

**PROPOSED DOWNTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN  
(SUBMISSION DRAFT)**

**Response of New Forest District Council to the Submission Draft**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Wiltshire Council is consulting on the draft Downton Neighbourhood Plan. The southern boundary of Downton immediately adjoins New Forest District Council (NFDC) and the New Forest National Park (NFNP).
- 1.2 Responses to the consultation will be provided to the Neighbourhood Plan independent examiner.

**2 ISSUES RELATING TO NEW FOREST DISTRICT**

- 2.1 Our proposed response is attached as Appendix 1 and comments on the following:
- Deficiency in the consultation process - this is the first formal notification that NFDC has received on the Downton Neighbourhood Plan;
  - Strategic approach to housing sites is overly complex and lacking robustness; and
  - Reference should be made to securing appropriate mitigation to manage the impacts of new development on the integrity of internationally protected sites in the New Forest.

**3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 None.

**4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Recreational impacts on European sites located within New Forest District arising from additional visits from the occupiers of new homes within Downton parish. These impacts will be required to be addressed by appropriate mitigation measures.

**5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None.

**6 RECOMMENDATION**

To agree the consultation response attached as Appendix 1.

**7 PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION**

**I have agreed to the recommendations of this report.**

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

**Date:** .....  
                  10 FEBRUARY 2016

<p>For further information contact:</p> <p>Andrew Herring Planning Policy Officer Policy and Plans Team Tel: 023 8028 5588 E mail: <a href="mailto:andrew.herring@nfdc.gov.uk">andrew.herring@nfdc.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Attached information:</p> <p>Appendix 1 – NFDC Response to Wiltshire Council on the draft Downton Neighbourhood Plan (February 2016)</p>
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Date on which notice given of this Decision - 10 February 2016

Last date for call-in - 17 February 2016

## **Economy, Housing & Planning**

**Executive Head:** Chris Elliott

Spatial Planning Team  
Economic Development and Planning  
Wiltshire Council  
County Hall  
Bythesea Road  
Trowbridge  
BA14 8JN

My Ref: AH/Downton NP\_Response  
Your Ref:

Date: 08 February 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

### **PROPOSED DOWNTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (SUBMISSION DRAFT)**

Thank you for consulting New Forest District Council on the above document.

The Council's comments on the Submission draft are as follows:

#### Page 5 (Consultation process)

In relation to Appendix 26 of the Consultation Statement please note that New Forest District Council (NFDC) has not been consulted on and received no notification of the Pre-Submission consultation in April 2015. As an adjacent authority to the Downton parish council area NFDC would expect to be consulted on such a document in line with Schedule 1 (Paragraph 1) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

#### Section 9.2 (Housing development)

The draft Neighbourhood Plan appears overly complex in relation to the way it deals with housing site preferences (in particular Section 9.2), and has the potential to be both confusing for readers and lacking robustness in relation to site allocations or future applications.

It would better reflect NPPF requirements and be more future proof to have a clear and positively worded policy about where the Parish would prefer future growth to take place, subject to there being additional need identified through the Wiltshire local plan review (as is likely). Such a policy should include site maps and a justification that includes planning evidence as well as community preferences.

#### Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

The HRA Screening Report (May 2015) notes the requirement to reduce the impacts of any new development on the New Forest SPA by providing recreational alternatives to visiting the New Forest for local people. Policy T5 refers to the need to improve footpaths and cycle routes across the Plan Area, but as worded this is not sufficient to address the key points raised in the HRA (for example in relation to paragraph 5.5 of the HRA and the conclusions in Section 6). The avoidance of adverse impacts on European sites is a matter of law, without which development cannot take place.

**newforest.gov.uk**

Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, LYNDHURST, SO43 7PA

In relation to potential future development the draft Plan should refer to securing appropriate mitigation to manage the impacts of new development on the integrity of the Special Protected Areas in the New Forest. The plan should also set out what form that mitigation should take in relation to any sites identified so that (we suggest) the site developers can deliver that mitigation directly. The Wiltshire local plan or supporting documents may provide some of this information, in which cross referencing may be appropriate. But to be silent on Europa habitats impact avoidance when the issue is identified in the HRA would be a significant soundness issue.

By way of example New Forest District Council has an adopted Mitigation Strategy SPD (2014) which sets out a number of different schemes designed to attract residents of new development away from European nature conservation sites for recreational activities which may otherwise take place within the designated sites. Part of this strategy seeks to provide publicly accessible natural green space (of SANGS quality) and recreational walking routes across the district, with specific projects set out within the SPD.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Herring  
Planning Policy Officer  
Economy, Housing & Planning  
Tel No: 023 8028 5588  
email: [andrew.herring@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.herring@nfdc.gov.uk)