

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY – CONSULTATION ON THE SCOPE OF THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The New Forest National Park Authority is consulting on the scope and content of its Local Plan Review which will replace its Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD adopted in 2010. This report recommends that this Council responds to the consultation as detailed below. The consultation is combined with a 'call for sites' which will be the subject of a separate response by this Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The National Park Authority has published an initial consultation on the scope and content of its Local Plan Review in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Evidence base

- 2.2 The consultation sets out the process of the Local Plan Review and identifies a list of the types of evidence that will be needed to support the Plan:
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess housing needs
 - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish the availability of land
 - Evidence to provide a clear understanding of the future needs of business
 - An assessment of the quality and capacity of local infrastructure
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
 - Tranquillity Map
 - Habitats Regulations Assessment to assess potential impacts upon nature conservation sites
 - Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment
- 2.3 As its closest neighbour, this Council has already commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment jointly with the National Park, although it will need some updating before our respective replacement local plans are finalised. In the interests of sharing resources, achieving joined up outcomes and fulfilling the statutory Duty to Cooperate, it would make sense to collaborate on other aspects of evidence. We are therefore discussing the potential for collaborative working on aspects of the evidence base such as the areas of business needs, local infrastructure, flood risk and Habitats Regulations Assessment. The two authorities have also established a joint Member Panel to discuss cross-boundary issues and ensure that the emerging planning strategies are integrated.
- 2.4 The requirement for Habitats Regulations Assessment in particular is a key piece of evidence for both authorities due to the extent of internationally protected nature conservation habitats within the National Park, Southampton Water and the Solent and the nearby Dorset Heaths which all impact on planning for the area.

Issues for the Local Plan Review

2.5 The consultation document sets out key issues across different topic areas which the Local Plan Review will need to address. The issues are grouped around five topic areas: natural environment; built environment; vibrant communities; local economy; and transport and access. Issues are broad-based. The consultation seeks views on two questions:

- whether the key planning issues have been identified?; and
- whether there are other key strategic planning issues facing the National Park?

Issues for the natural environment (see page 9 of consultation document)

2.6 The key issues relating to this topic area appear to have been identified including the conservation of protected landscapes and habitats, supporting commoning, addressing pollution and reviewing the potential impacts of renewable energy developments. However, Issue 5 states:

‘Considering options for addressing the cumulative impact of small-scale development and suburbanisation.’

2.7 This issue has no context provided for it and so it is unclear what impacts are being alluded to. It is considered therefore that the issue would benefit from some clarification, including how it should be understood alongside the identified issue of

Ensuring potentially significant impacts on the European designated sites from new development throughout the Park are avoided or fully mitigated.

2.8 There is currently a difference in the way that mitigation of the impacts arising from new residential development upon the international nature conservation designations is treated in the Park compared with the District outside. Effectively, mitigation requirements are more stringent for development outside the Park than within it. This anomaly should be considered as part of the plan process and the need to review mitigation requirements should therefore be reflected in the list of key issues.

2.9 There is also a need for the New Forest Local Plan to engage with the issue of impacts on European site, in particular the New Forest SPA and SAC arising from development beyond the National Park boundary. We would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively on this issue to help achieve a sub-regionally consistent and coordinated approach to mitigation.

Issues for the built environment (pages 10-11)

2.10 The key issues identified include: maintaining local distinctiveness and protecting heritage assets. There is, however, a lack of context provided to support some of these issues, which make it difficult to understand how concerns have arisen. For example, it is not clear what the final sentence of issue 2 ‘... *This includes concerns over the scale of new development.*’ is referring to and would therefore benefit from some clarification and context.

Issues for vibrant communities (pages 12-13)

2.11 This topic area highlights the need to support local communities, community facilities and services within the New Forest. It confirms the requirements of the NPPF for local plans to meet the full objectively assessed needs for housing where this is consistent with other policies of the NPPF and that national parks are one of the areas where development may need to be restricted.

2.12 Key issues include delivering new housing appropriate to address local housing needs which does not compromise the statutory purposes of the Park; enabling the delivery of affordable housing for local people; reconsidering the settlement hierarchy

in the Park; and considering how to address the needs for gypsy and traveller accommodation.

- 2.13 In general, it is considered that most of the main issues have been identified for this topic area.

Issues for the local economy (pages 14-15)

- 2.14 The key issues relating to this topic area appear to have been identified and include: reviewing the need and spatial options for new employment development and the retention of existing employment sites; assessing the policy approach towards supporting the visitor economy whilst avoiding harmful environmental and cultural impacts; and considering options to support the rural economy through provision of communications technology and flexible working.

Issues for transport and access (page 16)

- 2.15 This topic area sets out the need to review parking standards in the light of new national policy; reviewing the role of planning policies in the implementation of traffic management measures; and supporting provision of new footpaths and cycleways and improvements to existing routes. No additional issues are suggested for inclusion.

3. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

- 3.1 It is proposed to respond to the consultation on the following points:

- 3.2 This Council welcomes the opportunity to work with the National Park Authority in jointly commissioning/producing evidence required for their Local Plan Reviews where such collaboration is considered mutually beneficial in terms of sharing resources, achieving joined-up outcomes and fulfilling the statutory Duty to Cooperate.

- 3.3 Natural Environment Key Issue 5 refers to a need to address the ‘... cumulative impact of small scale development and suburbanisation’. Some explanation is needed in order to understand the context for this issue and to clarify what is being alluded to.

- 3.4 Built Environment Key Issue 2. The final sentence of this issue refers to the ‘... scale of new development’. Some explanation is needed in order to understand the context for this issue and to clarify what is being alluded to.

- 3.5 Vibrant Communities Key Issues. Related to the provision of new housing, referred to in this section, is the issue of habitat mitigation. There are currently different approaches to mitigation employed in relation to development which takes place within the National Park and development which takes place within the District Council’s Plan Area. Assessing the effectiveness of current mitigation standards and reviewing those standards in the light of evidence should be a key issue for the Local Plan Review. This issue might be included under the ‘Natural Environment’ topic area rather than ‘Vibrant Communities’.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The New Forest National Park Authority is consulting on the early stages of its Local Plan Review. Given the inter-related nature of planning in the National Park and the District Council’s Plan Area, this Council should respond as necessary to the consultation as proposed in section 3 of this report.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report. There are likely to be opportunities to share with the National Park Authority the costs of commissioning and producing necessary evidence to support the two authorities' Local Plans. These opportunities will be fully explored as part of ongoing discussions between the two planning authorities.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report. The National Park Authority's Local Plan Review will determine the planning strategy for the Park including the amount and location of new development to be accommodated within the Park. This strategy is likely to have implications for the environment of surrounding areas, including NFDC's Plan Area and planning strategy (and NFDC's strategy will have implications for the Park). It is important therefore that the two local planning authorities continue to work closely together throughout the process of formulating their Plans in order to address issues which arise.

7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is RECOMMENDED that the points set out in section 3 of this report form the basis of this Council's response to the New Forest National Park Authority's consultation on the scope of its Local Plan Review.

PORTFOLIO HOLDER ENDORSEMENT

I have agreed to the recommendation of this report.

Signed: ..CLLR E J HERON.....

Date: ...16 OCTOBER 2015.....

Date Notice of Decision given: 16 October 2015

Last Day for call-in: 23 October 2015

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Background Papers:

New Forest National Park Authority
Scope of the Local Plan Review
Initial 'call for views'
September 2015



NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

SCOPE OF THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

INITIAL 'CALL FOR VIEWS'

SEPTEMBER 2015

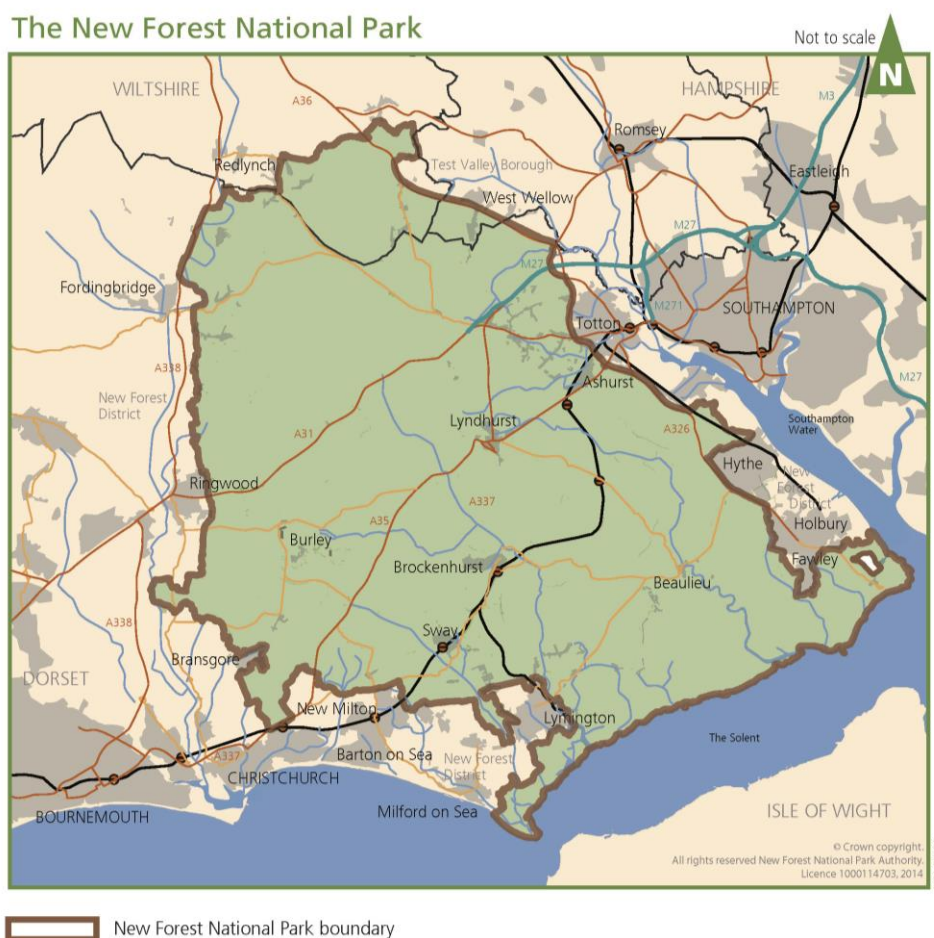
**(Regulation 18(1) – Notification and consultation on scope
of Local Plan Review)**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The New Forest National Park Authority is reviewing the local planning policies for the National Park, currently contained within the adopted *Core Strategy & Development Management Policies DPD*. The review will provide a strategic planning framework for the National Park looking forward to 2036.
- 1.2 Planning is a key way through which the Authority can help deliver the two statutory National Park purposes as set out in the ***National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949*** (as amended by the *Environment Act 1995*):
- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Parks; and
 - To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of these special qualities by the public.
- 1.3 The New Forest National Park – see map - was designated in March 2005 and the Authority’s primary responsibility is to deliver the two statutory purposes. In pursuing these purposes, the Authority also has a duty to, “...seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park and shall for that purpose co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of the National Park.” Planning enables the Authority to influence the scale and location of new development, manage impacts on landscape and biodiversity and enhance the built heritage of the Park.



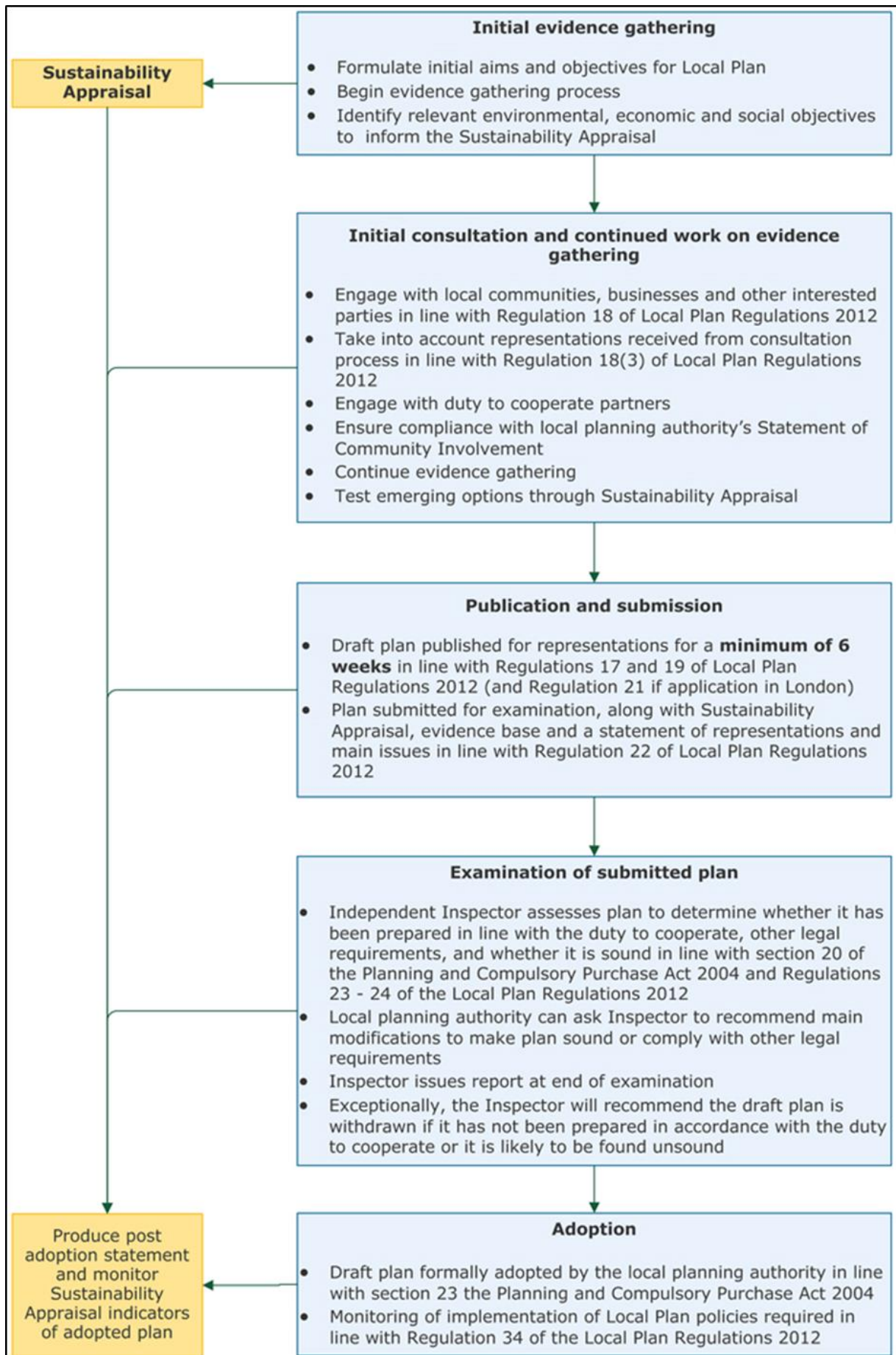
- 1.4 Since the adoption of the Core Strategy in late 2010 there have been significant changes in national planning policy. The *Localism Act 2011* gave local communities statutory plan-making powers for the first time with the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans. The Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) was published in 2012 and consolidated the previous national planning policy documents into a single, succinct framework. The Framework is now supported by the *National Planning Practice Guidance* (NPPG) online resource which was launched in March 2014. The *Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East* – which covered the whole of the New Forest National Park – was formally revoked by the Government in 2013. In addition to planning policy changes, there have also been several amendments to national Permitted Development Rights which have resulted in certain developments no longer requiring full planning permission within the Park.
- 1.5 The Government recognises that, “...*the planning system is a key instrument in the achievement of Park purposes. Planning legislation has a major impact on the form and location of development, is a vital tool for managing the impact of development on landscape and biodiversity and a key part of conserving and enhancing cultural heritage, including the built heritage in Park settlements...*”¹ To ensure the planning system continues to support the delivery of the two statutory Park purposes, it is vital that the Authority has an up-to-date development plan in place to guide planning decisions within the National Park.
- 1.6 The NPPG states that Local Plans are likely to require updating (in whole or in part) at least every five years and that reviews should be proportionate to the issues in hand. The NPPF makes it clear that the Government's preferred approach is for each local planning authority to prepare a single Local Plan for its area (paragraph 153). This is re-emphasised in the NPPG and therefore the Authority is justified in revising the Core Strategy into a single Local Plan.

Process of the Local Plan Review

- 2.1 The relevant Planning Regulations set out the process for the preparation of a Local Plan and these are summarised in the diagram on the following page. This scoping document forms part of the preparation of the Local Plan, during which the relevant Planning Regulations² require the Authority to: (i) notify certain bodies that the Local Plan is being reviewed; and (ii) invite representations on what the revised Local Plan should contain.

¹ Paragraph 136, *English National Parks & the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular*, 2010

² Regulation 18, Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012



3. Evidence Base

3.1 The review of the Local Plan should be based on proportionate and up-to-date evidence (para. 158, NPPF). The Authority has an established monitoring system in place and set out below is an indicative list of the types of evidence that may be required in the review to support and justify the particular policies in the Local Plan. All evidence base documents that support the Local Plan Review will be publicly available on the Authority's website during the process.

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess local housing needs
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish the availability of land to meet local housing needs
- A clear understanding of existing and future business needs arising within the Park
- An assessment of the quality and capacity of local infrastructure
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the National Park
- The updated New Forest National Park Tranquillity Map

3.2 An updated Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be undertaken to assess the potential impacts of the revised planning policies on the protected European nature conservation sites that cover large parts of the New Forest. The Authority will also undertake a Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) as part of the preparation of the revised Plan.

4. Scope of the Local Plan Review – Key Issues

4.1 The review of the Local Plan will establish the future local planning policy framework for the National Park. It should be noted that minerals and waste planning matters are covered separately in the *Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan*, adopted in 2013, which covers the whole of the National Park.

4.2 Set out on the following pages is: (i) a summary of the national planning context for reviewing the Authority's planning policies; and (ii) a summary of what we consider to be the main issues to be covered by the review (Section 5). At this initial stage, comments are invited on the two key questions below, and respondents can comment on as many or as few issues as they wish.

Your views:

1) Do you agree with the identification of the key planning issues on the following pages? If not, please say which, and why.

2) Are there other key strategic planning issues facing the New Forest National Park over the next 20 years that you feel are important?

National Policy Context

- 4.3 The ***English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular*** (DEFRA, 2010) confirms that the planning system is a key instrument in the achievement of the Park purposes through its role in guiding the form and location of development; managing the impacts of development on landscape and biodiversity; and conserving and enhancing the built heritage in Park settlements. For these reasons the Government has, through primary legislation, made national park authorities the sole planning authorities for their areas, covering development control, planning policy, minerals & waste and enforcement responsibilities.
- 4.4 In terms of local plan making, the Government's ***National Planning Policy Framework*** (NPPF, 2012) reaffirms that National Parks, "...*have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty...*" and that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of National Parks (para. 115). The Framework's general presumption in favour of sustainable development recognises that in some specific areas – including National Parks – development should be restricted (paragraph 14 and footnote 9) and that planning permission should be refused for major development in a National Park except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest (paragraph 116).
- 4.5 The Government's ***National Planning Practice Guidance*** (NPPG, online resource) confirms that National Park Management Plans should be taken into account in the local planning authority's Local Plan. The ***New Forest National Park Management Plan 2015 – 2020*** highlights the challenges facing the National Park (Chapter 4) and sets out a Vision for the National Park of an area which has a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place where people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest.

The Natural Environment – Key Issues

National and Local Policy Context

- 4.6 The ***Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations*** provide protection for certain species and habitats in areas designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites. This legislation confirms that plans and projects (including local plans and planning applications) can only go ahead if it can be shown there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of these protected nature conservation sites.
- 4.7 The ***National Planning Policy Framework*** (NPPF) supports the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. It provides National Parks with the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty and states that the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage should also be given great weight. The NPPF also requires planning authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and protect Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 4.8 Particular areas of the Park are at risk from flooding and the NPPF outlines that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. The NPPF also requires the reduction of risk from coastal change by avoiding inappropriate development in vulnerable areas on the coast. A Local Plan needs to decide whether a Coastal Change Management Area should be identified in any area likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast, and to clarify what development would be appropriate in such areas and in what circumstances.
- 4.9 The NPPF requires planning authorities to have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources; to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts; and to consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources.
- 4.10 The ***New Forest National Park Management Plan 2015-2020*** aims to protect and enhance the large-scale cultural landscapes, semi-natural habitats, and the individual characteristics that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the landscape. It also plans for the impacts of climate change on the Forest's special qualities and to reduce the Park's environmental footprint.

Profile and trends of the New Forest's Natural Environment

- 4.11 The New Forest National Park is the smallest of all the English National Parks, covering 56,658 hectares. Of this, more than 35,000 hectares are covered by international, national and local nature conservation designations. Over 32,000 hectares are protected as SSSI, with the vast majority of this area also internationally designated as SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites. There are also Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, County Wildlife Sites, National Nature Reserves and Local Nature Reserves. Whilst 52% of the SSSI area is currently in favourable condition, a large proportion of the SSSI remains in unfavourable but recovering condition, and a small amount is in unfavourable condition.

- 4.12 The extensive areas of nationally and internationally protected landscapes and habitats are a key consideration when planning for the New Forest. 54% of the total area of the National Park is covered by international nature conservation designations. This means that the New Forest National Park has a higher proportion of its planning area protected by these designations than any of the other 337 district planning authorities in England. Clearly this makes the landscape and habitats central to the character of the New Forest and sets the context for planning in the area. In part, this is one of the reasons why the area was also designated as a National Park.
- 4.13 However, although the landscape and habitats are protected they are under increasing and significant pressure from development within and surrounding the Park. The Authority has identified a range of measures to mitigate some of these pressures and has operated a habitat mitigation scheme since 2012. It is recognised that new or enhanced green infrastructure within or close to the Park has the potential to relieve some of the recreational pressures. It will also be important in this Local Plan to determine whether local communities are keen to identify 'local green spaces' of particular importance to them for special protection, or whether any Nature Improvement Areas would be appropriate.

Key Issues for the New Forest's natural environment

1. Ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the nationally protected landscape and internationally protected habitats of the New Forest (including the coast).
2. Ensuring potentially significant impacts on the European designated sites from new development throughout the Park are avoided or fully mitigated.
3. Supporting commoning and traditional land management practices that help to conserve the landscape character and natural habitats.
4. Addressing the likely impacts of climate change on the Park's habitats, species, landscapes, and coast, and how the New Forest National Park can adapt to climate change.
5. Considering options for addressing the cumulative impact of small-scale development and suburbanisation.
6. Reviewing the current approach to assessing the impacts of air, noise, light and water pollution arising from new development, including reviewing how the Forest's valued tranquillity can be safeguarded through planning policy.
7. Reconsidering the type and scale of renewable and low carbon energy development that would be appropriate in the Park to ensure that adverse impacts, including cumulative landscape impacts, are addressed.

The Built Environment – Key Issues

National and Local Policy Context

- 4.14 The **NPPF** sets out a number of core planning principles which include always seeking to secure high quality design; taking account of the character of different areas and conserving heritage assets. Paragraph 140 of the NPPF emphasises that local planning authorities should set out a “*positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment*”.
- 4.15 One of the objectives of the **New Forest National Park Management Plan 2015 – 2020** is to conserve and enhance the wealth of individual characteristics that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the villages and landscapes of the New Forest through actions such as fostering a better understanding of archaeology and the built environment which would help to conserve features of interest and encourage greater interest and involvement from land and property owners and local people.

Profile and trends of the New Forest’s built environment

- 4.16 The National Park has a significant amount of **heritage assets** which comprise:
- Over 200 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 - 7 Historic Parks and Gardens
 - 78 sites on Hampshire’s Register of Historic Parks and Gardens
 - 621 Listed buildings
 - Non-designated locally important buildings
 - 20 Conservation Areas supported by detailed Conservation Area Appraisals
- However, there are currently nine properties on the register of **buildings at risk** through neglect, decay and other threats.
- 4.17 The Authority has an adopted **Design Guide SPD** which sets out how development can sensitively respond to the Forest’s character and distinctiveness whilst encouraging good design. It is supplemented by a number of Village Design Statements which have also been adopted as supplementary planning documents, and focus on the distinctiveness of specific local communities. In addition, the Authority has prepared detailed Conservation Area Appraisals for each of the Conservation Areas within the Park which provide a wealth of information on the Character Areas and buildings of local; importance within each Conservation Area.

Key Issues for the New Forest’s Built Environment

1. Addressing concerns regarding the impact of new development on the local distinctiveness of the New Forest’s built environment.
2. Considering the need to balance making efficient use of land with conserving the rural character of the National Park, including the New Forest’s main villages. This includes concerns over the scale of new development.
3. Reviewing the approach to enabling development (as advocated by Historic

England and the NPPF), whereby development that would be normally be unacceptable in planning terms is supported due to the significant heritage benefits delivered.

4. Assessing the planning policy approach to: (i) the continued protection of designated and non-designated heritage assets and (ii) heritage assets at risk.
5. Determining a Park-specific approach to the Government's commitment to implementing the zero-carbon homes standard in 2016. Small sites of 10 units or fewer will be exempt from the off-site solutions element, but on-site energy performance will still apply.
6. Reconsidering the approach to telecommunications development within the Park within the context of the agreed code of practice in place with the operators and National Parks England. The vast majority of such development can currently be undertaken with the benefit of Permitted Development Rights but these may not always be in place.

Vibrant Communities – Key Issues

National and Local Policy Context

- 4.18 The Authority uses its planning remit to support the sustainability of communities; deliver housing and to ensure new development does not have detrimental impacts on the Park’s special qualities. The **NPPG** states that, “*A thriving rural community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, cultural venues, public houses and places of worship. Rural housing is essential to ensure viable use of these local facilities.*”
- 4.19 The **NPPF** confirms that planning authorities should, “...*use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework...*” (paragraph 47). The NPPF is clear that in some areas – including National Parks – development may be restrained and it may not be possible to meet the full housing need (paragraph 14, footnote 9). However, all planning authorities – including national park authorities – are required to objectively assess housing needs³ under a ‘policy off’ scenario, before then considering relevant factors such as landscape and nature conservation designations in formulating policy.
- 4.20 The special circumstances relating to the delivery of housing in National Parks are emphasised in the **English National Parks & the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular** (DEFRA, 2010) which states that NPAs, “...*have an important role to play as planning authorities in the delivery of affordable housing....they should include policies that pro-actively respond to local housing needs. The Government recognises that the Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing and does not therefore provide general housing targets for them. The expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services...*” – paragraphs 76 – 78.
- 4.21 The **New Forest National Park Management Plan 2015 – 2020** seeks to strengthen the well-being and sustainability of local communities and improve local facilities and services, including the provision of affordable housing.

Profile and trends of the New Forest’s Communities

- 4.22 The National Park is home to 34,900 residents (2011 Census data) and, with a population density of just over 62 people per square kilometre, is the second most densely populated of the British National Parks. The population of the National Park increased by 2.6% between 2001 and 2011 (Census data) and the housing stock currently stands at 15,650 dwellings, of which 6.8% are holiday homes or second residences. This is above the national figure of 4.4%, but below the average across the English and Welsh National Parks of 13.9%.

³ The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) technical guidance note on ‘Objectively assessed need and Housing Targets’ (2014) defines objectively assessed housing needs as “*the housing that households are willing and able to buy or rent, either from their own resources or with assistance from the state*”. In this definition, total need equals the total housing that would be provided across both affordable and open market sectors if land supply was not constrained.

- 4.23 **Annual monitoring** illustrates that 191 dwellings (net) have been completed within the Park between 2006 and 2014 – an average of 24 new dwellings per annum. Housing has been delivered through development within the four defined villages and through rural exceptions sites in other parts of the Park.
- 4.24 The **Travellers Accommodation Assessment for Hampshire** (Forest Bus Ltd, 2013) covered the whole of the National Park and concluded that two additional permanent pitches are required to meet local gypsy and traveller needs. The Authority will also be responding to the requirements of the NPPF by undertaking a detailed **Strategic Housing Market Assessment** and a **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment** to assess the local housing need and potential for new development in the Park.
- 4.25 Meeting the housing needs of older people within the Park will also be an issue over the Plan-period given the projected growth in the over-65 population.
- 4.26 The **Review of the Commoner's Dwelling Scheme** (2011) concluded that the existing legal framework is robust and does not require amendment. Any dwelling built under the Scheme has to meet the highest design standards and currently the maximum size of dwelling permissible is 120 m² floor area. Since the 2011 Review and following the consideration of subsequent planning applications for new commoners' dwellings, Members agreed in March 2013 to carry out a further review of the Scheme concurrently with Local Plan review.

Key Issues for the New Forest's Communities

- 1) Delivering new housing at an appropriate scale, mix and tenure in a way that helps address local housing needs, while at the same time ensuring development does not compromise the delivery of the two statutory purposes.
- 2) Enabling the delivery of affordable housing for local people - within the context of recent changes in national planning policy - to ensure the New Forest remains a living-working area.
- 3) Reconsidering the established settlement hierarchy within the Park, whereby new development is primarily focused on the villages of Ashurst, Brockenhurst Lyndhurst and Sway where a range of services can be provided close together.
- 4) Reviewing the Commoners' Dwelling Scheme as agreed at the Authority meeting held on 28 March 2013
- 5) Assessing the current approach of seeking to reduce the landscape impact of new development and safeguard the stock of smaller dwellings through limiting the size of residential extensions, replacement dwellings and outbuildings.
- 6) Considering how to address the national policy requirement for planning authorities to identify gypsy and traveller sites to meet local needs.
- 7) Considering the housing needs of different groups in the community, including older people given the future projected demographic profile of the area.
- 8) Reviewing the approach to developer contributions in light of recent national policy changes and the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Local Economy – Key Issues

National and Local Policy Context

- 4.27 The ***National Planning Policy Framework*** (NPPF) supports a prosperous rural economy. It outlines that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity. Local plans should support the sustainable growth of all types of businesses, promote the development and diversification of agricultural and land-based rural businesses, support sustainable rural tourism, and promote the retention of local services and community facilities.
- 4.28 At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means local plans should meet objectively assessed needs and allow for change. However, the NPPF clarifies that this does not apply where policies indicate that development should be more restricted, such as in National Parks, or areas affected by international and national nature conservation designations, as found extensively in the Forest.
- 4.29 A key objective of the ***New Forest National Park Management Plan 2015 – 2020*** is to develop a diverse and sustainable economy that contributes to the well-being of local communities and the National Park Authority has a duty to foster the economic well-being of its local communities. The challenge therefore, is that while delivering its two statutory purposes (see paragraph 4.3), the Authority needs to foster a prosperous rural economy in ways which either enhance, or do not compromise the special qualities of the area.
- 4.30 The National Park is covered by the ***Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP*** who have both developed Strategic Economic Plans for their areas. The Authority should work collaboratively with other planning authorities in consultation with LEPs on strategic planning priorities.

Profile and trends of the New Forest's local economy

- 4.31 The National Park has a diverse local economy, with 2,330 businesses covering a broad range of sectors, with the largest being the 'professional, scientific and technical' sector. Although rural in nature, only about 10% of businesses are now found in land-based businesses such as agriculture, forestry, and commoning. The vast majority of businesses are small, with less than 10 employees. There is a larger proportion of managers, senior officials and people in professional and technical occupations than across England. Average household incomes are higher than other National Parks and higher than the average for the South East. Unemployment is low and has been consistently lower than in Hampshire, the South East, and the UK.
- 4.32 A recent ***Business Needs Survey*** showed overall business confidence, and a resilience to the economic downturn of the past few years. Businesses are largely content with their existing premises, but some expect to require increased space in the future. The natural landscape and rural environment were seen as great assets to many businesses. The main business constraints

were identified as poor transport links, including the local road network, coupled with insufficient provision of public transport. Poor broadband provision and coverage was also cited. There remains a demand for good business advice and skills training to support the diverse economy.

4.33 New business floorspace has continued to be developed in the National Park in recent years, and there has also been expansion by local hotels and investment in new leisure developments. The Government's change in Permitted Development Rights to allow offices to be turned into homes without the need for planning permission could have an important impact on the local economy.

Key Issues for the New Forest's Local Economy

- 1) Reviewing the need for new employment development within the Park; the retention of existing employment sites; and the spatial options for new employment development. A recent survey shows that local businesses are largely content with their existing premises, but some expect to require increased business space in the future.
- 2) Sustaining the diverse local economy which has produced consistently low unemployment compared to regional and national levels.
- 3) Reviewing the implications for the local economy and jobs from the recent changes to national Permitted Development Rights to allow offices to be converted to homes without planning permission.
- 4) Assessing the planning policy approach aimed at supporting the visitor economy while avoiding potentially harmful environmental and cultural impacts.
- 5) Reviewing the planning policy approach to farm diversification.
- 6) Assessing the policy options available to support the rural economy, including the provision of fast and reliable communications technology across the Park and flexible working arrangements such as home working.

Transport and Access – Key Issues

National and local policy context

- 4.34 The **NPPF** sets out the basic strategy for transport based on actively managing patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focusing significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.
- 4.35 The **New Forest National Park Management Plan 2015 – 2020** identifies a number of transport related issues of concern to local communities. These include such matters as signage clutter and damage to road verges. The Management Plan also identifies actions to improve the connectivity of the on and off road network in the Park for the benefit of residents and visitors.
- 4.36 In the **English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular (2010)** there is a clear steer that national parks should promote sustainable transport and consider demand management measures and low carbon transport initiatives such as enhancements to public transport, segregated cycling and walking connections between train stations, local towns, villages and car parks and the local rights of way network.

Profile and trends of the New Forest's Transport and Access

- 4.37 Car use is predicted to rise markedly nationally from 2015 onwards, with a possible 19% rise across the country as a whole up to 2025 (taking the medium prediction of several possible scenarios).
- 4.38 Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council, as the Highways Authority for parts of the Park, produce **Local Transport Plans**. Hampshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2031, and Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011- 2026 both set out local strategic transport objectives which cover the relevant parts of the National Park.
- 4.39 Regard should be had to the latest available data on road network usage, traffic forecasts and levels of road accidents. In addition, there may be usable data from the 2011 Census with regard to travel to work areas that indicate origin and destination points of commuting traffic.

Key Issues for the New Forest's Transport & Access

- 1) Reviewing the need for local parking standards to be established through local planning policy in light of the Government's March 2015 Planning Statement which confirms that such standards should only be imposed with clear and compelling justification.
- 2) Reviewing the role of local planning policies in the implementation of traffic management measures (such as traffic calming and signage) within the context of a nationally protected landscape.
- 3) Reviewing the role of the Local Plan in supporting new footpaths or cycleways, or improvements to existing routes.

5. Indicative Timetable

- 5.1 The timetable for the review of the Local Plan can be broken down into a number of distinct stages as set out in the table below, which corresponds with the relevant requirements in the Government's Planning Regulations. The Authority will, in due course, adopt an updated *Local Development Scheme* setting out in more detail the timetable for the Local Plan review.

Local Plan Stage	Indicative Timetable
Initial evidence gathering and early targeted consultation	July – August 2015
Initial Consultation (Reg. 18)	September – October 2015
Preferred Options Consultation (non-statutory stage)	Spring 2016
Publication of proposed Submission Document for representations to be made (Reg. 19)	Autumn 2016
Submission to Secretary of State for Examination (Reg. 22)	Winter 2016/17
Examination	To be confirmed
Adoption	Summer 2017

6. How to get involved

- 6.1 As outlined in the indicative timetable above, this scoping consultation forms an initial part of the review of the Authority's Local Plan. At this stage respondents are invited to make representations on what matters the review of the Local Plan ought to consider and address, and whether there are any omissions in the list of issues identified by the Authority on pages 7 – 15.

Representations should be sent to:

- policy@newforestnpa.gov.uk or
- Policy Team, New Forest National Park Authority, Lymington
Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 9ZG

In addition, if you would like to keep in touch with the process of the Local Plan Review (even if you have not made a comment at this initial consultation stage) please contact us with your details and we will ensure you receive future updates.

7. Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Coastal Change Management Area	An area identified in Local Plans as likely to be affected by coastal change (physical change to the shoreline through erosion, coastal landslip, permanent inundation or coastal accretion).
Community Infrastructure Levy	A levy through which the National Park Authority could raise funds from owners or developers of land undertaking new building projects in the National Park.
Core Strategy	The Authority's adopted Core Strategy (December 2010) set out the Park-wide planning policies against which planning applications are assessed.
Defined Villages	The villages of Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway where appropriate small-scale employment and housing development is supported in the current Core Strategy (2010).
Enabling Development	Development which would be unacceptable in planning terms but for the fact that it would bring heritage benefits sufficient to justify it being carried out, and which could not otherwise be achieved.
European designated sites	A network of nature protection areas made up of candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated respectively under the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive.
Heritage Asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets such as listed building and assets identified at the more local level by the National Park Authority.
Local Enterprise Partnership	A body designated by the Government, established for the purposes of supporting the economic growth in the area. The New Forest lies within the Enterprise M3 LEP and close to a number of other LEPs.
Local Plan	The Plan for the future development of the local area drawn up in consultation with the local community. Forms the basis for making decisions on planning applications.
National Planning	Published in March 2012, the Framework sets out the Government's national planning policies for England and how

Policy Framework (NPPF)	these are expected to be applied. The Framework must be taken into account in the preparation of local plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)	The Government's online planning resource launched in March 2014 which sets out relevant planning practice guidance on a range of issues including housing, local plans, conserving and enhancing the built environment, and the natural environment.
Permitted Development Rights	Certain types of development do not require full planning permission. These are called 'permitted development rights' and are granted by the Government. Different permitted development rights apply within National Parks to other parts of the country.
Rural Exception sites	Small sites developed for affordable housing where sites would not normally be used for housing.