performance	-0.50%	-3.97%	N/A	0.4%	Desired DOT	▲ or ▼
Upper range	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	Format	%
Lower range	-3.00%	-3.00%	-3.00%	-3.00%	Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Paul Whittles
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
					Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation
					RAG Status	
2024/5		2025/6				
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2			
Green	Red	Grey	Green			

Supporting narrative

2024/5 Q3	Indicative figures as at 21 January 2025, final figures will be confirmed as set out in the Financial Monitoring Report taken to Cabinet 5 February 2025.
2024/5 Q4	Figures subject to audit. Full details of variations will be set out in the Budget Monitoring report to be presented to Cabinet on 2 July 2025
2025/6 Q1	No financial monitoring report was released during Q1. The next scheduled report will be September 2025.
2025/6 Q2	Data from financial monitoring report which will be taken to Cabinet in November.

NFDC ID NO.43: Percentage of Council Tax collected in year																				
	2025/6		Q3	Q4	Supporting information															
	Q1	Q2			Target	Desired DOT														
Performance	29.57%	57.13%			57.6%	▲														
Target	29.90%	57.60%	85.30%	98.50%		%														
<table border="1"> <caption>Chart Data: Percentage of Council Tax collected</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Performance</th> <th>Target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q1</td> <td>29.57%</td> <td>29.90%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2</td> <td>57.13%</td> <td>57.60%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3</td> <td></td> <td>85.30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4</td> <td></td> <td>98.50%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Quarter	Performance	Target	Q1	29.57%	29.90%	Q2	57.13%	57.60%	Q3		85.30%	Q4		98.50%	Frequency Quarterly Metric type Cumulative/year to date Leadership team member Ryan Stevens Portfolio holder Cllr Jeremy Heron Overview and scrutiny Resources & Transformation
Quarter	Performance	Target																		
Q1	29.57%	29.90%																		
Q2	57.13%	57.60%																		
Q3		85.30%																		
Q4		98.50%																		
RAG Status																				
			2024/5		2025/6															
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2														
Supporting narrative																				
2025/6 Q1	No court dates for 25/26 until August, so there is a delay in recovery proceedings. In addition we are receiving more requests for 12 instalments, instead of 10.																			
2025/6 Q2	Some instalments have been re-profiled to March 2026 and there was a delay in court date hearings, the first being August 2025.																			
2025/6 Q3																				
2025/6 Q4																				

NFDC ID NO.44: Percentage of Non-domestic Rates collected in year																				
	2025/6		Q3	Q4	Supporting information															
	Q1	Q2			Target	Desired DOT														
Performance	28.63%	56.23%			57.9%	▲														
Target	29.60%	57.90%	84.30%	98.50%		%														
<table border="1"> <caption>Chart Data: Percentage of Non-domestic Rates collected</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Performance</th> <th>Target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q1</td> <td>28.63%</td> <td>29.60%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2</td> <td>56.23%</td> <td>57.90%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3</td> <td></td> <td>84.30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4</td> <td></td> <td>98.50%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Quarter	Performance	Target	Q1	28.63%	29.60%	Q2	56.23%	57.90%	Q3		84.30%	Q4		98.50%	Frequency Quarterly Metric type Cumulative/year to date Leadership team member Ryan Stevens Portfolio holder Cllr Jeremy Heron Overview and scrutiny Resources & Transformation
Quarter	Performance	Target																		
Q1	28.63%	29.60%																		
Q2	56.23%	57.90%																		
Q3		84.30%																		
Q4		98.50%																		
RAG Status																				
			2024/5		2025/6															
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2														
Supporting narrative																				
2025/6 Q1	No court dates for 25/26 until August, so there is a delay in recovery proceedings commencing.																			
2025/6 Q2	Delay in court hearing dates, the first being August 2025 and reduction in retail discount and transitional relief may be impacting collections as businesses have more to pay this year.																			
2025/6 Q3																				
2025/6 Q4																				

Future New Forest: Designing modern and innovative services

NFDC ID NO.45: Benefits realisation from ICT investment

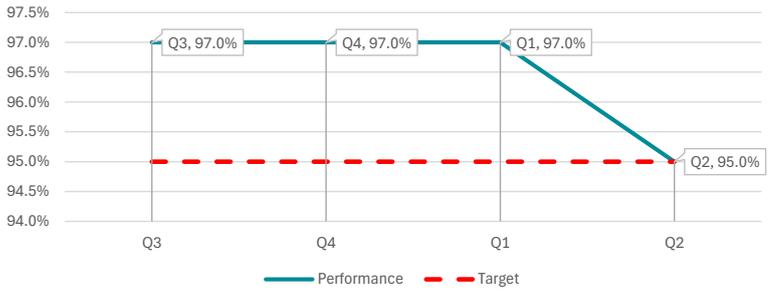
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
Performance	95.00%	96.50%	96.50%	96.50%	Target	70.00%
Target	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%	Desired DOT	Maintain
					Format	%
					Frequency	Every 6 months
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Rich Bird
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
					Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation
RAG Status						
		2024/5		2025/6		
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	



Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	-
2024/5 Q4	Narrative for April 24 - April 25: Azure Migration project = 100% (9/9) Learning Management System (LMS) project = 86% (6/7) (Security training module is targeting go live on LMS on the 17th Jan) Direct Debit = 100% (5/5)
2025/6 Q1	Performance is in line with previously reported percentage.
2025/6 Q2	Project performance remains on track, with no current risks or issues identified that would impact the anticipated completion timelines.

NFDC ID NO.46: Percentage of ICT incidents resolved within SLA

	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
Performance	97.0%	97.0%	97.0%	95.0%	Target	95.0%
Target	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	Desired DOT	▲
					Format	%
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Kim Gray
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
					Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation
RAG Status						
		2024/5		2025/6		
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	



Supporting narrative	
2024/5 Q3	-
2024/5 Q4	Performance is above target and remains steady quarter on quarter.
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above target and in line with previous quarter.
2025/6 Q2	Performance is on target. Slight decrease from last quarter but there was a significant rise in the number of incidents logged within Q2.

NFDC ID NO.47: Percentage of annual ICT work programme delivered on time and on budget						
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	
Performance	93.33%	93.33%	93.33%	93.00%	70.0%	Maintain
Target	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%	%	Quarterly
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Rich Bird
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
					Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation
RAG Status						
2024/5		2025/6				
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2			
Supporting narrative						
2024/5 Q3	-					
2024/5 Q4	Narrative for April 24 - April 25: Azure Migration project = delivered on time in line with board approved project plan. Learning Management System (LMS) project = delivered on time in line with board approved project plan. Direct Debit = delivery delayed by around 1.5 months whilst transition to BAU was better prepared for within business units.					
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above target and in line with previous quarter.					
2025/6 Q2	Project performance remains on track, with no current risks or issues identified that would impact the anticipated completion timelines.					

NFDC ID NO.48: Percentage unscheduled downtime for critical systems						
	2024/5		2025/6		Supporting information	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Target	
Performance	0.16%	0.43%	0.41%	1.05%	<5%	▼
Target	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	%	Quarterly
					Frequency	Quarterly
					Metric type	Snapshot/point in time
					Leadership team member	Kim Gray
					Portfolio holder	Cllr Jeremy Heron
					Overview and scrutiny	Resources & Transformation
RAG Status						
2024/5		2025/6				
Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2			
Supporting narrative						
2024/5 Q3	-					
2024/5 Q4	Performance is within targeted expectation.					
2025/6 Q1	Performance is above target and in line with previous quarter.					
2025/6 Q2	Performance is within targeted expectation.					

*NOTE KPI Nos 34 and 36 have been removed.

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Cabinet – 4 February 2026

Financial Monitoring Report (based on performance April to December 2025 inclusive)

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report provides the latest budget forecasts for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and capital programme for the 2025/26 financial year, based on the third quarter performance from April 2025 to December 2025 inclusive.</p> <p>It shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a balanced budget in the General Fund. b. a balanced budget in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and; c. a net reduction in the capital programme for 2025/26 of £787,000.
Recommendation(s)	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) note the latest budget forecasts of the General Fund, HRA, and Capital; 2) approve net changes to the Capital Programme totalling £787,000; and 3) Recommend to Council that the General Fund Corporate Priority Reserve is increased by £1.296 million.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>To comply with accounting codes of practice and best practice which requires councils to regularly monitor the annual budget position and take any action to support the sustainability of the council's financial position ensuring we are being financially responsible.</p>

	To comply with the council's financial regulations regarding budget virements and supplementary budget requests.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources (Section 151 Officer)
Officer Contact	Paul Whittles Assistant Director - Finance 02380 285766 paul.whittles@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. Following the approval of the Original Budget for 2025/26 in February 2025, this report provides a further update on the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital budgets, adjusting for any budget changes now required and recommended.
2. Financial Monitoring is an important feature in the management of the council's finances as it gives an opportunity to reflect on variations as against the latest set budget and reflect on the impact that these variations may have over the period covered by the council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

General Fund revised projection

3. Appendix 1 sets out the General Fund budget of £25.509 million for 2025/26 as agreed by council in February 2025 (£28.719 million at Portfolio analysis level, with other budget elements reducing this to this lower General Fund budget figure).
4. The quarter one monitoring report to September Cabinet and the quarter two monitoring report to November Cabinet identified total additional budget requirements of £459,000 (£258,000 and £201,000 respectively) with the full amount being offset by an improvement in interest earnings against budget.
5. The latest budget variations reported include net nil expenditure and income variations. In addition to internal virements between portfolios, major variations are detailed below (ordered in

accordance with **Appendix 1**), with full variations listed in **Appendix 2**.

Environment and Sustainability (Place, Operations and Sustainability)

6. **Bring Site Review (£301,000)** – As detailed and agreed in the Waste Service Budget Position report to Cabinet in December, this supplementary budget shall enable the service to operate effectively following the roll out of the new waste collection service which resulted in behaviour changes and a significant increase in the amount of material being brought to bring sites.
7. **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) (-£1.226 million)** - Relating to the Refuse and Recycling service £1.201 million has been received to date for Q1 and Q2 of 2025/26, with a further £1.200 million expected regarding the second half of the financial year (total £2.401 million), therefore providing us with an additional £1.226 million against the £1.175 million budget.

Finance and Corporate (Corporate Resources and Transformation)

8. **Information Governance and Compliance (£39,000)** – Agency staff costs totalling £69,000, partly offset by unused substantive £30,000 salary budget.
9. **Revenues and Benefits (-£40,000)** – net saving due to staff cost variances including vacancies.
10. **ICT Work Programme (-£295,000)** – Timing regarding the deliverability of the ICT transformation work programme means some aspects shall now be undertaken in 2026/27.

Planning and Economy (Place, Operations and Sustainability)

11. **Staffing restructure (-£45,000)** – Changes to the Land Charges and Policy teams have resulted in a £45,000 reduction in expenditure compared to budget.
12. **Appeal costs (£40,000)** – Unbudgeted costs of ongoing planning appeal.
13. **Building Control, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Administration and Planning income (-£70,000)** – Collectively forecasting greater than budgeted income.
14. The revised General Fund Budget for 2025/26 can be seen at Appendix 1, with further details on the variations being reported included within Appendix 2.

Other Financial Matters of note

15. **Bed and Breakfast** – spend to date remains ahead of the profiled budget, whilst these increases in expenditure shall be mitigated in part by an increase in benefit subsidy received, and likely smaller positive budget variances within the service, the council remains watchful of this evolving situation as it could lead to an in-year budget pressure.
16. **Hardley Depot** – An incident at the depot has resulted in the need to replenish stolen equipment plus additional security improvement expenditure. An insurance claim is still pending and once concluded any financial consequences shall be declared as necessary.
17. Due to the overall improvement in funding, effectively providing a forecast surplus, the report contains a recommendation to increase the council's **Corporate Priority Reserve** by £1.296 million. This can be used to support the council's priorities, with the current balance (before this recommendation takes effect) of £1.846m as at 31/3/2025 allocated to support the delivery of the transformation programme, the waste roll out and the delivery of the Strategic Asset Management Plan, including the investment in improvements to Public Conveniences across the district.

Housing Revenue Account Revised Projection

18. A break-even HRA budget for 2025/26 was agreed in February 2025, with a Revenue Account contribution of £10.200 million supporting the financing of the £30.820 million HRA Capital Programme.
19. The quarter one monitoring report to September Cabinet and the quarter two monitoring report to November Cabinet identified total additional budget requirements of £208,000 (£60,000 funded from earmarked reserve and £148,000 respectively).
20. The latest budget variations are reported below:
21. **Non-Dwelling Rents (£60,000)** - Income has reduced due to an increase in the number of void garages, largely due to the ongoing project to review options for all sites.
22. **Interest Earnings (-£20,000)** – Interest income will be higher due to higher year end opening and closing reserve balances, offset by lower average interest rates than originally predicted.

23. **General Management (-£85,000)** - Timing regarding the deliverability of the ICT transformation work programme means some aspects shall now be undertaken in 2026/27.
24. **Capital Financing Costs – Interest (-£436,000)** - Interest costs are anticipated to be £436,000 less than budget due to a smaller borrowing requirement than originally expected in both 2024/25 and 2025/26, partly due to higher-than-normal capital receipts (£6 million received in year to date) and lower interest rates on actual borrowing taken out during 2025/26.
25. **Capital Financing Costs – Principal (£333,000)** – When setting the original budget this was reduced to act as a balancing figure and therefore is now being increased to reduce the loan re-financing requirement.
26. The updated balanced HRA budget can be seen at Appendix 3.

Capital Expenditure (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account)

27. A Capital Programme budget of £50.231 million for 2025/26 was agreed by council in February 2025.
28. Principally due to rephasing from 2024/25, the budget was increased by £2.093 million to £52.324 million in the September Cabinet report.
29. The quarter two monitoring report identified net programme changes totalling £154,000 which results in an updated 2025/26 Capital Programme Budget of £52.478 million (Appendix 4).
30. The latest forecast confirms a net reduction to the programme totalling £787,000 which results in an updated 2025/26 Capital Programme Budget of £51.691 million (Appendix 4).
31. Details of the significant changes are provided below:
32. **Leader / Finance & Corporate (£26,000)** – NFDC matched funding has been made available to support improvement to Hythe Promenade as part of the investment supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
33. **Environment and Sustainability (£37,000)** – Additional resources to support the Hurst Spit Beach Management Plan (BMP) work, fully funded by external grant.
34. **Housing Revenue Account (-£850,000)** – £850,000 of Fire Risk Assessment Works have been rephased into 2026/27, due to the complexity of scope of work, preparation of tender documents and

planning/building control regulation approvals. This rescheduling has not increased the risk, as the scope of work is intended to support fire safety improvements as a betterment to those in place at the time of construction, and which are already compliant with Building Regulations. Any urgent work to deal with risk mitigation has already taken place.

Corporate plan priorities

35. Regular monitoring and reporting of our financial activity including adjusting budgets whilst maintaining a balanced medium term financial plan (MTFP), ensures we are being financially responsible and supports our Future New Forest transformation programme which underpins the delivery of all our priorities.

Options appraisal

36. Members could choose to reallocate some or all of the additional forecast surplus differently rather than increase the Corporate Priority Reserve.

Consultation undertaken

37. Internal consultation between finance officers, service managers and budget holders has determined the forecast data presented in the report.

Financial and resource implications

38. This is a financial report with budget implications already detailed and considered in the main body of the report.

Legal implications

39. The Council will have a legal requirement to play a role in ensuring that the new Sovereign Authority created through a structural change order in due course, is 'Safe and Legal' on vesting day. Sound financial stewardship will support this.

Risk assessment

40. The projected forecast is prepared based on estimates and assumptions in consultation with services. There are key risks in the projections across all service areas and both revenue and capital activity.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

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

Equalities implications

42. There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

Crime and disorder implications

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

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

44. There are no data protection, information governance or ICT implications arising directly from this report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Revised General Fund Budget 2025/26

Appendix 2 – Variation Analysis General Fund 2025/26

Appendix 3 – Revised Housing Revenue Account Budget 2025/26

Appendix 4 – Revised Capital Programme 2025/26

Background Papers:

[Cabinet 5 November 2025](#)

Financial Monitoring Report
(based on performance April to September 2025 inclusive)

[Cabinet 3 September 2025](#)

Financial Monitoring Report
(based on performance April to June 2025 inclusive)

[Cabinet 19 February 2025 – Budget Reports 2025/26](#)

Housing Revenue Account Budget and the Housing Public Sector Capital Expenditure Programme 2025/26

Medium Term Financial Plan and Annual Budget 2025/26

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2025/26						
REVISED GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2025/26	Feb-25	Nov-25	February-26			
	2025/26 £'000's Original Budget	2025/26 £'000's Latest Budget	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Expend.	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Income	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Rephasings	2025/26 £'000's Updated Budget
PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS						
Community, Safety and Wellbeing	3,389	3,530	15	-15	0	3,530
Environment and Sustainability	11,747	12,392	301	0	0	12,693
Finance and Corporate	3,710	3,762	-24	0	0	3,738
Housing and Homelessness	3,652	3,686	0	0	0	3,686
Leader	2,243	2,277	23	0	0	2,300
Planning and Economy	3,978	4,494	-5	-70	0	4,419
Multi Portfolio adjustments - To be allocated	0	-43	-295	0	0	-338
	28,719	30,098	15	-85	0	30,028
Reversal of Depreciation	-2,768	-2,768				-2,768
Contribution (from) / to Earmarked Revenue Reserves	-1,645	-2,565	-15	1,311	0	-1,269
NET PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS	24,306	24,765	0	1,226	0	25,991
Minimum Revenue Provision	2,512	2,512				2,512
Contribution to Capital Programme Financing (RCCO)	1,100	1,100				1,100
Interest Costs	206	206				206
Interest Earnings	-1,432	-1,891				-1,891
Waste Services Grant	-1,175	-1,175		-1,226		-2,401
Other Grants	-8	-8				-8
GENERAL FUND NET BUDGET REQUIREMENTS	25,509	25,509	0	0	0	25,509
COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION						
Budget Requirement	25,509	25,509	0	0	0	25,509
Less: Settlement Funding Assessment						
Lower Tier Service Grant	0	0				0
Services Grant / Revenue Support Grant	-1	-1				-1
New Homes Bonus	-36	-36				-36
Employers National Insurance Grant	-155	-155				-155
Guarantee Grant (MHCLG)	-676	-676				-676
Business Rates Baseline	-4,378	-4,378				-4,378
	-5,246	-5,246	0	0	0	-5,246
Locally Retained Business Rates	-5,007	-5,007				-5,007
Estimated Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit Business Rates	-192	-192				-192
Estimated Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit Council Tax	-162	-162				-162
Contribution from Business Rates Equalisation Reserve	192	192				192
Contribution to/ from(-) Variation Reserves	0	0	0	0	0	0
COUNCIL TAX	15,094	15,094	0	0	0	15,094
TAX BASE NUMBER OF PROPERTIES	73,355.00	73,355.00				73,355.00
COUNCIL TAX PER BAND D PROPERTY	205.77	205.77				205.77
GENERAL FUND BALANCE 31 MARCH	3,000	3,000				3,000

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2025/26				
VARIATION ANALYSIS GENERAL FUND 2025/26				
Nov-25 2025/26 £'000's Latest Budget	February-26			2025/26 £'000's Updated Budget
	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Expend.	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Income	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Rephasings	
PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS				
Community, Safety and Wellbeing				
Previously Reported September Cabinet;				
Implications of the 25/26 pay award	27			
Grants - Rephasings	29			
CCTV Expansion - Rephasing - part £300k	51			
Community Safety - grant	34			
New Items;				
Sports & Comm Dev - Grant receipt		15	-15	
	141	15	-15	0
Environment and Sustainability				
Previously Reported September Cabinet;				
Implications of the 25/26 pay award	126			
Cemeteries - Sway & New Milton AMR schemes into 25/26	47			
Foreshores - Coastal Water Safety AMR scheme into 25/26	21			
Open Spaces - Scheme virement to Contingency (Finance & Corporate)	-30			
Operational Restructure - budget movement to Finance & Corporate	-36			
Refuse & Recycling- additional Grant re New Service Roll Out	-151			
Operations Administration - service change workload and sickness temporary cover	25			
Refuse & Recycling - New Drivers to be appointed earlier than budgeted	67			
Refuse & Recycling - Narrow Access Round	59			
Waste Transition - Recruitment of additional waste advisers	46			
Waste Transition - Additional Customer Services	20			
Waste Transition - Additional Programme Support	22			
Public Conveniences - Cleaners pay adjustments/Streetscene income	26			
Refuse & Recycling/StreetScene - Drivers pay to reflect market supplement (Contingency)	116			
Refuse & Recycling - Behind Gates Collection trial	150			
Refuse & Recycling - New Waste Supervisor	19			
Previously Reported November Cabinet;				
Car Parking - projected income shortfall, new F&C's 2026 (clocks/meter)	65			
Keyhaven River - projected income shortfall, new F&C's 2026 (mooring fees)	29			
Public Conveniences - survey costs	24			
New Items;				
Bring Site Review - Waste and Streetscene implications (as per CN EMT report 11/11/25)		301		
	645	301	0	0
Finance and Corporate				
Previously Reported September Cabinet;				
Implications of the 25/26 pay award	65			
Pay award 25/26 implications funded by Contingency	-316			
Additional Pay award 25/26 implications funded by Contingency - Drivers	-116			
Contingency - Scheme virement from Open Spaces (Env. & Sustain.)	30			
Operational Restructure - budget movement from Env. & Sustain.	36			
People Strategy - budget movement to Transformation (Leader)	-50			
Lymington Town Hall Site - Residual HCC Grant into 25/26	16			
Commercial Inv. Property - Salisbury Road, Totton Scheme into 25/26	157			
Corporate Management - Fleet & Infrastructure Strategy into 25/26	80			
Previously Reported November Cabinet;				
Revenues Service - Vacancy Salary Savings / reduced court cost income	0			
Pension Increase Act - Added Years	30			
Commercial Inv. Property - Platinum Jubilee Business Park	120			
New Items;				
Elections - virement from AMR Contingency - Booths etc		-23		
Salary vacancy savings within Info Gov & Com		-30		
Agency costs within Info Gov & Com		69		
Council Tax - CAB Grant		15		
Revenues Service - Vacancy Salary Savings		-55		
	52	-24	0	0
Housing and Homelessness				
Previously Reported September Cabinet;				
Implications of the 25/26 pay award	34			
New Items;				
None				
	34	0	0	0

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2025/26				
VARIATION ANALYSIS GENERAL FUND 2025/26				
Nov-25 2025/26 £'000's Latest Budget	February-26			2025/26 £'000's Updated Budget
	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Expend.	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Income	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Rephasings	
PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS				
Leader				
Previously Reported September Cabinet;				
Implications of the 25/26 pay award	9			
Resident Insight Survey - remove budget	-25			
People Strategy - budget movement from Corp. Management (Finance)	50			
Previously Reported November Cabinet;				
UK Shared Prosperity Fund budget transfer from Revenue to Capital	0			
New Items;				
Elections - virement from AMR Contingency - Booths etc		23		
	34	23	0	23
Planning and Economy				
Previously Reported September Cabinet;				
Implications of the 25/26 pay award	55			
Local Plan - Local Plan Grant rephasing & Green Belt grant	298			
Policy - Improve Digital Planning Grant	63			
Economic Development - budget for Totton Masterplan	100			
New Items;				
Building Control - Income shortfall		40		
Policy -Additional CIL Admin Income		-40		
Policy - Salary savings restructure	-70			
Land Charges - salary overspends restructure	25			
Planning DM - Additional fee income		-70		
Planning DM - Appeal costs due	40			
	516	-5	-70	-75
Portfolio adjustments - Non Direct				
Previously Reported November Cabinet;				
Corporate Administration - Vacancy Salary Savings	-43			
New Items;				
ICT Work Programme		-295		
	-43	-295	0	-295
TOTAL PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS				
	1,379	15	-85	0
NON-PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS				
Interest Earnings				
Central Government Grants		0	-1,226	0
Contribution to/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-920	-15	1,311	0
Interest earnings	-459			
TOTAL NON-PORTFOLIO ADJUSTMENTS				
	-1,379	-15	85	70
GRAND TOTAL ADJUSTMENTS (Credited to (-) / Debited from (+) Budget Reserves)				
	0	0	0	0

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2025/26				
REVISED HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET				
2025/26	Feb-25	Nov-25	February-26	
	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26
	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
	Original	Latest	New	Updated
	Budget	Budget	Variations	Budget
INCOME				
Dwelling Rents	-34,230	-34,230		-34,230
Non Dwelling Rents	-735	-735	60	-675
Charges for Services & Facilities	-1,142	-1,142		-1,142
Contributions towards Expenditure	-277	-277		-277
Interest Receivable	-418	-418	-20	-438
Sales Administration Recharge	-33	-33		-33
Shared Amenities Contribution	-361	-361		-361
TOTAL INCOME	-37,196	-37,196	40	-37,156
EXPENDITURE				
Repairs & Maintenance				
Cyclical Maintenance	2,234	2,390		2,390
Reactive Maintenance - General	3,520	3,546		3,546
Reactive Maintenance - Voids	1,886	1,896		1,896
Supervision & Management				
General Management	8,288	8,295	-85	8,210
Grounds Maintenance and Trees	1,087	1,094		1,094
Older Person and Temporary Accommodation	1,199	1,201		1,201
Rents, Rates, Taxes and Other Charges		0		0
Provision for Bad Debt	150	150		150
Capital Financing Costs - Interest/Debt Management	5,608	5,608	-436	5,172
Capital Financing Costs - Internal Borrowing		0		0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	23,972	24,180	-521	23,659
HRA OPERATING SURPLUS(-)	-13,224	-13,016	-481	-13,497
Contribution to Capital - supporting Housing Strategy	10,200	10,200		10,200
Capital Financing Costs - Principal	3,174	3,174	333	3,507
HRA Total Annual Surplus(-) / Deficit	150	358	-148	210
Contribution to/from(-) Earmarked Reserves	-150	-210		-210
HRA TOTAL ANNUAL SURPLUS(-) / DEFICIT	0	148	-148	0

FINANCIAL MONITORING 2025/26					
REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26					
Portfolio	Feb-25	Nov-25	February-26		
	2025/26 £'000's Original Budget	2025/26 £'000's Latest Budget	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Expend.	2025/26 £'000's New Variations Rephasing	2025/26 £'000's Updated Budget
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	LEADER/ALL	60	113	26	139
Rural England Prosperity Fund	LEADER/ALL		162		162
Disabled Facilities Grants	HSG (GF)	1,500	1,000		1,000
Sustainability Fund - Unallocated	ENV & SUSTAIN	100	100		100
Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring (22-27)	ENV & SUSTAIN	2,829	3,009		3,009
Barton Horizontal Directional Drilling Trials	ENV & SUSTAIN	135	238		238
Hurst Spit Beach Shingle Source Study	ENV & SUSTAIN	75	90		90
Milford Beach and Cliff Study	ENV & SUSTAIN	230	230		230
Hurst Spit BMP Works	ENV & SUSTAIN			37	37
Waste Strategy Container Roll Out	ENV & SUSTAIN	4,550	4,593		4,593
Asset Modernisation Programme - Public Convenience	ENV & SUSTAIN		58		58
Car Parking - new land purchase	ENV & SUSTAIN				
Eling Tide Mill Urgent Repair Works	FIN & CORP	200	200		200
Eling Toll Bridge and Quayside Repairs	FIN & CORP	60	100		100
New Depot Site: Hardley	FIN & CORP				
Commercial Property - Queensway - addit.works	FIN & CORP		323		323
ATC Accommodation Refurbishment	FIN & CORP	200	200		200
Ringwood Depot: Extension and Works	FIN & CORP		248		248
V&P; Replacement Programme	FIN & CORP	2,463	2,516		2,516
V&P; Replacement Programme - Waste Strategy Vehicles	FIN & CORP	3,709	4,405		4,405
Mitigation Schemes	PLAN & ECON	1,000	1,000		1,000
Infrastructure Projects	PLAN & ECON	1,000	1,000		1,000
Strategic Infrastructure Projects	PLAN & ECON	1,000	1,000		1,000
Arts & Culture Projects	PLAN & ECON	300	300		300
TOTAL GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME		19,411	20,885	63	20,948
Fire Risk Assessment Works	HRA	1,500	1,500		650
Major Structural Refurbishments	HRA		921		921
HRA - Major Repairs	HRA	11,100	10,752		10,752
Decarbonisation	HRA	1,870	2,070		2,070
Estate Improvements	HRA	200	200		200
Council Dwellings - Strategy Delivery	HRA	15,200	15,200		15,200
Disabled Facilities Grants	HRA	950	950		950
TOTAL HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME		30,820	31,593	-850	30,743
GRAND TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME		50,231	52,478	63	51,691

Cabinet – 4 February 2026

Community Grant Funding 2026/27

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>The Council’s Corporate Plan prioritises the delivery of an annual Community Grants scheme to support organisations delivering wide-ranging services to different communities and to meet the needs of vulnerable residents in the district through the award of discretionary revenue and capital grants to support organisations which meet the Council’s objectives.</p> <p>The proposals in this report include total awards of revenue community grants of £201,859 for 2026/27, summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Revenue grants of £157,500 to support 28 organisations, of which £72,000 are longer term awards. b) Community Transport scheme grants of £44,359, <p>An allocation of up to £100,000 is available toward capital community grant applications. The proposals in this report include total awards of community capital grants of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) £97,949 to support 10 projects
Recommendation	<p>As recommended by the Task & Finish Group and Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel that the Cabinet approve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community grants totalling £157,500 in revenue grants and £97,949 in capital grants, as detailed in Appendix 1, for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and proposed budget for 2026/27; 2. The proposals, as detailed in paragraph 19;

	<p>3. The Community Transport grants totalling £44,359, as set out in paragraph 25; and</p> <p>4. A procedural change to award Band A organisations a rolling 3-year award, if agreed by the Task & Finish Group, and for any further procedural changes brought about by LGR to be considered by the Task & Finish Group and agreed through the PFH for Community, Safety and Wellbeing.</p>
Reasons for recommendation	To complete the Community Grants process for 2026/27.
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Dan Poole – Housing and Communities
Strategic Director	Peter Matthew – Strategic Director Housing and Communities
Officer Contact	<p>Ryan Stevens Service Manager Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services 02380 285693 Ryan.stevens@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction and background

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the recommendations of the Community Grants Task and Finish Group. Community grants are distributed to support groups and organisations located within the district who support our residents and communities. The Council is committed to supporting organisations through the Community Grants programme, which is a key priority in the Corporate Plan, actively promoting the programme and encouraging new applications.
2. A full review of the Community Grants scheme was undertaken in 2024; however, a further recommended change is proposed. The Task and Finish Group also received an update on the Community Lottery, including the funding raised for good causes to date, along with the central fund.

- The Council continues to work in partnership with Hampshire County Council on the provision of two community transport schemes to support vulnerable residents with transport.

Community Grants

- On 26, 27 and 28 November 2025 the Community Grants Task and Finish Group met to consider the revenue and capital Community Grant applications received for the 2026/27 financial year. We received an unprecedented 42 revenue applications, 23 being first time applicants (54%), and 24 capital applications, from a range of organisations across the district. The programme was promoted via social media, partner organisations, networking and residents' email, with the application window being open for two months.
- The value of revenue grant applications totalled £504,048 (£277,163 in 2024) and capital grant applications totalled £317,616 (£86,371 in 2024).
- All recipients of a community grant are provided with information and communications to promote the award by the Council in any publicity or promotional materials.

Revenue grants – the process

- From the 2024 grants programme 5 organisations were awarded 3-year grant agreements from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028 as they are key partners who work closely with the Council and support our services and communities. These organisations are:

Organisation	Grant amount for each year
Community First Wessex	35,000
New Forest Disability Information Service	5,000
The Crossings	10,000
The Handy Trust	10,000
Youth and Families Matter	12,000
Total	67,000

- The 3-year funding agreement provides financial security and enables longer term planning, with the grants paid annually. Officers meet regularly with all recipients to review activities, initiatives, objectives and targets.
- An application was received from New Forest Disability Information Service for additional grant funding. The Group reviewed the request and when considering the work undertaken, the coverage, and the uniqueness of the support provided to a vulnerable cohort,

recommended increasing the grant for years 2 and 3 to £10,000 per year.

10. In accordance with the revised process, applications were scored against a matrix and placed into one of three bands, A, B and C. The matrix comprised of various categories, including, how the application demonstrated:
 - value for money
 - a local need
 - that it supports the Council's corporate priorities
 - that funding is required
 - alternative or additional funding raising activities had been explored
 - that it supports Council services and/or priorities
 - that it supports the residents of the New Forest
 - the area of the district covered
 - if the service is duplicated elsewhere
11. Due to the volume of applications, it was not feasible to invite all applicants to interview. Therefore, those applications scoring low against the matrix criteria, or submitted an incomplete application or which did not meet the eligibility criteria, were placed into Band C and not invited to present their application to the Group.
12. From the 42 applications, 28 were placed in Band B and were invited to the Task and Finish Group to present how their application would meet the needs of, and benefit or support, residents in the district. Applicants were also asked to explain how their funding request linked to the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan and their outcomes and key deliverables, with Members asking further questions about their organisation and application. Advice was also given to applicants on additional and/or alternative funding streams, such as Councillor Engagement grants and Community First Wessex membership.
13. Following the presentations, the Task and Finish Group thoroughly discussed and deliberated the applications. In formulating a recommendation for each grant request, members considered the agreed criteria, the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, and the value for money being offered. Due to the very high number and value of applications the Group had to make difficult decisions and in a number of instances the Group recommended grants of less than the amount being requested so as to support as many groups as possible and to recognise the benefits and work of the individual grant applications. Consideration was given to organisations submitting their first application, if the service is duplicated elsewhere, the financial position, and the impact and benefits of a grant being awarded.

14. From the interviews the Group are recommending a grant award to 11 organisation (47% of awards) who have not previously had a community grant award, and further 2 applications did not receive a grant last year, meaning 56% have not received a grant in the last two years.
- 15. The Group recommendations of each grant application are summarised in Appendix 1, with further details in Appendix 2.**

Capital grants – the process

16. In accordance with the new process, applications were scored against a matrix of criteria which comprised of various categories, including, how the application demonstrated:
 - value for money
 - community benefits
 - it supports the Council's corporate priorities
 - if there is community support
 - if the project is deliverable
 - if the project supports key infrastructure in the community
 - if the project will be used by the wider community
 - how the project positively supports climate change
17. The Task and Finish group fully discussed and considered the information provided in the applications and the scoring matrix to make their recommendations. Where the applicant had not secured 50% of the project costs, or exceeded the maximum grant award, as detailed in the guidance provided to applicants, these applications were ineligible and not considered.
- 18. The Group's recommendations for each grant application are summarised in Appendix 1, with further details in Appendix 2.**

Review of the community grants process

19. On completing the process, the Task and Finish Group undertook a review and recommend the following:
 - a. To reduce the maximum grant award for revenue grants from £20,000 to £10,000 for Band B
 - b. To amend the ordering of questions in the Revenue grant application form so that employee details appear with the budget information
 - c. To continue in person attendance to the Group for revenue grant applications

- d. To use the funds raised from the New Forest community lottery general fund to top-up the revenue community grant budget
20. The Group did receive feedback from several applicants who expressed support for the community grants programme as most grant funding is now aimed at specific project work, and not to support the core infrastructure and day-to-day running costs of the organisations, without which project work cannot be achieved.

Community Transport grants

21. The Task and Finish Group also considered community transport grants, which the Council has supported for many years. There are currently 2 schemes the Council supports in partnership with Hampshire County Council for transportation projects, all funded from the overall annual budget for Community Grants. After a recent procurement exercise, new contracts were awarded from 1 September 2025 with Community First Wessex administering the two schemes, which are:

- Call and Go – This is a bookable community transport service for anyone whose transport needs are not met by public bus services to go, for example, shopping, to visit a library or to see family and friends. Drivers will assist with carrying shopping and wheelchair accessible minibuses collect users from their home at a pre-arranged time. The cost will vary according to the distance travelled.

Current NFDC funding is £29,998 per year

- Group Hire – This scheme provides affordable wheelchair accessible minibuses to hire for voluntary or charitable organisations for a period of 3 hours to 1 week. The cost of hire depends on the distance travelled and duration of hire period.

Current NFDC grant funding is £14,361 per year

22. The total current funding for the two community transport schemes is £44,359, with Hampshire County Council also providing grant funding. The amounts are to be increased annually by April's Consumer Price Index (CPI).
23. The Group reviewed the numbers using the two schemes, with Call and Go and Group Hire recovering following the pandemic. Call & Go has over 400 regular monthly users, mostly being elderly or with mobility issues, whilst Group Hire has 307 organisations registered and averages 486 passenger trips each month.

24. The Group was of the view that NFDC should maintain the same level of funding for the Call and Go and Group Hire service to continue our support our communities, especially those who are vulnerable and in rural areas with limited transport links.

25. The Group recommend the following:

- **Funding for Call & Go for 2026/27 to be £29,997.80**
- **Funding for Group Hire for 2026/27 to be £14,361.12**
- **To continue the funding for both schemes in 2027/28 and 2028/29, subject to an annual increase based on April's CPI.**

26. Following a further officer review the following recommendations were put forward to the Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to amend the administration of grants during 2026 for distribution in 2027/28 as follows:

- Ringfence an annual allocation of up to £120,000 toward revenue funding for Band A organisations, with any residual value available for Band B awards.
- Implement a rolling 3-year award to Band A organisations.
- Prioritise the award of capital grants to organisations who propose additional, or replacement community play spaces and equipment.

27. These recommendations were well debated but not all supported by the Panel, although there was agreement to offer a 3-year rolling period, with the opportunity to review any procedural changes with the Task & Finish group during 2026 and to return with any additional recommendations at a later date, which is framed by recommendation 4.

Corporate plan priorities

28. The contents of this report support the key priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan by providing community grants to organisations that support and meet the diverse needs of the district's communities and vulnerable people, and working closely with key partners to help resolve issues, including those associated with cost of living, homelessness, and health and wellbeing, as well as supporting a vibrant arts and culture offer.

Options appraisal

29. Details of the options and discussions are included in the paragraphs above.

Consultation

30. The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel at the meeting on 21 January 2026, considered the report and following discussions support the recommendations as detailed in this report.

Financial and resource implications

31. The proposed recommendations of this report are included in the overall budget allocated to community grants of £350,000, of which £250,000 is allocated to revenue projects, which includes Members Community Engagement Grants of £48,000, and funded via the general fund, and £100,000 to capital projects, funded from general fund reserves. The resources used to administer this programme are maintained within existing resources.
32. The proposals in this report include total awards of community grants of £299,338, summarised as:
- a) Revenue grants of £157,500
 - b) Capital grants of £97,479
 - c) The proposed budget for 2026/27 for the Community Transport schemes of £44,359

Legal implications

33. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Risk assessment

34. There are no risk assessments required, however as part of the deliberations consideration is given to the financial stability of the organisation to ensure that grants are only awarded where the organisation can demonstrate longer term financial stability to deliver the services.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

35. There are no significant environmental or climate and nature implications arising from this report, although applicants to community grants did have to provide details of their activities to support the Council's commitment to climate sustainability, such as recycling bikes and making buildings more energy efficient.

Equalities implications

36. Our Community Grants programme continues to support a wide range of organisations across the district that support, engage and benefit our diverse communities and residents, including those with mental health and disabilities, the elderly and vulnerable

households, as well as those that support the LGBTQ+ and Traveller communities. Applicants have to demonstrate through the application form and process how corporate priorities will be met, for example supporting residents with the greatest need.

Crime and disorder implications

37. There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from this report. However, several of the organisations proposed to receive grant funding support vulnerable people to sustain accommodation and maximise income, and work with communities and partners to reduce crime.
38. It is a widely held view that providing support to these groups increases stability and positive behaviours, as well as reducing the likelihood of people falling victim to crime.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

39. There are no data protection, information governance or ICT implications arising from this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Details of grant applications and award recommendations

Appendix 2 – Summary of revenue grant recommendations

Background Papers:

There are none.

Appendix 1 – Community grant applications

A. Summary of Revenue Grants - Band A (3-year funding agreement)

No.	APPLICANT	GRANT AMOUNT
1	Community First Wessex	30,000
2	New Forest Disability Information Service	10,000
3	The Crossings	10,000
4	The Handy Trust	10,000
5	Youth and Families Matter	12,000
Total		72,000

B. Revenue Grants considered by the Task and Finish Group - Band B

No.	APPLICANT	AMOUNT REQUESTED	RECOMMEN- DATION	2025/26 AWARD (INFO ONLY)
1	Aquaphonics	20,000	4,000	N/A
2	ArtfulScribe	5,000	0	N/A
3	Breakout Youth	7,500	3,000	N/A
4	Broadleaf Home Ed Co-Op	20,000	0	N/A
5	Countryside Education Trust	20,000	0	N/A
6	Families Matter	10,000	6,000	5,000
7	First Steps New Forest	8,000	3,000	N/A
8	Fluid Motion Theatre Company	20,000	4,000	N/A
9	Forest Forge	20,000	4,000	7,500
10	Hammersley Homes	20,000	0	3,000
11	HomeStart	9,100	3,000	0
12	Helping Older people	20,000	4,000	10,000
13	New Forest Basics Bank	12,000	6,000	3,500
14	New Forest Bike Project	5,000	3,000	3,000
15	New Forest Heritage Centre	10,000	3,000	0
16	Pennington Action Group	4,200	3,000	N/A
17	Positive Path Foundation	10,000	3,000	0
18	Ringwood Foodbank	6,851	3,000	N/A
19	SPUD	15,000	4,000	7,500
20	St Barbe	12,000	4,000	3,000
21	STARF	15,000	4,000	N/A
22	Step Up Safe Space	4,576	3,000	N/A
23	The Branch	10,000	3,000	4,000
24	The Honey-pot Childrens Charity	9,820	4,000	6,000
25	Thorneyhill Community Centre	8,000	3,000	N/A
26	Totton Spiritualist Church	3,000	0	N/A
27	Yellow Door	20,000	4,500	0
28	Youth in Romsey	17,160	4,000	7,500
Total		£199,663	£85,500	

(Note: N/A means there was no application received for 2025/26)

C. Revenue Grants not considered by the Group - Band C

ITEM	APPLICANT	AMOUNT REQUESTED
29	15TH New Forest Milford Scout	5,000
30	Aid Ukraine Direct	5,000
31	All Saints Luncheon Club	4,000
32	Burley Charities	3,000
33	Close Combat Martial Arts	20,000
34	Dementia Friendly Hampshire	5,000
35	Lyndhurst Shed	13,500
36	MHA Communities	15,000
37	New Forest Carriage for the Disabled	6,000
38	New Forest for Ukraine	3,000
39	New Forest Mind Body and Spirit	17,441
40	New Forest Wellbeing	8,000
41	Project Manna	24,400
42	Waterside Arts	15,000
	Total	£144,341

D. Capital Grants considered by the Task and Finish Group

No.	APPLICANT	PROJECT	AMOUNT REQUESTED	RECOMMEN- DATION
1	Bashley Football Club	Disabled toilets	4,050	4,050
2	Blandford Hall	Roof repair	3,325	3,325
3	Boldre Parish Council	Hall refurbishment	7,000	7,000
4	Bramshaw Community Speed Watch	Speed indicator device	3,107	0*
5	Bramshaw Village Hall	Hall refurbishment	2,000	2,000
6	Burley Parish Council	Village enhancements	4,875	0*
7	Cadnam Cricket Club	Changing and shower facilities	16,000	0*
8	Exbury Club	Community playground	25,000	0*
9	Fawley Rugby Club	Green initiatives	25,000	25,000
10	Foxies Future	Access barrier improvements	4,940	0
11	Hulse Hall	Treatment plant	15,000	0
12	Lymington Community Association	Upgrade electrical supply	90,169	0**
13	Lymington Cricket Club	Scoreboard	3,000	0
14	Lymington Croquet Club	Second lawn	17,577	0
15	Lymington Pétanque Club	Lighting	9,000	0*

16	Lyndhurst and District Community Association	Hall refurbishment	11,224	11,224
17	New Milton Men Shed	Building extension	6,000	6,000
18	Ringwood and District Community Association	New community café	25,000	25,000
19	Salvation Army	Media upgrade	5,000	0*
20	SPUD	Accessibility improvements	11,141	0
21	St Barbe Museum	Visual improvements	4,600	4,600
22	Woodgreen Village Hall	New LED lighting	9,750	9,750
23	The Milford Millenium Hall	New flooring	7,358	0*
24	Totton Community Centre	Hall refurbishment	7,500	0
		TOTAL	£317,616	£97,949

* These applications had not secured the minimum 50% funding of the overall project costs so are ineligible

** This application is for an amount exceeding the £25,000 limit so ineligible

Appendix 2 – Summary of recommendations for revenue grants applications

A. Revenue Grants – Band A

1	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Disability Information Service (NFDIS)	NFDIS provides specialised, free, impartial, and confidential disability related information, advice, and guidance to anyone with a disability who lives or works within the New Forest area. NFDIS are the only organisation within the district that support and represent disabled clients at benefit tribunals. NFDIS specialise in providing mobility aids and equipment, and collaborate with community and other organisations to help people maximise their wellbeing and live safely and as independently as possible in their own home.

Request

£15,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £10,000 be given for years 2 and 3.

Reason for decision:

NFDIS is the only organisation of its kind in the district and provides an essential service to the vulnerable in the face of ever-increasing demand and supports the council in many ways, including with the Just Got Home, working from Lymington and Fordingbridge hospital, and Independence Matters projects. The Group acknowledged the great work of NFDIS in supporting and advocating for vulnerable and disabled residents and the expansion of outreach work.

B. Revenue Grants - Band B

1	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Aquaphonics	Aquaponics began as way of 'companion farming' where fish and plants grow and nurture each other, providing healthy food in a regenerative and waste-free way. They have since expanded to also support the community with clothes swap, a repair café, and distribute food waste from supermarkets, as well as a food pantry.

Request

£20,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £4,000 be given

Reason for decision:

The Group recognised the range of work of the organisation in educating and promoting sustainable activities, supporting, local communities,

reducing poverty and providing the repair café, food pantry and “cook-ups”.

2	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	ArtfulScribe	ArtfulScribe is a literature development agency based in Southampton who support emerging and continuing writers to create new work and develop skills through writing workshops, live events and career development opportunities. They work with all ages and levels of ability, collaborate with schools, businesses and organisations, embedding writing into everyday activities through residencies, creative programmes and events.

Request

£5,000

Recommendation

That no grant be given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that this was not a corporate priority when considering other applications and the budget available, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents.

3	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Breakout Youth	Breakout Youth is the only dedicated LGBTQ+ organisation supporting young people aged 11-25 across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (IOW). They provide safe spaces to deliver seven weekly youth groups, including in New Milton and Marchwood.

Request

£7,500

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The recognised the work of Breakout Youth in supporting the LGBTQ+ community, in particular providing 1-2-1 sessions and workshops, support with coping strategies and mental health challenges, and their educational work with schools.

4	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Broadleaf Home Ed Co-Op	Broadleaf is a community-led organisation, supporting children, young people and their families through a creative, social and nature-based wellbeing programme. They work directly with families who are not currently accessing school who can find belonging, purpose and connection within a beautiful natural landscape.

Request Recommendation

£20,000 That no grant be given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that this was not a corporate priority when considering other applications and the budget available, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents.

5	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Countryside Educational Trust	The Countryside Education Trust (CET) was founded as a means of ensuring access to the countryside to all, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. By connecting people and nature the CET helps children and adults understand, protect and conserve the countryside. The CET uses its skills and knowledge to inspire people to act in the face of the nature and climate crisis. This is achieved through a mix of formal education via work with schools, and informal community-based activities such as clubs, volunteering, and events skills training.

Request Recommendation

£20,000 That no grant be given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that this was not a corporate priority when considering other applications and the budget available, the reserves and incoming streams being developed, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents.

6	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Families Matter	Families Matter is based in Hythe which helps families in need in the Waterside area. They support parents through parenting classes and groups for parents and children with special needs, autism and mental health, and through a crisis, i.e. separation, domestic violence, behavioural problems. They work closely with local schools, supporting children and also run groups for people with dementia and their carers and for families with drug and/or alcohol addictions.

Request Recommendation

£10,000 That a grant of £6,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The organisation contributes to the Council's priorities through assisting wellbeing of those in the district, working with and mentoring vulnerable children and young people and parents, and low-income households. Families Matter work in partnership with other organisations, run parenting courses to those families struggling with their child's anxiety or extreme angry behaviour, promote healthy relationships, and support elderly people with dementia, and their carers, with monthly groups.

7	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	First Steps New Forest	First Steps New Forest is a community based registered charity that provides a support network for children, young people and their families from the local settled Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) community who across the New Forest

Request

£8,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group support the work of First Steps New Forest in working with and supporting the gypsy and traveller community on a variety of matters, often being their first point of call, notably, the "Mental Health Matters" sessions, support with benefit applications, and counselling.

8	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Fluid Motion	Fluid Motion Theatre Company is an award-winning arts and health charity that uses creativity to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people, and families in our community, using creative activity as tools for recovery, connection, and growth.

Request

£20,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £4,000 be given

Reason for decision

Fluid Motion support the Councils priority of a vibrant and creative culture, providing an inclusive space and creative programmes for young people, which supports mental health and wellbeing, young mums, and holiday clubs.

9	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Forest Forge Theatre Company	Forest Forge is theatre that provides creative learning and outreach activities and tours to communities and schools across the New Forest with an emphasis on creative learning and using theatre to tackle wider social issues such as bullying and mental health. The organisation encourages participation in a variety of activities such as workshops; work experience and targeted outreach projects (e.g. teenagers).

Request

£20,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

Forest Forge provides creative learning activities across the district and contributes to community cohesion and wellbeing. It supports local business, supports local artists, and provides experience for young people's employability and seeks to be fully inclusive by engaging with all communities. It works in schools, tours a production about mental health, has a youth theatre, and a group for over 55's and workshops in schools.

10	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Hammersley Homes	Hammersley Homes apply a person-centred approach to provide emotional and practical support for people with mental health and aims to provide supported living accommodation for vulnerable adults so that they can live independently. They provide an outreach programme and aim to keep people out of hospital by providing support in their own home.

Request

£20,000

Recommendation

That no grant be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that this was not a corporate priority when considering other applications and the budget available, the number of people supported, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents.

11	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	HomeStart Hampshire	Homestart Hampshire support families with young children through challenging times, helping them

		grow in confidence, build resilience and create nurturing home environments. They empower families, promote good health, both mental and physical, of children and their parents, prevent cruelty to, or maltreatment of, children, and seek to relieve sickness, poverty, and need among children and their families.
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Request

Recommendation

£9,100

That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group recognised the increasing need to support children with mental health issues and the bespoke action plan formulated for families, providing practical and emotional support, as well preventive measures to avoid a future crisis, and plans to expand the service future.

12	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Helping Older People	Helping Older People provide free support, advocacy, advice and befriending services, including home visits, as well as running two charity shops.

Request

Recommendation

£20,000

That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group considered the demographics of the district and recognised the work undertaken to support the elderly and expanding their reach across the district, including to reduce isolation, support those with limited mobility or capacity, for example with benefit claims or “home” administration, and working with partners to receive and provide referrals, and that the grant will be used to provide additional support.

13	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Basics Bank	New Forest Basics Bank operate a Basics Bank from Lymington which supports the surrounding areas, including schools and community hubs.

Request

Recommendation

£12,000

That a grant of £6,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group recognised the work of the volunteers and the support given to vulnerable families, especially with the cost of living, and the work New

Forest Basics Bank do with schools and supporting the Food Larders in areas of deprivation with regular attendance and providing additional supplies and resources, as well as working collaboratively with partners and providing additional household provisions.

14	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Bike Project (NFBP)	NFBP is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company that re-cycles bikes and sells them at reduced rates, benefiting residents by offering an affordable source of bikes and parts, especially to those on a low income, to keep people on the road, fit and healthy, reducing the need for car journeys and the impact on the environment. It provides opportunities and a place to help those with issues in their lives improve their confidence, self-esteem, practical and social skills.

Request

£5,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group support the work of this project, especially as part of the sustainability and greener agenda and to encourage recycling and cycling, providing more affordable access to bicycles for households struggling with the cost of transport, as well as providing volunteering opportunities and training to improve confidence and self-esteem of young people.

15	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	New Forest Heritage Centre	The free entry New Forest Heritage Centre is the only museum dedicated to the social and natural history of the New Forest. Their aim is to inspire visitors to explore and value the New Forest by collecting, conserving, and interpreting collections and by providing educational activities and information to children, young people and adults visiting the Forest and living in the community. The Centre includes an accredited Museum, Reference Library, which preserves historical artefacts, shop, and Exhibition Gallery.

Request

£10,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group were supportive of the work undertaken, including with partners organisations to promote the New Forest, promoting sustainable activities, retaining exhibitions, collections and artefacts for future

generations, supporting those with dementia, and providing employment and work experience opportunities.

16	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Pennington Action Group	Pennington Action Group support the people of Pennington, including the young people, where they run a Youth Club, provide Youth Workers, support the elderly, as well as seeking to make environmental improvements to the village.

Request

£4,200

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group recognised that Pennington is an area of deprivation and the work that Pennington Action Group undertakes to support the community, including weekly youth club, helping with benefit and job applications, cooking classes, education on drugs, smoking, sexual health, and bereavement and working collaboratively with partners, and the plan to expand further with a dedicated Project Worker.

17	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Positive Path Foundation	Positive Path provides mentoring, support, advocacy and advice to people with mental health issues, to improve wellbeing, skills and confidence and with gaining and maintaining employment.

Request

£10,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged the hard work of Positive Path and the impact it has on the lives of people that it supports, many having a disability, including autism, and/or are not in employment, education and/or training, along with the work with partner organisations, including schools and colleges, to maximise the benefits with their limited resources.

18	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Ringwood Foodbank	Ringwood Foodbank support clients in Ringwood, Fordingbridge and surrounding areas. Their objective is the alleviation of poverty through the provision of emergency food and other items and signposting and income maximisation advice

Request Recommendation

£6,851 That a grant of £3,000 be given

Reason for decision:

The Group recognised the work of the volunteers and the support given to vulnerable families, especially with the cost of living, and the work with schools, and providing additional supplies and resources, as well as working collaboratively with partners with referrals and providing additional household provisions.

19	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	SPUD	SPUD is an arts and education charity that creates opportunities for people to creatively engage with art, architecture, design, and the environment. SPUD supports people works with and support various groups including, youth, disabled, autism, LGBTQ+ and dementia.

Request Recommendation

£15,000 That a grant of £4,000 be given

Reason for decision:

The Group support the work SPUD does with vulnerable groups, which aligns closely with the 'Culture in Common' programme that the Council is involved in delivering across the district. SPUD's work with residents with dementia, LGTBQ+ and with young people to support their mental wellbeing was noted, as was their outreach programme that builds on the community partnerships, and the support to local artists and businesses.

19	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery	St Barbe is a museum and art gallery providing a cultural hub and educational facilities on the heritage, culture, history, and character of the New Forest. It is part of FOLIO, and provides learning services for schools and interest groups, including workshops, exhibitions, and curriculum-based activities. St Barbe also support groups, e.g. an Elderly Programme for "memories" and works with low-income families, e.g. holiday workshops and activities and Food programme.

Request Recommendation

£12,000 That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

St Barbe supports NFDC priorities through assisting with the wellbeing of those in the district, as well as attracting visitors. St Barbe provide a wide range of activities, for all ages, and is a vibrant community hub, working with schools, disabled groups, those suffering with dementia or autism, holiday programmes, and a Young Curator group. The Group were very supportive of the outreach programmes and the summer camps for children eligible for free school meals.

20	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Stronger Together Across Ringwood and Fordingbridge	STARF is a charity providing counselling to children & young people (CYP) and financial advice to families who children go to schools in Ringwood & Fordingbridge

Request

£15,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision

Stronger Together Across Ringwood and Fordingbridge work with schools who identify children/families in crisis, with a schools' hardship worker, they provide counselling services, food for vulnerable children, winter clothes, run an under 1's club, provide computers for schools, and workshops for families experiencing complex issues to become more resilient, and work with partner organisations.

21	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Step Up Safe Space	Step Up Safe Space's core mission is to empower the community by providing essential aid with dignity and care, while promoting reuse and recycling for a sustainable future. The organization focuses on delivering critical and emergency support, including fuel and food bank referrals and facilitating food bank referrals.

Request

£4,576

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given.

Reason for decision

Step Up Safe Space support households in financial hardship by attending community hubs to distribute essential household items, coordinating the school uniform and stationary sets distribution, and support women in refuges, new mums and work with partners, including Basics Bank. The Group welcomes the plans to expand the service further.

22	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	The Branch	The Branch is a multi-purpose community hub in Fordingbridge, providing an inclusive and accessible affordable café which facilitates the provision of events, wellbeing and support.

Request

£10,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group were supportive of community spaces which bring together communities and organisations to support residents and were encouraged by the plans to expand the opening hours and support available, including volunteer experience and developing further networks of partners.

23	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	The Honeypot Childrens Charity	Honeypot Childrens Charity support young carers aged between 5 and 12, including offering respite breaks at their home.

Request

£9,820

Recommendation

That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group were supportive of Honeypot and their plans to reach out to more young carers, a cohort who have very limited support available from other sources and often struggle with their own mental health, stress, anxiety and social isolation as a result of their caring responsibilities. The Honeypot Childrens Charity work with other organisations and work with schools to raise awareness and to utilise the building during term times.

24	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Thorneyhill Community Centre	The Thorneyhill Community Centre provides a meeting place for the whole community including families of Gypsy origin

Request

£8,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £3,000 be given.

Reason for decision

The Group recognised the importance of the centre in a rural and remote area as a meeting place for whole community to build relationships with community groups, as a community hub to access support, connect,

improve wellbeing and reduce isolation, in particular to the local gypsy and traveller community, and after school and holiday clubs.

25	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Totton Spiritualist Church	Totton Spiritualist Church supports the community, including the homeless, operate a foodbank, a Christmas toy appeal, a weekly bereavement café and warm space in winter. chat. We always open our door for everyone and anyone

Request

£3,000

Recommendation

That no grant is given

Reason for decision

The Group acknowledged and supported the work undertaken, but considered that there was duplication so when considering other applications and the budget available, and that funding could be utilised elsewhere to directly support organisations that benefit our residents on other areas.

26	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Yellow Door	Yellow Door provides a range of integrated specialist services, advocacy, and therapeutic support to those who are at risk of or who have been affected by unwanted Sexual Experience or Domestic Abuse. This may include anything from rape, childhood sexual abuse, to harassment or coercion. The group works with the police, schools, and other organisations within the district, such as the Handy Trust, provides impartial advice, and information, and runs the STAR project delivering bespoke workshops on the impact of drugs and alcohol, image-based abuse, and abusive relationships.

Request

£20,000

Recommendation

That a grant of £4,500 be given.

Reason for decision

Yellow door supports the Council's priorities by delivering outcomes for the community and working with others to achieve more. It works with families offering support to those affected by abuse, and running preventative education programmes to raise awareness of these issues, such as STOP Domestic Abuse. Demand for its services is increasing and Yellow Door worked with young people as part of its STAR project. Yellow

Door have extended their work in the district and have worked with over 700 students in a number of schools across the district. The group was pleased to note the organisation's continued involvement with the Safer New Forest and Domestic Abuse strategy, and that the grant is used solely for the benefit of the New Forest.

27	APPLICANT	SUMMARY
	Youth in Romsey	Youth in Romsey provide services for young people aged between 5 and 25, including counselling, therapeutic support, youth groups, sexual health, career advice, and support groups for those with anxiety or low self-esteem.

Request

Recommendation

£17,160

That a grant of £4,000 be given.

Reason for decision:

The Group were supportive of the work of Youth in Romsey and recognised the need to support young people, particularly with mental health, self-harm and bereavement, and young carers, and the increased demand and lack of support available. The Group were encouraged by the partnership working with organizations, and 7 local schools, and the further development of networks, and had assurances that any grant will be used to support residents of the New Forest.

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Cabinet – 4 February 2026

Asset Maintenance and Replacement Programme and General Fund Capital Programme 2026/27

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report provides the council’s proposed revenue funded Asset Maintenance and Replacement programme (AMR) and General Fund Capital programme for 2026/27 and outline budgets to 2027/28.</p> <p>This includes a £210,000 increase to the overall AMR budget, now totalling £3.1 million (£2.6 million General Fund investment after accounting for a £500,000 allocation to the Housing Revenue Account).</p> <p>The General Fund Capital programme for 2026/27 totals £14.646 million with approximately two thirds (£9.717 million) being financed from external third-party funding.</p>
Recommendation(s)	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <p>a) endorse the schedule of projects, as included within the report and summarised via Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, noting that final approval will come through Council consideration of the 2026/27 budget;</p> <p>b) notes that this programme commits the Council to expenditure beyond 2026/27 whereby a project commences in 2026/27 and extends into future years; and</p> <p>c) recommend to Council that the Vehicle and Plant replacement programme be approved for a 2-year period, covering purchases due in 2026/27 and 2027/28.</p>

Reasons for recommendation(s)	To support the council setting an annual balanced budget and presenting how its financial resources are to be allocated and utilised. To ensure the council continues to invest in and maintain its assets in order to carry out its duties and minimise risk.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources (Section 151 Officer)
Officer Contact	Paul Whittles Assistant Director - Finance 02380 285766 paul.whittles@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. This report provides the proposed revenue funded Asset Maintenance & Replacement programme (AMR) and General Fund Capital programme for 2026/27 and outline budgets to 2027/28.
2. The December 2025 Medium Term Financial Plan included a revenue budget allowance to cover the AMR programme for 2026/27 of £2.500 million for the General Fund and £390,000 for the HRA (total £2.890 million). The proposals contained in this report have increased the General Fund budget to £2.600 million and the HRA to £500,000 (total £3.100 million). Separately, there is a £610,000 budget relating to waste vehicles following the implementation of the new waste service. This enhances the level of investment previously provided in 2025/26 and there are currently no further planned or approved adjustments to the overall programme budget over the period covered by the current Medium Term Financial Plan.
3. Service Managers were asked to come up with their proposed projects for 2026/27, whilst being realistic in terms of timeframes and deliverability. The programme amounts now being proposed matches the funding allocated, following work by the Capital Board (CB) which prioritised projects to align to the budgets available, with priority given to statutory and health and safety items.

4. The proposed General Fund Capital Programme for 2026/27 totals £14.646 million. Projects are funded by a range of resources, including NFDC reserves (capital reserve and receipts received), various grants, funds and Developer Contributions including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and external borrowing as required. Full financing detail is covered in the Council's Capital Strategy.
5. The council's Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) was approved in July 2025. The plan allows the Council to set out longer-term goals in respect of its property assets, thereby aligning property to key corporate priorities. The development of the plan also aligns with the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge report (December 2024) and supports the preparedness for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Specific activity regarding the proposed £2 million improvements to Public Conveniences are included within this report.

Proposed Asset Maintenance and Replacement Programme 2026/27

6. The summary programme covering 2026/27 – 2028/29 is included as Appendix 1. The budget is monitored at this overall summary level to allow for sufficient flexibility should more urgent projects come to light during the financial year.

Further Information Relating to Projects

Health & Leisure Centres Annual Maintenance Programme £750,000

7. In 2019, the Council commissioned a comprehensive condition survey of its five Leisure Centres, undertaken by an independent specialist. The resulting report set out a 15-year programme of works to maintain the centres at their current standard. This programme is reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and informs the required maintenance activities. For 2026/2027 and beyond, the prioritised works schedule will continue to focus on lifecycle replacements and upgrades, including the phased replacement of end-of-life plant with modern, energy-efficient alternatives. All proposed works will be agreed in consultation with the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources to ensure alignment with corporate priorities and sustainability objectives.

Offices and Commercial Premises £265,000

8. £175,000 is required to replace the roof at Salisbury Road Arcade supporting our tenants and in turn our associated income streams.

9. £50,000 has been provided to repair the Appletree Court East Wing second floor roof and a further £25,000 has been allocated regarding the East Wing Tower Access.
10. £15,000 has been included to allow for an air conditioning upgrade to the server room at Lymington Town Hall to reduce the risk of systems overheating leading to unplanned shutdowns.

ICT Equipment Replacement Programme £190,000

11. The Council has a cyclical replacement programme in place to ensure IT equipment remains fit for purpose. An annual budget of £190,000 is in place throughout the period covered by this Medium Term Financial Plan.

Vehicles & Plant Replacement Programme £1,790,000

12. Members will note that the replacement of Vehicles & Plant (V&P) occurs on both the revenue AMR programme and the Capital Programme. The Council's policy is to capitalise individual items with a value greater than £10,000 and then depreciate these over their estimated useful life. The capital programme therefore includes the cash amount required to purchase the V&P, and the revenue programme includes the depreciation charge. The depreciation charge to revenue then makes a direct contribution towards the capital cost through a charge known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The significant capital outlay required will result in older less efficient vehicles being replaced with the latest more efficient models.
13. The 2026/27 programme includes cyclical replacement of 'standard' fleet vehicles and plant. The £1.790 million budget here does not relate to the additional vehicles, or the capitalisation of the containers associated with the roll out of the waste strategy which is shown separately and totals £610,000.

Other

14. £48,000 is proposed to support work across NFDC managed cemeteries to ensure all memorials are safe.
15. In addition to a £15,000 base revenue budget, this AMR budget proposes a £12,500 top-up to the budget for works at Hythe Promenade. This enables the continuation of maintenance works following the conclusion of critical safety work during Phase 1 and will lead to further improvements of the decking to keep it a safe space.

16. The overall AMR programme includes a £45,000 contingency to help managing any unforeseen changes to the items proposed or any urgent emerging items.
17. The programme as outlined above totals £3.100 million. Of this total, approximately £500,000 is rechargeable to the HRA leaving £2.600 million to be funded via the General Fund, in keeping with the amount currently provided for in the MTFP. The recharge to the HRA will be accommodated within the detailed budget planning for 2026/27.

Projects that did not make it through to the final prioritised AMR programme were as follows:

18. ATC South Wing Toilet Refurbishment deprioritised, but to be potentially funded from Appletree Court works budget contingency, should resources allow following the completion of other schemes.
19. Lymington Town Hall drainage run (£15,000) to be funded from existing revenue maintenance budgets.
20. Salisbury Road Office refurbishments (£70,000) to be funded from the Commercial Property Sinking Fund.

Other One-Off Funded Programmes

21. The Community Grants programme has a maximum budget of £100,000 for one-off capital grant applications for 2026/27. The Panel are aware this is a financial ceiling, and not a target. In 2026/27 the recommendation from the Task and Finish group to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel was to award grants totalling £97,950.
22. This one-off item will require financial resources, funded by the revenue budget or reserves and will be included on the Medium Term Financial Planning Reports through Cabinet.

General Fund Capital Programme 2026/27

23. The capital programme consists of projects funded by NFDC resources (capital reserve and receipts received), various grants, funds and Developer Contributions including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
24. The proposed programme for 2026/27 totalling £14.646 million including the outline financing is included as Appendix 2.

25. The project proposals for a 3-year period have been included for overall context. Where a project commences in (or continues into) 2026/27 and spans several financial years, a commitment to start in 2026/27 is a commitment to approve the funding required to complete over the period of the programme. Where a sum is included in future years, it is not requiring approval now but is included for completeness and overall programme context; approval for these items will come at the appropriate point in the budget setting cycle for the year in question. Due to the lead in time of the Vehicles and Plant Acquisition programme, the programme sums for 2026/27 and 2027/28 will be approved now to enable necessary work to commence in the year prior to when the new vehicle and plant will actually be delivered.

Further Information Relating to NFDC Funded Projects

Sustainability and Climate Action (2026/27 £50,000; 2027/28 £50,000; 2028/29 £50,000)

25. This £50,000 allocation is in addition to a £75,000 revenue budget in place to support the Council's sustainability team and maintains its commitment to support the Climate Strategy and action plan throughout the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) – Public Conveniences (2026/27 £1,000,000; 2027/28 £1,000,000)

26. Public conveniences form an essential part of the Council's estate, supporting health, accessibility, and visitor experience across the district. Condition surveys undertaken in 2025 revealed a range of significant structural and operational issues across the 23 sites.
27. Four priority locations at Calshot East, Totton Central, Bransgore, and Lymington New Street require full refurbishment due to their critical condition and strategic importance. Targeted improvements will also be delivered across the remaining blocks to ensure compliance with health and safety legislation, building regulations, and the Equality Act 2010.
28. Consequently, the significant investment proposed will bring all sites to a good standard of building integrity and accessibility, while incorporating sustainability enhancements such as LED lighting, water-saving fixtures, improved insulation, and maintenance of existing solar PV installations where feasible.
29. Works will be phased through 2026/27 and 2027/28.

30. The programme will deliver full statutory compliance, improved accessibility, and enhanced visitor experience, alongside positive environmental impacts, and reduced lifecycle costs such as maintenance. These works will create a lasting legacy of resilient, future-proofed facilities for our residents and visitors.

Vehicles & Plant (2026/27 £2.947 million; 2027/28 £1.012 million; 2028/29 £3,458,000)

31. The significant Capital Outlay required will result in older less efficient vehicles being replaced with the latest more efficient models.

Eling Tide Mill - Major Works (2026/27 £250,000; 2027/28 £500,000)

32. A phased investment of £750,000 is planned to deliver essential improvements to Eling Tide Mill, following consultant feasibility work completed in 2024 and 2025. While previous interventions have addressed mechanical elements such as sluice gates, the undercroft beams and the wheel mechanism, this programme will focus on the building fabric, including repairs to roofing, windows, and flooring to ensure structural integrity and protect the historic asset. These works are critical to prevent further deterioration, maintain safety, and preserve the mill's heritage value. In addition, the Council will consult with Totton and Eling Town Council to identify any additional priorities at the site that fall outside the initial scope but are deemed vital for overall site preservation and community benefit.

Marsh Lane Depot improvements including Electrical Supply (2026/27 £500,000)

33. The 2026/27 Capital Programme includes £500,000 for targeted improvements at Marsh Lane Depot. The focus will be on delivering high-impact, cost-effective interventions to enhance welfare facilities and overall accommodation standards for staff. Alongside upgrades to communal and hygiene areas, the project will review the capacity of existing office accommodation to determine whether certain buildings can be refurbished to provide modern, functional workspace. This approach supports better utilisation of assets and improved working conditions. In addition, a comprehensive storage audit across the site is planned to identify opportunities for rationalisation and efficiency gains. A significant priority will be the installation of a new 1500kVA substation at Marsh Lane Depot, Lymington. This investment was informed by and recommended as part of consultant-led feasibility works completed in 2025, which confirmed that the existing electrical infrastructure is operating at

full capacity and poses compliance and safety risks. The upgrade will provide essential capacity relief, improve resilience, and ensure statutory compliance, while supporting future operational growth and sustainability objectives.

Dibden Golf Centre (2026/27 £100,000)

34. This investment is to undertake landlord responsibilities and improve the clubhouse, particularly the entrance. Full details will need to be determined, and the resultant activity scheduled in collaboration with our partners.

35. **Further Information Relating to Part or Non-NFDC Funded Projects**

Disabled Facilities Grants (2026/27 £1.500 million; 2027/28 £1.500 million; 2028/29 £1.500 million)

36. The Council facilitates the delivery of Disabled Facility Adaptations each year, using central government 'Better Care Fund' to pay for said adaptations. The Council's contribution is in the staffing resource to deliver the adaptations. NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil.

South-East Strategic Coastal Monitoring (2026/27 £2.731 million; 2027/28 £3.431 million; 2028/29 £3.211 million)

37. This project is the continuation of the regional coastal monitoring programme, with the MTFP covering the conclusion of Phase III 2025-2027 of the national monitoring programme and the initial stages of Phase IV 2027-2033. The figures above are for the full approval for the SE region as managed and co-ordinated by NFDC. NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil.

Hurst Spit Shingle Source Study (2026/27 £61,000; 2027/28 £61,000)

38. The existing Hurst Spit Beach Management Plan (BMP) has been in existence since 1996. The plan requires updating to consider additional data, past performance of the spit and future management operations. This study, funded by the Environment Agency, will enable this work to be undertaken, enabling the BMP to be updated in line with current practices. NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil.

Milford-On-Sea Beach and Cliff Study (2026/27 £100,000; 2027/28 £123,000)

39. This project will enable an updated condition survey, assessment, and plan to be formulated to protect the aging coastal defences. The commencement and delivery of this project will be subject to the outcomes of the Christchurch Bay Strategy Study. NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil.

Hurst Spit Beach Management Plan (BMP) (2026/27 £105,000)

40. The proposed works, funded by the Environment Agency, align with the current approved BMP for undertaking Hurst Spit maintenance operations and is also in sync with the preferred ongoing “hold the form – maintain” strategy. NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil.

Developer Contributions / CIL (2026/27 £5.100 million; 2027/28 £9.650 million; 2028/29 £7.300 million)

41. A separate report in early Summer 2026 will confirm the proposed projects, with the Capital Programme at this stage setting aside an indicative gross overall budget to be set for drawdown for individual project delivery. NFDC Capital Contribution: £nil.

Applemore Leisure Centre Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) (2026/27 £202,000; 2027/28 £1,211,000; 2028/29 £731,000)

42. The scheme will enable upgrades to the Leisure Centre in turn reducing carbon emissions. These include replacing existing heating systems and improving insulation. NFDC Capital Contribution: 2026/27 £82,000; 2027/28 £130,000, 2028/29 £131,000.

Corporate plan priorities

43. The investments laid out in the body of the report are widespread and crosscutting, positively impacting many of the council’s corporate priorities including caring for our facilities, neighbourhoods, and open spaces in a modern and responsive way, maximising the benefits of inclusive economic growth and investment, and being financially responsible.

Options appraisal

44. As detailed in the body of the report the Capital Board considered a number of potential requests for funding prioritising those of a statutory and health and safety nature first.

Consultation undertaken

45. Internal consultation between finance officers, service managers and budget holders has determined the forecast data presented in the report.
46. This report was considered at the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 22 January 2026.

Financial and resource implications

47. This is a financial report with budget implications already detailed and considered in the main body of the report. The new Project Management Office (PMO) will help provide oversight and delivery of the AMR and capital programme, to include consideration of resourcing requirements to deliver the enhanced programmes.

Legal implications

48. Many of the maintenance projects ensure the Council is satisfying its health and safety, statutory and contractual obligations associated with its assets.

Risk assessment

49. None undertaken.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

50. Whilst constrained to the funding available a number of the schemes included in the council's AMR and Capital Programme, such as replacing old less efficient fleet vehicles and coastal protection work, make positive contributions to the environment.
51. £50,000 is specifically allocated to support work undertaken by the Council's sustainability team.

Equalities implications

52. There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

Crime and disorder implications

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

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

54. There are no data protection, information governance or ICT implications arising directly from this report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Asset Maintenance
and Replacement Programme
2026/27 – 2028/29

Appendix 2 – Capital Programme
2026/27 – 2028/29

Background Papers:

None

GENERAL FUND ASSET MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT (AMR) PROGRAMME

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Health & Leisure Centres	750	750	750	750
Office, Depots and Outlying Buildings	270	265	-	-
Cemeteries	-	48	-	-
Hythe Prom	-	12	-	-
Programme Contingency	30	45	370	370
	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
	1,050	1,120	1,120	1,120
ICT Replacement Programme	190	190	190	190
Vehicle and Plant (Depreciation/MRP)	1,650	1,790	1,790	1,790
	1,840	1,980	1,980	1,980
Less: Proportion allocated to the HRA	-390	-500	-500	-500
TOTAL GENERAL FUND AMR PROGRAMME	2,500	2,600	2,600	2,600

	Portfolio	PROJECT REQUIREMENTS £			ORIGINAL 2026/27 PROJECT FINANCING £			
		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	NFDC Resources / Loan	Better Care Fund	Grant / Income	Developer contributions / CIL
Disabled Facilities Grants	HOU (GF)	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	-	1,500,000	-	-
Sustainability Fund - Unallocated	ENV & SUSTAIN	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	-	-	-
Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring (2025-2027)	ENV & SUSTAIN	2,731,000	147,000	-	-	-	2,731,000	-
Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring (2027-2033)	ENV & SUSTAIN	-	3,284,000	3,211,000	-	-	-	-
Hurst Spit Beach Shingle Source Study	ENV & SUSTAIN	61,000	61,000	-	-	-	61,000	-
Milford Beach and Cliff Study	ENV & SUSTAIN	100,000	123,000	-	-	-	100,000	-
Hurst Spit BMP	ENV & SUSTAIN	105,000	-	-	-	-	105,000	-
Public Conveniences	ENV & SUSTAIN	1,000,000	1,000,000	-	1,000,000	-	-	-
Vehicle & Plant; Replacement Programme	FIN & CORP	2,947,000	1,012,000	3,458,000	2,947,000	-	-	-
Eling Tide Mill Major Works	FIN & CORP	250,000	500,000	-	250,000	-	-	-
Marsh Lane Depot (Including Electrical Supply)	FIN & CORP	500,000	-	-	500,000	-	-	-
Mitigation Schemes	PLAN & ECON	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	-	-	-	1,000,000
Infrastructure Projects	PLAN & ECON	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	-	-	-	1,000,000
Strategic Infrastructure Projects	PLAN & ECON	2,950,000	7,500,000	5,150,000	-	-	-	2,950,000
Arts & Culture Projects	PLAN & ECON	150,000	150,000	150,000	-	-	-	150,000
Dibden Golf Centre	CSWELL	100,000	-	-	100,000	-	-	-
Applemore PSDS	CSWELL	202,000	1,211,000	731,000	82,000	-	120,000	-
TOTAL GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME		14,646,000	18,538,000	16,250,000	4,929,000	1,500,000	3,117,000	5,100,000
								14,646,000
LOAN FINANCED				Vehicle & Plant	-2,947,000			
RESIDUAL NFDC RESOURCES					1,982,000			

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Cabinet – 4 February 2026

Capital Strategy 2026/27

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report provides the council’s proposed capital strategy for 2026/27.</p> <p>It provides a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management come together, with an overview of current activities and the implications for future financial sustainability.</p>
Recommendation(s)	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <p>1) Recommend to Full Council that the Capital Strategy 2026/27 be approved, including the adoption of the Minimum Revenue Payment (MRP) statement.</p>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	To comply with the statutory guidance issued by the Government in January 2018 and the CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes requiring all local authorities to prepare a Capital Strategy.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources (Section 151 Officer)
Officer Contact	<p>Paul Whittles</p> <p>Assistant Director - Finance</p> <p>02380 285766</p> <p>paul.whittles@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction and background

1. The Capital Strategy is a high-level document, giving an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury

management come together, with an overview of current activities and the implications for future financial sustainability.

2. The Capital Strategy confirms what the Council is intending to spend its money on over the medium term and how it intends to finance this expenditure.
3. The Capital Strategy is still work in progress whilst the budget is being finalised and may be subject to minor adjustments between the panel's overview, and the version presented to Cabinet.
4. The Council will supplement internal resources, when necessary, with external borrowing and in accordance with advice it receives from its contracted Treasury Management experts. Borrowing was utilised to support the 2025/26 capital programme and based on the current set of prudential indicators; external borrowing will continue to be required each year from 2025/26.
5. Over the period covered by 2026/27 to 2028/29, total capital expenditure is forecast at around £142.414 million. (General Fund Treasury Management Strategy 49.434 million; Housing Revenue Account (HRA) £92.980 million)
6. £46.196 million of capital expenditure is currently programmed during 2026/27 with £14.646 million relating to the General Fund and £31.550 million within the HRA.
7. 2026/27 General Fund activity is funded using £9.717 million of external funding (grants, developer contributions including CIL), £1.982 million of internal resources (reserves, capital receipts and revenue contributions) with the balance funded by borrowing.
8. The change to the levels of cash held and debt funding will require the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to be reviewed and adjusted accordingly to match the estimated interest earning and costs.
9. It is vitally important that the Council has regard to the relationship between the financing costs of the capital programme and the revenue General Fund, and Housing Revenue Account. This is covered within the report by the prudential indicators.
10. This Council has established a sound level of governance surrounding its capital investments and employs suitably qualified personnel in order to fulfil the objectives of the Strategy. External support and expertise is sought where necessary, and officers have the ability to communicate openly and freely with members of the Cabinet.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

11. Where General Fund capital spend has been financed by loan (including internal borrowing) and has increased the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), the Council is required to make a provision to repay a proportion of the accumulated amount each year. This amount is charged to revenue and is called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This charge reduces the CFR each year and is based on the expected economic use period related to the capital expenditure.
12. Full Council is required to approve an MRP statement in advance of each financial year. The Council is recommended to approve the following MRP statement:

“For capital expenditure that has been incurred, and which has given rise to a CFR, the MRP policy for expenditure other than that incurred on investment property and dwellings, shall be to charge revenue an amount equal to the depreciation of any asset financed by loan. The MRP policy specific to investment properties and dwellings financed by loan, shall be to charge revenue an amount equivalent to the sum of borrowing utilised, over a repayment period of 50 years.”

Corporate plan priorities

13. The Capital Strategy provides a framework ensuring we use our resources appropriately, are financially responsible, and consequently supports and underpins the delivery of all our priorities.

Options appraisal

14. None undertaken.

Consultation undertaken

15. Internal consultation between finance officers, service managers and budget holders has determined the forecast data presented in the report.
16. This report was presented to Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 22 January 2026.

Financial and resource implications

17. This is a financial report with budget implications already detailed and considered in the main body of the report.

Legal implications

18. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Risk assessment

19. None undertaken.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

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

Equalities implications

21. There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

Crime and disorder implications

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

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

23. There are no data protection, information governance or ICT implications arising directly from this report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Capital Strategy
2026/27

Background Papers:

None

Capital Strategy 2026/27

Introduction

1. This capital strategy gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.
2. Decisions made this year on capital and treasury management will have financial consequences for the Authority for many years into the future. They are therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework, summarised in this report.
3. The report also includes the prudential indicators, as required by the Prudential Code.

Capital Expenditure and Financing

4. Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles, that will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets.
5. The Council has some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure, for example assets costing below £10,000 are generally not capitalised and are charged to revenue in year.
6. In 2026/27, the Council is planning capital expenditure of £46.196 million as summarised below:
7. Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £ millions

	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Budget	2027/28 Budget	2028/29 Budget
General Fund services	15.331	20.948	14.646	18.538	16.250
Council housing (HRA)	28.652	30.743	31.550	30.530	30.900
Capital investments	-0.007	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
TOTAL	43.976	51.691	46.196	49.068	47.150

8. The General Fund capital programme includes the cyclical replacement of vehicles and plant, and containers/vehicles for the new Waste Strategy.
9. Due to the ongoing comparatively high, albeit reducing, interest rate environment, no further expenditure on commercial and residential properties is assumed at this time (save for exceptional opportunities).
10. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account which ensures that council housing does not subsidise, or is itself subsidised by, other local services. HRA capital expenditure is therefore recorded separately and includes the maintenance and decarbonisation of existing stock and the building and acquisition of new homes over the forecast period, in line with the Housing strategy.
11. **Governance:** Service managers bid annually in the early Autumn to include projects in the Council's capital programme. Bids are collated by the Chief Finance Officer and reviewed collectively by the Capital Board. The Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel appraises the proposed programme and makes recommendations to the Cabinet. The final capital programme is then presented to Cabinet and to Council in February each year.
12. Full details of the Council's capital programme are available within the February 2026 Cabinet papers (Medium Term Financial Plan / Annual Budget 2026/27).
13. All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (loan/borrowing). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

14. Table 2: Capital financing in £ millions

	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Budget	2027/28 Budget	2028/29 Budget
External sources	10.211	14.466	9.992	16.121	12.885
Capital Receipts	6.086	7.200	6.080	2.000	1.000
Capital Reserves	6.088	0.950	2.932	2.630	1.131
Revenue Contributions	10.728	11.100	10.200	10.500	10.800
Debt / Loan	10.863	17.975	16.992	17.817	21.334
TOTAL	43.976	51.691	46.196	49.068	47.150

15. Prior to 2023/24 any borrowing required to meet the Council's capital expenditure was met by using cash held in reserves rather than raising loans. This action is known as internal borrowing. Internal borrowing is replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which is known as minimum revenue provision (MRP, explained further below). Alternatively, additional (beyond those already anticipated within the financing as shown within table 2) proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP and debt repayment are as follows:

16. Table 3: Replacement of debt finance in £ millions

	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Budget	2027/28 Budget	2028/29 Budget
Capital Expenditure Financed by Debt / Loan	10.863	17.975	16.992	17.817	21.334
Own resources - Net Debt Repayment	-4.100	-2.414	-2.832	-2.523	-2.355
Own resources - MRP Provision	-2.415	-3.136	-3.667	-3.976	-4.144
Movement in CFR	4.348	12.425	10.493	11.318	14.835

17. The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP, debt repayments and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £10.493 million during 2026/27. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

18. Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	31.3.2025 Actual	31.3.2026 Forecast	31.3.2027 Budget	31.3.2028 Budget	31.3.2029 Budget
General Fund services	9.639	17.258	17.841	16.490	17.585
Council housing (HRA)	137.267	142.509	152.854	165.959	180.135
Capital investments	20.537	20.102	19.666	19.231	18.795
Total CFR at Year End	167.443	179.869	190.362	201.680	216.515
Movement in CFR from one year to the next	1.747	12.425	10.493	11.318	14.835

19. **Minimum Revenue Provision:** Where General Fund capital spend has been financed by loan (internal borrowing), and has increased the CFR, the Council is required to make a provision to repay a proportion of the accumulated amount each year. This amount is charged to revenue and is called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This charge reduces the CFR each year and is based on the expected economic use period related to the capital expenditure.

20. Full Council is required to approve an MRP statement in advance of each financial year. The Council is recommended to approve the following MRP statement:

“For capital expenditure that has been incurred, and which has given rise to a CFR, the MRP policy for expenditure other than that incurred on investment property and dwellings, shall be to charge revenue an amount equal to the depreciation of any asset financed by loan. The MRP policy specific to investment properties and dwellings financed by loan, shall be to charge revenue an amount equivalent to the sum of borrowing utilised, over a repayment period of 50 years.”

21. For Council Housing and the refinancing settlement of 2012, the Council approved a business plan that charged amounts to revenue to ensure that any borrowings are reduced in accordance with the maturity of the debt outstanding. The proposed 2026/27 HRA budget confirms that new borrowing is required to provide the necessary finance to the Capital Programme.

22. **Asset management:** Service Managers from across the Council manage assets in their service delivery areas. The Council’s Service Manager for Estates and Valuation has overall responsibility for the

management of the Council’s property estate records, including liaising with the Council’s Accountancy department on statutory annual financial reporting. To ensure that property assets continue to be of long-term use, the Council has produced a Strategic Asset Management Strategy (SAMP).

23. **Asset disposals:** When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds (capital receipts), can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts. Council dwelling sales through the Right to Buy scheme also generate capital receipts. The Council plans to receive £3.540 million of capital receipts in the coming financial year as follows:

24. Table 5: Capital receipts in £ millions

	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Budget	2027/28 Budget	2028/29 Budget
Asset sales	5.181	6.098	3.540	1.410	1.100
Loans repaid	0.250	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000
TOTAL	5.431	6.148	3.540	1.410	1.100

25. The majority of forecast asset disposals relate to Right to Buy receipts.

Treasury Management

26. Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council’s spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent (‘spent’ in this context also includes the payment of collected council tax to the relevant precepting authorities) but will become cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.
27. At the last balance sheet date (31/03/2025), the Council had £132.9 million borrowing at an average interest rate of 3.69% (due principally to the HRA refinancing settlement in 2012) and held £32.4 million treasury investments (including sums received from

Central government for redistribution) earning an average rate of 4.76%.

28. **Borrowing strategy:** The Council’s main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheaper short-term loans and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher.
29. The Council does not borrow to invest for the primary purpose of financial return and therefore retains full access to the Public Works Loans Board.
30. Projected levels of the Council’s total outstanding debt are shown in table 6 below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).
31. Table 6: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £millions

	31.3.2025 Actual	31.3.2026 Forecast	31.3.2027 Budget	31.3.2028 Budget	31.3.2029 Budget
Debt - HRA settlement	109.9	105.8	101.7	97.6	93.5
Debt - Capital programme	23.0	35.5	56.5	81.5	104.1
Total debt	132.9	141.3	158.2	179.1	197.6
Capital Financing Requirement	167.4	179.9	190.4	201.7	216.5

32. Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from table 6, the Council expects to comply with this for the duration of the current programme.
33. The figures shown in the Debt – Capital Programme row highlight the amount of external borrowing that is anticipated to be needed from 31 March 2025, but this will be managed against actual overall cash balances, as part of the Treasury Strategy.
34. **Affordable borrowing limit:** The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year and to keep it under review. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

35. Table 7: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £millions

	2024/25 limit	2025/26 limit	2026/27 limit	2027/28 Limit	2028/29 Limit
Authorised limit – total external debt	233.6	229.7	235.5	244.1	260.3
Operational boundary – total external debt	214.5	209.8	215.0	222.9	238.4

36. Further details on borrowing are included within the treasury management strategy.
37. **Investment strategy:** Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.
38. The Council’s policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Money that will be held for longer terms is invested more widely, including in bonds, shares and property, to balance the risk of loss against the risk of receiving returns below inflation. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.
39. Table 8: Treasury management investments in £millions

	31.3.2025 Actual	31.3.2026 Forecast	31.3.2027 Budget	31.3.2028 Budget	31.3.2029 Budget
Near-term investments	23.3	10.0	10.3	10.2	10.1
Longer-term investments	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1
TOTAL	32.4	19.1	19.4	19.3	19.2

40. Further details on treasury investments are included within the treasury management strategy
41. Table 8 highlights that the majority of the Council’s cash will be utilised over the period through internal borrowing to fund the needs of the Council’s capital programme, until minimum balances reach £10 million. Use of cash for capital programme financing will

then be supplemented through external borrowing, when required. The Council should expect to retain a minimum level of cash, known as the **Liability Benchmark**. The General Fund balance reserve at £3 million and the HRA reserve at £1 million are an absolute minimum, with further headroom added to set where the Council's basic benchmark should be (**£10 million** in total).

42. **Governance:** Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Chief Finance Officer and staff, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Council. A mid-year and an outturn report on treasury management activity are presented to the audit committee. The audit committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

Commercial Activities for the Purpose of Economic Sustainability, Regeneration and Income

43. The Council has invested in commercial and residential property to support a sustainable local economy within the New Forest and encourage regeneration projects. The Council will invest in and will lend to its Wholly Owned Trading Company (WOTC) and will in return receive an income. Investment properties were valued at £28.3 million on the Council's balance sheet as at 31/03/25 and long terms loans to the WOTC totalled £3.713 million as at the same date.
44. To support the wider objective of economic sustainability and regeneration the Council accepts higher risk on commercial and residential investment than with treasury investments. The principal risk exposures include vacancies and falls in capital values. These risks in relation to commercial property are managed by predominantly targeting acquisitions with existing medium-long term tenancies in place and being sensible about the purchase price in relation to the Council's desire to promote and sustain employment sites within the district, and the income yields achievable. In order that commercial investments remain proportionate to the size of the authority, these are currently subject to an overall maximum investment limit of £50 million. Residential property investments are currently subject to an overall investment limit of £10 million.
45. Expenditure on these approved strategies remains paused due to the interest return that can currently be received on cash balances, and as the Council is now in an external borrowing position, the

interest charges are currently too high to satisfy the financial parameters of the business case requirements.

46. **Governance:** Decisions on commercial investments are made by an investment panel in line with the criteria and limits approved by Council in the Commercial Property Investment strategy. Decisions on residential investments are taken by the Board of Directors of the wholly owned trading company, in line with the criteria and limits approved by Council in the Residential Property Strategy. Property and most other commercial investments are also capital expenditure and purchases have therefore also been pre-approved as part of the capital programme.
47. Further details, including the risk management on commercial and residential investments are outlined in these respective strategy documents;
 - [Commercial Property Investment Strategy 2022](#)
 - [Residential Property Investment Strategy](#)

Other Liabilities

48. In addition to debt of £132.9 million detailed above, the Council is committed to making future payments to cover its pension fund liability (valued at £5 million as at 31/03/2025), It has also set aside £1.9 million in provisions, with £1.4 million of this to cover risks of business rate appeals.
49. **Governance:** Decisions on incurring new discretionary liabilities are taken by the Chief Finance Officer. The risk of liabilities crystallising and requiring payment is monitored by Accountancy and reported when necessary.
50. Further details on liabilities are shown within the Council's draft balance sheet on page 18 of the 2024/25 draft Annual Financial Report, further supported by notes to the accounts originally published May 2025 (to be confirmed following conclusion of the external audit by the 28 February 2026 backstop date):
51. [Draft Annual Financial Report 2024-25](#)
52. Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable (In relation to the finance costs incurred within the General Fund, the income to be

generated from Commercial and Residential property will exceed the additional MRP and interest charges, but as this income is to be used to directly contribute towards the funding of services, the income is not netted off against the finance costs within the table 9.) . The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants for the General fund, and the income receivable from rents within the HRA.

53. Table 9: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	31.3.2025 Actual	31.3.2026 Forecast	31.3.2027 Budget	31.3.2028 Budget	31.3.2029 Budget
General Fund; Financing costs (£m)	1.97	2.93	3.21	3.31	3.39
General Fund; Proportion of net revenue stream	8.0%	11.5%	12.3%	12.7%	13.1%
Financing costs (£m)	5.0	5.6	6.8	8.1	8.8
HRA; Proportion of net revenue stream	13.7%	15.2%	17.4%	19.7%	20.4%

54. The Financing costs of both the General Fund and HRA are set to increase as a result of the required Capital Financing Requirement, reducing cash balances (and assumed interest rates) for investment and costs of external borrowing, as the council has an ongoing greater reliance on external debt to fund its capital programme.
55. **Financial Sustainability:** Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 50 years into the future. The Chief Finance Officer is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is appropriate according to required projects aligned to service delivery and in light of the proposed Local Government Reorganisation. The medium-long term affordability remains reliant on service change savings being delivered, and government transitional support (with regards to the waste strategy roll-out & the large decarbonisation requirements within the HRA).

Knowledge and Skills

56. The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions. For example, the Chief Finance Officer, Assistant Director – Finance, the Principal Service Accountant and the Principal Corporate Accountant are all

qualified accountants with several years' experience between them. Senior Estates, Valuation & Facilities Officers are highly experienced in commercial property transactions and facilities management and are supported by experienced and professionally qualified surveyors and valuers (members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors).

57. Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers and has a Service Level Agreement with Hampshire County Council's Treasury Management department for day-to-day treasury management activities. The Council instructs external surveyors, valuers, architects and quantity surveyors to provide specialist advice on specific projects, where required. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

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Cabinet – 4 February 2026

Members’ allowances – Scheme to apply from 1 April 2026

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	In compliance with legislation and the scheme of allowances adopted by Council in February 2025, this report seeks authority to set the scheme of members’ allowances to apply from 1 April 2026. No changes are recommended to the scheme.
Recommendation:	That the Cabinet recommend to Council that the current scheme of members’ allowances be made as the scheme to apply from 1 April 2026.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	To implement a scheme that will apply for a period of up to four years commencing 1 April 2026. To comply with the provisions of the Local Government (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jill Cleary - Leader
Strategic Director(s)	Kate Ryan – Chief Executive
Officer Contact	Karen Wardle Principal Democratic Services Officer Tel: 023 8028 5071 Karen.wardle@nfdc.gov.uk Matt Wisdom Assistant Director – Strategy and Engagement (Monitoring Officer) Tel: 023 8028 5072 Matt.wisdom@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. Allowances paid to members of the Council are set out in the Members' Allowances Scheme. The Council is required annually to make a scheme of members' allowances, which must be published. The current scheme is available to view here:

[Members' allowances - New Forest District Council.](#)

2. The current scheme was adopted in February 2025 following a review by the Independent Remuneration Panel. The scheme provides for the annual adjustment of allowances (basic, special responsibility and dependant carers' allowances) by the Local Government staff employees' national pay award annual percentage increase.
3. The proposed scheme for 2026/27 continues to align with the last IRC recommendations in November 2024, which took into account the reduction in the number of councillors implemented in May 2023 and made minor adjustments to the calibration of certain allowances.
4. The employees' national pay award for 2025/26 was agreed in July 2025 and has been implemented. Any pay award agreed for the 2026/27 financial year, will automatically, under the terms of the Scheme, be backdated to 1 April 2026. No other changes to the scheme are proposed. Indeed, no changes are possible without a recommendation from the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Corporate Plan priorities

5. The proposed scheme promotes the Future New Forest objectives by ensuring that the Council's modernised governance and electoral arrangements are reflected in the remuneration of councillors.

Options appraisal

6. In light of no changes being proposed to the members allowance scheme to apply from 1 April 2026, no other option has been considered. Should any changes be proposed, it would be necessary to undertake a review of the members allowance scheme by an Independent Remuneration Panel.

Consultation undertaken

7. No consultation has been undertaken on the basis that a full review was carried out in 2024 and no changes are proposed to the scheme of members' allowances.

Financial and resource implications

8. Provision has been made in the draft 2026/27 budget for members allowance payments.

Legal implications

9. There are none arising from this report. The Council's scheme is in accordance with The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. It should be noted that where a scheme allows for the adjustment of allowances to be determined by reference to an index, the application of that index must be reviewed at least every four years. As this Council's scheme of allowances was last reviewed in November 2024, the next review would be due in November 2028. In light of local government reorganisation, it may not be necessary for this Council to undertake a further review. Cabinet will be advised if this position changes.

Risk Assessment

10. A formal risk assessment for the setting of a Members' Allowances Scheme is not considered necessary, having regard to the implications outlined throughout the report.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

11. The continued adoption of a Members' Allowances Scheme with provision for electric vehicles, bicycles and public transport, promotes the use of sustainable travel for Council business.

Equalities implications

12. The continued adoption of a Members' Allowances Scheme with provision for Parental Leave and a Dependent Carers' Allowance has positive implications by ensuring potential candidates are not deterred from standing for election, taking into account a range of personal circumstances.

Crime and disorder implications

13. There are none arising directly from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

14. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

Cabinet report – February 2025

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