

Issues and Scope Consultation

New Forest District Council

(outside the National Park)

February 2025 – Cabinet Version

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Foreword

New Forest District has had a successful history of local planning that has provided new jobs, homes, and investment in town centres and local infrastructure at the same time as protecting and enhancing our natural and historic environment and promoting health and wellbeing. Over the course of the 50 years of New Forest District Council's history, Local Plans have regularly been produced and updated to help realise these goals.

This 'Issues and Scope Consultation' is the first stage in reviewing the local plan. The local plan is an important document which sets out detailed planning policies and proposals for New Forest District (outside the National Park) for the coming years.

In producing the local plan, we are required to accord with certain legal requirements and guidelines set at national level. However, the views of those who live and work in the area are key in shaping this new plan to meet its needs, while protecting and enhancing the local environment. This document has also been prepared in light of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 which has increased pressure on local authorities to meet high housing targets and set new requirements for elements such as Green Belt reviews.

Good planning means that we try to address different priorities, endeavouring to help cater for growth, while supporting communities with good design, and protecting our precious environment and furthering the purposes of both the National Park and Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

To do this we need to be appropriately informed and that is why we need your views to help shape the plan and the future for the New Forest. We would be grateful for your views in response to the consultation.

Thank you.

Councillor Derek Tipp

Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy

Introduction and Background

The New Forest District Council 'Plan Area'

1. The 'Plan Area' which is covered by us comprises the yellow area on Figure 1. New Forest District Council (NFDC) is responsible for planning matters in this area including, the production of the Local Plan, Development Management (determining planning applications), Building Control and Planning Enforcement.
2. Our Local Plan Area is not contiguous, but comprises three broad sub-areas:
 - Waterside
 - South Coastal Towns
 - Avon Valley and Downlands

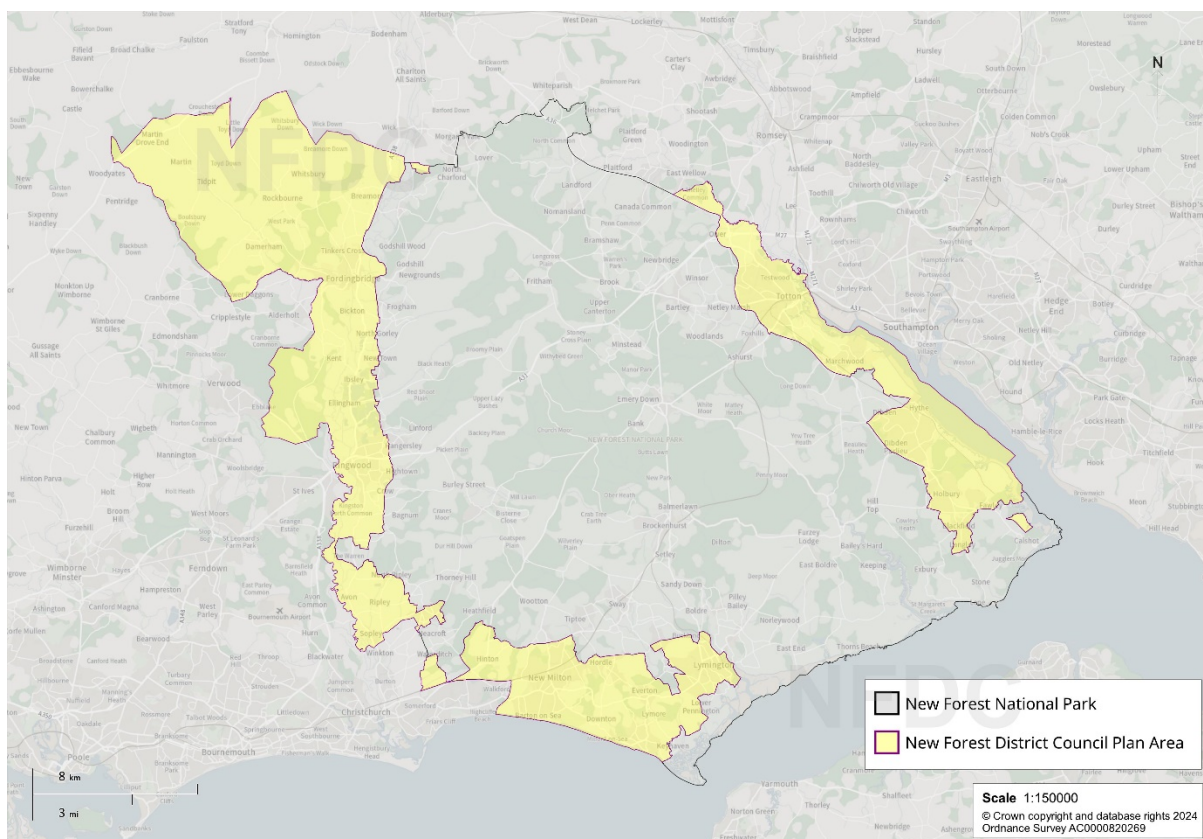


Figure 1: The Plan Area in relation to New Forest District and the National Park

3. Each NFDC sub-area is described in more detail later in the document.

4. The Plan Area is in, and near, a number of International Nature Conservation sites (SPAs, SACs and Ramsars), including the New Forest, as well as across the Solent and Southampton Water. Under the **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017** (as amended), all new residential development within the Plan Area will have to consider its impact upon the conservation and protection of the internationally important sites and will need to be accompanied by an extensive package of habitat mitigation measures.
5. The parts of the district within the New Forest National Park (the grey area on figure 1) are not covered by our Review. Instead, within the National Park, planning is the responsibility of the **New Forest National Park Authority** (NFNPA) who prepare a separate local plan for their area.
6. As introduced in the **Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023**, we have a strengthened legal duty to further the purposes of both the New Forest National Park and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. The National Park purposes are:
 - Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, culture and heritage.
 - Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public.
7. If there is any conflict between these purposes, greater weight must be attached to the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park. The purpose of a National Landscape is to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the area. The natural beauty of these areas is the sum of its 'sense of place'. It includes geology, climate, landform, and species which together give rise to the industry, heritage, culture, and language of a place.

What is a local plan?

8. Local plans are the key documents through which local planning authorities can set out a vision and framework for the future development of the area, engaging with their communities in doing so. Our Plan will set out a strategy and policies for the use, development or protection of land and buildings in the Plan Area for at least 15 years. These policies are then used as the basis for determining planning applications.
9. The new Local Plan will replace the existing adopted policies set out in the current Adopted Local Plan, which comprises **Part One (adopted July 2020)**, **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.
10. 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**.
11. In December 2024, the government published a new **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF). This document has been prepared in the context of the current NPPF and we will continue to have regard to any revisions to government policy as our review progresses. The government is seeking to significantly boost housing supply and delivery and has set a target to deliver 1.5 million dwellings across England by 2029.

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

12. 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 because they have 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.

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

What are the stages of the production of the New Forest District Local Plan?

14. The local plan making process that the Council must follow is prescribed in **national regulations**.

15. More detail on the timetable is set out in our **Local Development Scheme (LDS)**.

16. The latest timetable, for the initial stages of Plan preparation, is set out below:

- Issues and Scope Consultation – Spring 2025
- Draft Plan Consultation – Autumn/Winter 2025
- Review of consultation, further testing and refinement – Winter/Spring 2025/26

What is this 'Issues and Scope' document about, and why are we seeking your views?

17. This consultation on Issues and Scope is the first formal stage of preparing our Local Plan.

18. At this stage we are looking for your views on whether we have identified the right issues facing our Plan and the scope of what the review should cover. We are also seeking your views on individual topics and some of the key issues the Plan will need to address.

19. This document sets out a summary on a wide range of issues and contains several questions that we would like your views on, but this is not the definitive list, and we would welcome your views on any other topics you feel we may have missed.

Spatial context

New Forest as a place

20. New Forest District lies on the south Hampshire coast between the conurbations of Southampton to the east and Christchurch / Bournemouth / Poole to the west. The New Forest National Park lies at the centre of the district. The Plan Area contains most of the district's population, settled in six market towns of Totton, Hythe, Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood and Fordingbridge as well as numerous smaller settlements and large areas of countryside. 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 Part One:

- 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.

21. The hierarchy as currently adopted does not explicitly name all towns and villages, and we would welcome views on a revised hierarchy. The towns and villages covered by this Plan are set out in Figure 2.

22. According to the 2021 Census, the size of the New Forest population (including the National Park and the Plan Area) was 175,800 people (51.9% male, 48.1% female). The total population has decreased by 700 people (0.4%) since the previous census in 2011 when the population was 176,500. By contrast, the population in Hampshire has increased by 6.3% and the UK population has increased 6.6%. This makes New Forest one of only 25 authority areas within the UK to have shown a decrease in population since 2011. The New Forest has an ageing population and a decreasing working age population.

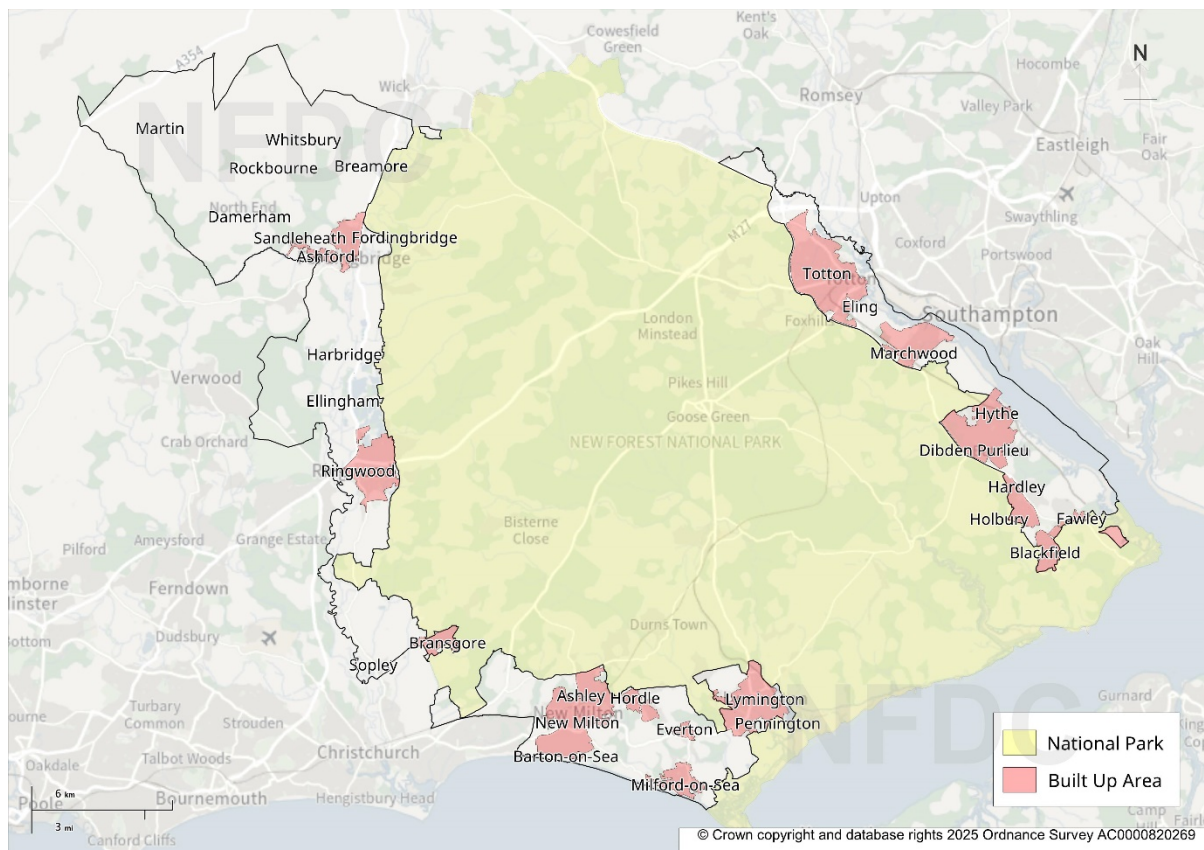


Figure 2: The settlements covered by our plan.

Relationship of the Plan Area to the National Park

23. The Plan Area houses most of the population of the New Forest as a whole and surrounds the New Forest National Park. The relationship between the Plan Area and the surrounding countryside, including the National Park, 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. 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 and the Plan Area. Due to government policy (including **paragraphs 189 and 190** of the NPPF) the majority of housing and other development to meet needs across New Forest District is expected to predominantly come forward within the Plan Area, outside of the National Park.

The Waterside

24. The Waterside lies between the National Park and Southampton Water. Much of the area is intensely developed with approximately 37% of the district's population living in the settlements of Totton, Eling, Marchwood, Hythe and Dibden, Hardley, Holbury, Blackfield, Langley and Fawley. The area falls within the Southampton housing and economic market areas, with the A326 providing the main access route linking the settlements with Southampton and the M27, and typically more rural roads linking the Waterside into the National Park. A historic ferry route links Hythe to Southampton, whilst a presently disused railway branch line runs between Fawley and Totton.

25. The area has a substantial amount of existing employment land, focused on sites in Totton and Marchwood and the Fawley Refinery. A significant increase in employment opportunities is forecast to become available as the **Solent Freeport** develops. Totton also has a large town centre with a smaller village centre at Hythe. Both settlements also have out-of-centre supermarkets. A number of local centres serve the other settlements.

26. Most of the coast and the Lower Test Valley is subject to national and international nature conservation designations. Open areas of countryside between the main settlements help to maintain their separate identities, accommodate green infrastructure, and are used for a variety of rural purposes, including agricultural grazing.

South Coastal Area

27. Located between the National Park and the Solent is the South Coastal Area. The largest towns are Lymington, Pennington and New Milton, with main villages including Milford-on-Sea, Hordle and Everton. There are significant employment estates at Lymington and New Milton, and both have large town centres. There is a village centre in Milford-on-Sea, and local centres elsewhere. Lymington is a historic and popular sailing centre, provides an important ferry route to the Isle of Wight and is an attractive visitor destination. Barton-on-Sea and Milford-on-Sea are also both important coastal destinations with the latter providing a key access point to the **English Heritage owned Hurst Castle** a popular tourist site located within the National Park.

28. The A337 links the main settlements with Christchurch to the west and to Brockenhurst and Lymington to the north. Access to the north and east is through the National Park, with some routes along forest roads. Whilst outside of the Plan Area, there is also a level crossing of the mainline railway at Brockenhurst as well as a great number of vehicular movements in Lyndhurst (particularly during the summer months), both of which can cause traffic issues and congestion.
29. There is an existing minerals extraction site at Downton Manor Farm with permission for up to 150 trips per day which is safeguarded in the Adopted **Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan**. The workings of minerals on this site are reaching its conclusion prior to planned restoration. As part of their **partial update to their Minerals and Waste plan**, the Hampshire minerals and waste planning authorities are proposing a new minerals extraction site at Ashley Manor Farm. This would replace the existing operations at Downton Manor Farm and would operate within the existing vehicular movements. The geology of the area means that a significant proportion of the remaining countryside is within a 'Mineral Consultation Area' for future minerals extraction prior to any potential alternative development.
30. Much of the coast is designated **nationally** for its nature conservation importance with a small area designated for its **international** nature conservation importance east of Milford-on-Sea. The cliffs at Barton-on-Sea are of international geological importance. This area contains the South-West Hampshire Green Belt which tightly surrounds all the settlements and adjoins the South-East Dorset Green Belt to the west.

Avon Valley and Western Downlands

31. This sub-area lies to the west of the National Park. Around 27,000 people live in the main settlements of Bransgore, Ringwood, Fordingbridge and the downland villages of Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne, and Whitsbury.
32. The River Avon also flows through this area from Salisbury before reaching the English Channel through Christchurch Harbour, and to the north-west of Fordingbridge lies the Cranborne Chase National Landscape which covers 6,750 hectares of the Plan Area and includes the downland villages.

33. The A338 runs between Christchurch, through Ringwood and Fordingbridge, to Salisbury. Ringwood has a large town centre with a smaller centre in Fordingbridge. There is also a small village centre in Bransgore. Ringwood contains some sizeable employment estates within the town and at Blashford. There are small settlements in the Avon Valley including Sopley, Ellingham, Harbridge, Ibsley and Breamore. The sub-area is divided between two housing market areas: the south including Ringwood and Bransgore look towards Bournemouth/Christchurch, while Fordingbridge and the north-west have strong links with Salisbury and Wiltshire.
34. The area has been subject to significant development pressure. The existing Local Plan Part One allocated strategic sites for housing development in Fordingbridge, Ringwood and Bransgore. There are existing minerals extraction sites and most of the land in this area is safeguarded in the Adopted **Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan**, which means that any future planning decisions will need to consider potential minerals and waste interests on suitable sites.

Our Current Spatial Strategy

35. Our existing **Local Plan** (2016 – 2036) sets out a spatial strategy for the area which outlines how development is distributed across the area for at least 10,420 dwellings. This is set out in **policy STR5**.
36. The existing Plan also acknowledged the role of good quality design principles in helping to shape places. The current spatial strategy is design, landscape and environment-focused, aiming to address the key issues under the following themes:
- Protect and enhance the special character and environment of the New Forest;
 - Provide more homes for local people;
 - Support local businesses to prosper for the benefit of the community; and
 - Promote the safety and wellbeing of people who live and work within the area.
37. The existing Plan identifies where growth will take place within the Waterside, the South Coastal towns and the Avon Valley with strategic sites allocated around the Plan Area as follow:
- Waterside – 3,230 dwellings
 - South Coastal Towns – 945 dwellings
 - Avon Valley and Downlands – 1,820 dwellings
38. The current spatial strategy locates development in accessible locations that help to sustain the vitality and viability of the towns and villages. It includes a settlement hierarchy based around towns, main villages, and small rural villages.
39. The current Plan promotes sustainable economic growth by retaining and supporting existing business sectors and safeguarding opportunities for future employment and business development. The strategy for economic growth reflected the observed unemployment rates in the Plan Area were generally low at the time of preparing the Plan and that with an ageing population the working age population was not forecast to increase significantly across the Plan period.

Spatial Vision and Outcomes

40. It is important that a local plan incorporates a vision. The vision should set out the intended character of the Plan Area and, with objectives, set out how we should deal with critical issues.

41. Developing a vision for the Local Plan involves looking ahead to what our Plan Area will be like in 15, 20 or even 30 years' time, and will likely include:

- a direction of travel as to how the Plan Area will evolve and places are shaped.
- the general location of where development will take place and where it will not.

42. The NPPF expects strategic policies to look ahead at least 15 years post adoption and to ensure that any proposed large scale development (e.g. a new settlement or significant extension to an existing settlement) is set within a vision of at least 30 years. Whilst a 15 year period would likely require a local plan period up to 2043, we are keen to understand what period you think this Plan should cover.

43. Our current **vision** for the Plan Area sets out how the areas and settlements within it will contribute towards its delivery, but as we start this review we need to consider what our new vision should be and what are the key issues to be considered.

Consultation questions:

1. What would you like see as our main focus for our review?
2. What do you think the key issues will be to deliver a new vision and why?
3. How should our Plan look to address the 'duty to seek to further the purposes' of the New Forest National Park and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape?
4. How long ahead should we plan for in the new Plan, and why?

What should the distribution of new development be?

44. The new Plan will contain policies that set out the overall spatial strategy for the distribution of development.
45. Our current strategy is to locate and direct new development to accessible locations that help to sustain the vitality and viability of the towns and villages of the Plan Area as the focal points of commercial and community life and as safe, attractive, and accessible locations to use and visit.
46. The existing **settlement hierarchy** is defined based on the availability within the settlement or ease of access to services like public transport, employment, schools and health facilities and shops or 'high street' facilities. It also considers the regeneration opportunities in the main towns and coastal communities.
47. An important issue to address in our review is whether to continue with this spatial development strategy or develop an alternative strategy. Options could include (but not limited to):
 - focus development according to the existing settlement pattern, with different scales of development considered appropriate for the town, main village, or small rural village,
 - an increased focus on brownfield sites and town centre regeneration,
 - identifying a site for a new settlement in a sustainable location, or other approaches such as a larger number of smaller developments in areas that are linked together,
 - Identifying sites where development could be justified through its special quality and ability to deliver benefits for redefining countryside and settlement edges.
 - focusing new development on established transport corridors such as the A326 and/or where access to larger existing market towns is possible,
 - Increasing densities on new developments to enable more homes to be delivered on smaller sites.

- Providing new development within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (in that part of National Landscape that is within our Plan Area)

48. Whatever the development strategy proves to be, there will always be a need to reinforce and support existing communities to maintain and enhance local services and facilities.

Consultation questions:

5. In seeking to meet our identified development needs, what should our strategy be?
6. Is the existing settlement hierarchy appropriate, or are there changes that should be included?
7. Do you think it's appropriate for us to consider new development within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape?
8. Are there other strategic options that could help meet the need for development that we should also consider?

Relationship with the New Forest District Council Corporate Plan

49. Our new Local Plan will take forward the key commitments for the Council as set out in the **Corporate Plan**, adopted on 3 of April 2024 and provide the spatial dimension to it.

50. The Corporate Plan sets out the following Vision for New Forest District:

"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."

51. In addition to its Vision, the Corporate Plan sets out nine key commitments (priorities) the Council is making to New Forest District residents. These are divided into three priority themes, 'People,' 'Place,' and 'Prosperity' which are underpinned by the Future New Forest transformation program.

52. In order to group the large number of issues that need to be discussed in the Local Plan, the remainder of this document sets out the various topics that we believe need to be considered. These are grouped within the context of the Corporate Plan priority themes of People, Place and Prosperity. At this stage it is intended that these themes will be used as our Local Plan develops but we would welcome suggestions on any alternative structure.

Consultation questions:

9. Are our **Corporate Plan** priorities of 'People', 'Place' and 'Prosperity' appropriate to also be used for our Local Plan?

People

Helping people in the greatest need and creating balanced, resilient, and healthy communities who feel safe and supported with easy access to services.

Housing

53. Housing is a basic human right and a key priority for the government. It is important that we ensure that the right number and type of houses are delivered across the Plan Area. The Local Plan will need to set out the number of new homes to be provided and the distribution of these based on the spatial strategy for the distribution of development. Additionally, the size, type, and tenure of housing needed for different groups will need to be identified, including the proportion of the overall housing requirement that should be affordable.

Why does it matter?

54. There is a significant need for new homes across the Plan Area. The NPPF requires local authorities to prepare local plans that meet the housing needs of their areas wherever possible as currently supply is not meeting demand, and nationally developers have not been building houses where they are needed. There is also a need to take account of any development needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas.

55. Our review therefore needs to make sure it provides for a supply of homes in an appropriate way to address the needs of our communities.

What are the issues?

a) How much housing to plan for

56. To fulfil the government's priority of boosting the supply and delivery of housing, the NPPF 2024 requires local authorities to calculate the housing need for their area using a **standard method** which sets our housing need as 1,501 dwellings per annum. This is a near three-fold increase above our existing housing target and far above levels previously delivered in both the Plan Area and the National Park.

57. The housing need figure established by the standard method is the first step in the process of deciding how many homes should or can be planned for in as part of our review. It is undertaken separately from assessing whether sufficient land is suitable, available, and achievable. The extent of any unmet development needs in neighbouring areas which we need to consider has yet to be confirmed.

58. Our Plan Area is significantly affected by major physical and environmental designations and constraints. Approximately 57% of the Plan Area (i.e. outside of the National Park) is affected by constraints the National Planning Policy Framework (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). All these constraints and others will need to be considered when assessing sites for development and establishing the proposed housing requirement.

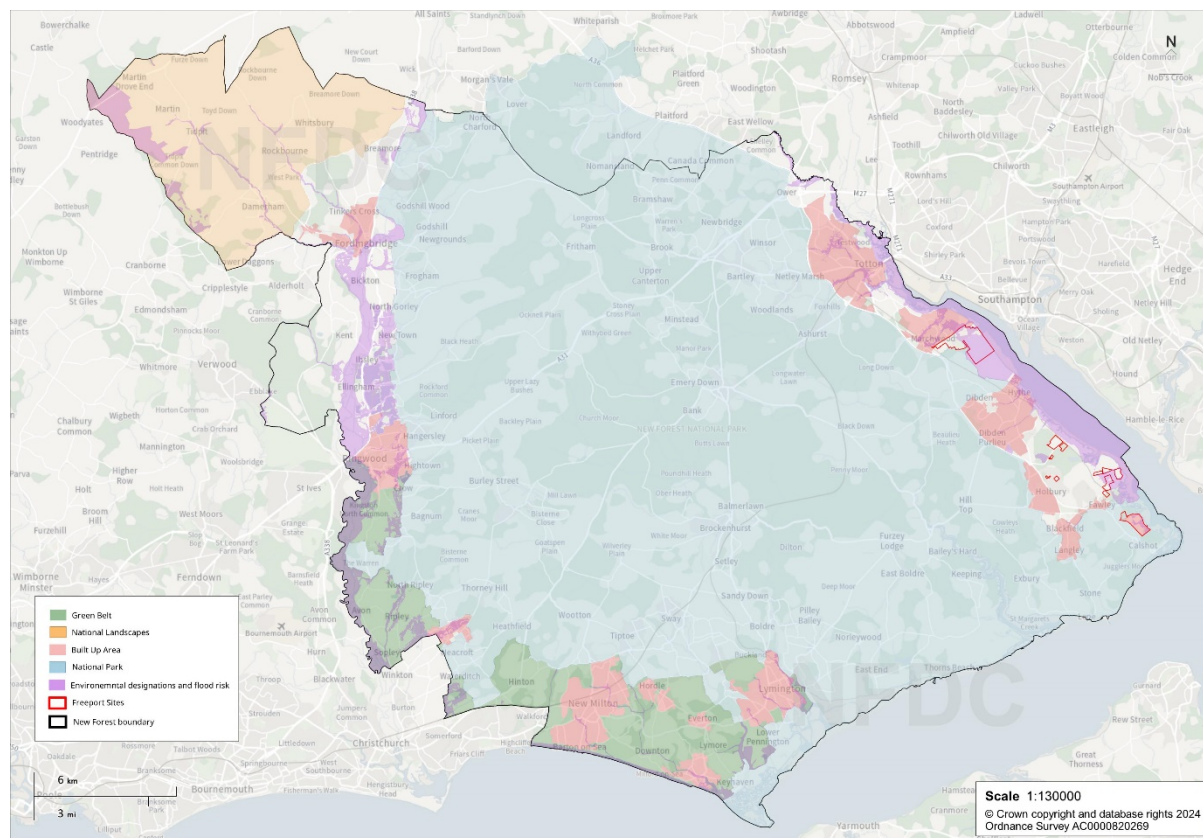


Figure 3: Constraints plan for the Plan Area.

59. Neighbourhood planning groups can prepare neighbourhood plans se determine sites to be allocated for development. The NPPF requires that strategic policies should set out the housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations.

b) Housing mix and affordable housing

60. The Council currently has approximately 2,100 households on its Housing Register awaiting affordable housing. Of these, most of the need is for 1 or 2 bedroom properties. Approximately 1,100 of the households on the Housing Register are in bands 1 & 2 of priority need (the highest priority needs).

61. We need to consider how to plan for the needs of our population and will need to consider the balance between letting the market find suitable sites within existing urban areas and the general policy framework of the Plan or through making more specific policy provision, perhaps through site specific requirements on land to be allocated for development. Notable demographic trends for our area include a decrease in total population and an ageing population with a decline in working age and school age cohorts. Whilst it is important not to simply seek to carry forward past trends, it is important to note that where there are demands for certain types of housing (e.g. housing for older people), this is also likely to generate a requirement for housing for younger people nearby to help service this specialised housing.

62. We also need to consider that a range of housing should be provided across the Plan Area to cater for all demographics.

c) Housing densities

63. As part of preparing a new Local Plan the density of sites will need to be considered. The NPPF makes it clear that site densities should be optimised (albeit not necessarily maximising) to promote the most efficient use of land. It is therefore important that as part of the plan we understand the character of a place should not seek to preserve things in a static way but should ensure an appropriate balance is struck between existing fabric and any proposed change. Opportunities for change and transformation, through new building forms, densities, and typologies, should be informed by an understanding of a place's distinctive character and landscape.

d) Second home ownership

64. 'A 'second home' is defined as a privately-owned habitable accommodation that is not occupied by anyone as their main residence. It may be occupied occasionally, for example as a holiday home or when working away from the household's main home. The 2021 Census has indicated that there are around 2,000 second homes in the New Forest District.
65. Whilst neither the NPPF nor Planning Practice Guidance make any direct reference to the ability for local plans to restrict second home ownership, it has been shown that second homes can have a positive economic effect on a wider area but simultaneously cause damage to the community cohesion and social fabric of settlements and harm the viability of key local services such as schools.

e) Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople

66. Historically, Gypsy, Travellers 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. National policy is to ensure fair and equal treatment for Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life while respecting the interests of the settled community.
67. 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. There are currently 10 established sites within the Plan Area. Our new Plan should include fair, realistic and inclusive policy measures that have due regard to the protection of local amenity and local environment.

Consultation questions:

10. Do you have any comments on our housing need and how it can be met?
11. Are there any specific sites not currently allocated in existing local plans or otherwise permitted for development that should be considered for their development potential?
12. What role can town and parish councils have in addressing the development needs of the area, such as through preparing **neighbourhood plans**?

13. Should we consider a policy to restrict second home ownership within the area?

14. Are there any specific forms of affordable housing that we should aim to prioritise to provide for those most in need locally?

15. How should we aim to meet the housing needs of its population and the current population trends?

16. Do you have any comments on the range of densities that should be sought on new development sites?

17. How should we aim to meet the identified accommodation need of the Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople community?

Infrastructure

68. 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).

Why does it matter?

69. The provision of relevant infrastructure is key in delivering sustainable communities that function effectively. It is also critical that this infrastructure is delivered alongside development in a timely manner for the benefit of existing and new residents.

What are the issues?

a) The Council's role

70. Most infrastructure is provided by **organisations** other than the Council. It can be provided by private companies (e.g. electricity or sewage) or the public sector (e.g. 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.
71. We will need to consider the cumulative impacts of development and identify the key infrastructure required to deliver the strategy such as new strategic transport schemes, utility networks, green infrastructure and community facilities including schools. These considerations will be informed by a refresh of the infrastructure evidence base, including an updated assessment of potential transport demands generated from new development to ensure that all forms of movement infrastructure are identified and planned for.

b) Digital infrastructure

72. There is a need to improve access to digital connectivity in rural areas by, for example, securing efficient full fibre broadband provision for all. Full fibre ensures that speeds can increase to keep up with demand which will continue to grow at even faster rates as more devices and services become connected and richer data needs to be transmitted.

c) Utilities

73. Much of the physical infrastructure required to provide services to new development is provided by private utility companies. These companies often have a statutory duty set out in legislation to provide the service to new development. There are concerns locally about the adequacy of existing wastewater treatment and conveyance and water supply (particularly in relation to flooding incidents affecting supply infrastructure). We are also aware of the need to provide additional electricity supply capacity to meet the needs for growth through a significant substation upgrade in the Totton area.

d) Social infrastructure

74. The Council is responsible for setting out the requirements at plan-making stage for social and community needs, including schools, access to nature, doctors' surgeries and community buildings. This will be identified through consultation with various key infrastructure providers with responsibilities in this area including the National Health Service and Hampshire County Council.

75. Larger developments have the capacity to deliver infrastructure on-site. Smaller developments may not be able to deliver a school, for example, but do contribute to a cumulative need for additional facilities (either through a **S106 agreement** or the **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** . The Council can seek funding from individual developments and collects the Community Infrastructure Levy to provide for cumulative needs.

e) The role of art and culture

76. Arts and culture play an integral and valuable role in making prosperous, healthy, and attractive places. Bringing people together, arts and culture provide a sense of vitality in our local areas; on our high streets, our town centres and in regeneration areas; contributing much to the current and future health and growth of where we live, work and play.

77. Cultural planning supports place making through considering what arts and cultural infrastructure can be secured through redevelopment and the planning process. We are currently preparing a cultural strategy for the District, which will sit alongside our plan and we will need to consider options for the creation of tangible creative ways for local communities to participate in both art and cultural activities.

Consultation questions:

18. What are the key infrastructure priorities that need to be delivered and how can they best be delivered?

19. What do you think are the key considerations for increased electricity generation from renewable sources in the New Forest (outside the national park), such as onshore wind or solar power?

20. Do you have any suggestions for incorporating art and culture into our Local Plan?

Health and wellbeing

78. The environment in which we live is a major determinant of human health and wellbeing.

Why does it matter?

79. The current planning system originated from focusing on basic human living conditions. Today, the health and wellbeing agenda is much broader, with determinants considered to influence health and wellbeing encompassing the physical, social, and economic environments.

80. Health and wellbeing should not be seen as an isolated topic and should be an important thread throughout the whole Plan.

What are the issues?

81. Planning for health involves thinking about the interrelated factors that affect health, including social and psychological elements, such as wellbeing. The wider determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age. A healthy place is one that can contribute to the prevention of ill health and provide the environmental conditions to support positive health and wellbeing.

82. As well as incorporating the design principles for active street layouts and public realm, which can also include enhancing our green spaces to improve physical and mental health, the Local Plan is likely going to need to consider ways to making it easier for people to make healthier choices, reducing social isolation and loneliness and reducing health and sustainability impacts (e.g. impacts to air quality).

Consultation questions:

21: Do you agree with the description of issues regarding health, wellbeing and are there other issues to consider?

22: What options do you think we should follow for addressing health and wellbeing?

Place

Delivering growth, opportunity and services that shape our place now and for future generations, within a unique environmental context, to ensure we remain a special place to live, work and visit.

Design (and placemaking)

83. The NPPF highlights that design centres around the creation of high quality and sustainable buildings, and places. Design and placemaking should be specific to its local area, and we will look to ensure we continue to have a good understanding of our local context of both settlements and countryside. Good design also supports the development of which also supports the development of healthy, safe, and sustainable communities.

84. Alongside our Local Plan we are also preparing a district wide Design Code

Why does it matter?

85. Design and placemaking encompass social and economic opportunity, creating an environment that supports health, wellbeing, and the quality of people's lives. Great places are safe and inclusive, well planned, and managed, offer equality of opportunity and good services for all, and promote a green economy. The NPPF **National Model Design Code** and **National Design Guide** underwrite these ambitions.

What are the issues?

a) **Key principles for designing good quality and sustainable places and communities**

86. The key principles for designing good quality and sustainable places and communities are:

- Active, inclusive, and safe;
- Environmentally sensitive;
- Well-designed and built;
- Well-connected;
- Thriving community/offer; and

- Future proofed.

87. Recognising that how we live in our homes has changed over the years, requiring flexibility to adopt to changing household needs, the NPPF allows us to require minimum space standards where the need can be justified.

Additionally, as part of our review we can consider whether there is justification to identify an approach to the provision of private amenity space in private or community gardens, as well as the functional use of external space, e.g. car parking, bin/cycle storage.

88. Additionally, we can look at the **Hampshire & Isle of Wight Home Movers Survey 2023** which looked to identify the key characteristics and views of occupiers of new homes across the wider Hampshire & Isle of Wight area. The survey showed that over 40% of new homes built within the New Forest area with three or more bedrooms were being occupied by two person households. It also highlighted that across Hampshire and Isle of Wight nearly 15% of people work solely from home and that 45% of households within the New Forest area currently had no one in employment (and the highest percentage of respondents aged 65+).

Consultation questions:

23. Are we identifying the correct principles for creating a place people want to live and work, or are there any others that need to be considered?

24. Should we seek to set a policy for the size of houses and gardens that are different from those set **nationally**?

Climate change

89. We declared a Climate Change and Nature Emergency in October 2021 to support the government's adoption of environmental objectives, including a **legally binding target to reach net zero emissions by 2050**. To drive progress against these targets, we are aligning activities across four programme areas:

- Carbon Reduction;
- Climate Adaptation;
- Nature Recovery; and

- Programme Management.

90. The key achievements to date, and short-term future plans, are detailed in the **NFDC Climate Change and Nature Emergency Annual Update Report**.

91. We have provided further extensive guidance on the implementation of climate change policies in the current adopted Local Plan through a **Supplementary Planning Document** (SPD). This sets out best practice approaches or standards that developers are encouraged to target or adopt, including to:

- Take all practical steps to decarbonise the running of buildings;
- Meaningfully reduce embodied carbon in construction; and
- Ensure that development is climate change adapted.

Why does it matter?

92. As sea level rises, coastal communities will be at increasing risk of tidal flooding and coastal erosion. Furthermore, all communities will experience more extreme weather which is predicted to lead to fluvial, ground and surface water flooding. This will adversely impact operational infrastructure, particularly where critical facilities are in areas at risk of flooding. There are significant financial and emotional costs for those who experience flooding, particularly where properties are difficult or expensive to insure.

What are the issues?

a) **Reducing the causes of climate change**

93. The Local Plan will need to provide a framework for development which reduces greenhouse gas emissions locally as part of the area's wider contribution to national objectives. This will include:

- Consideration of the distribution and location of development, to reduce the need to travel within and beyond the Plan Area and maximise opportunities to travel by other means;
- Sustainability standards for new buildings to minimise the demand for energy; and

- Identifying opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy generation and the associated infrastructure and, where possible, requiring this as part of new development.

b) Adapting to the effects of climate change

94. Significant parts of the Plan Area face some level of flood risk. Areas at 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.

95. The approach to climate change adaptation and ensuring resilience to the effects of climate change will necessitate changes to the way buildings and development sites are planned and designed. These measures may include:

- Sustainability standards for new buildings to make them more resilient to the effects of climate change;
- Locating new development to minimise the risk of flooding, taking into account climate change predictions for sea level rise and increased fluvial, groundwater and surface water flood risk;
- Protecting water quality and maximising water efficiency; and
- Provision of multi-functional open spaces that can support carbon storage and address temperature increases, flooding, and soil erosion.

Consultation questions:

25. How do you think we should work towards achieving net zero?

26. What measures do you think we should take to ensure appropriate climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resilience?

27. Should we seek more ambitious targets and measures to address climate change?

28. Other than the private car, what other form of transport (including buses, walking, cycling, rail and water transport) would you use more if you could?

29. What approach should we take to large-scale renewable energy generation?

Natural Environment

96. The New Forest National Park lies at the centre of the district. With its remarkable range of plants and animals, and ancient tradition of commoning, the National Park is largely protected from major development. While the very high quality of the landscape and environment of the National Park dominates the district, the Plan Area includes other areas of high landscape and environmental quality, including part of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, the valleys of the rivers Avon and Test and the coast.

97. We have an ambition that as a result of the Local Plan we leave the environment in a better state than it is now. That means achieving environmental net gain. The government has recently introduced a statutory requirement to achieve a minimum of 10% **Biodiversity Net Gain**.

Why does it matter?

98. 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 endangered species and the habitats that support them.

99. Protecting and enhancing our natural environment in the area is fundamental to delivering a sustainable development strategy. The natural environment is an essential and precious asset and underpins our wellbeing and prosperity. The natural environment is therefore proposed to be at the core of the approach to our spatial strategy. There are legislative requirements to ensure that protected habitats and their landscapes are not harmed.

What are the issues?

a) Natural capital

100. The concept of natural capital is an important part of our growth strategy. The importance of accessible, good quality natural environments to encourage community cohesion, activity and healthy living is recognised as is the role of '**natural capital**' in enhancing economic prosperity, productivity and inward investment.
101. Recognising the complex ways in which our natural, social and economic systems interact enables us to make better decisions that protect and enhance the services and environment that we need.

b) Recreational impacts and nutrients

102. The recreational pressures arising from residential development within the Plan Area have a potentially harmful impact on the internationally important nature conservation sites within the New Forest and at the coast. To comply with legislation to protect the designated sites, measures need to be taken to ensure adverse effects on the integrity of protected sites from recreational impacts is avoided or mitigated.
103. The current adopted **Local Plan policy**, supported by the **NFDC Mitigation for Recreational Impacts on New Forest European Sites SPD** and the **Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy**, provides the strategy for mitigation to address the current scale and distribution of development provided for in the adopted Local Plan. This strategy will need to be reviewed against our new Plan.
104. Our current strategy comprises four main elements:
- New greenspace via the provision of new areas of publicly accessible Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace (ANRG), required on schemes over 50 dwellings;
 - Enhancements and improvements to local existing greenspace and Footpath/Public Right of Ways (PRoW) located near to where new residential developments have taken place;

- Ongoing monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of schemes, including monitoring usage, changes in overall visitor numbers, environmental impacts and realised benefits; and
- Access and visitor management delivered by our People and Wildlife Ranger to undertake educational and monitoring functions.

105. The impact of nutrient deposition (nitrates and phosphates) generated by increased wastewater treatment from new development can be harmful to protected habitats. Although new development only makes a very minor contribution to the nutrients reaching the protected habitats, it has to demonstrate that it is '**nutrient neutral**'.

c) Biodiversity and Biodiversity Net Gain

106. Key components of the **Environment Act** include the requirement of development to provide a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and the opportunity to enter conservation covenants and register off site biodiversity gains. In addition, there is a requirement to prepare a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire (led by Hampshire County Council). This strategy will set out the priorities for nature recovery, identify areas of opportunity and help to shape how future funding will be spent to maximise benefits for both people and nature across the county.

d) Green and blue infrastructure

107. Green Infrastructure (GI), including blue infrastructure comprising the network of rivers and lakes, comprises a broad range of high-quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering ecosystem services and quality of life benefits. For example, GI supports healthier lifestyles (including opportunities for recreation and active travel), manages flood water, improves air quality, and helps to mitigate the effects of climate change. We have recently undertaken a review of the **Green Infrastructure opportunities** along the waterside.

e) Landscape character

108. Landscape character is unique to its location and influenced by physical and human interaction through history. These landscapes are what makes this area distinctive and there is a need to conserve and enhance many of the features of importance landscape settings, as well as recognising the importance of their views and vistas. A Landscape Character Assessment was last completed in 2000 and will be updated shortly.

109. Some landscapes are more sensitive to change than others. Development can impact on character and the quality of the landscape. The degree to which development will become a significant or defining feature in the landscape, including skyline (where additional development appears disproportionately dominant), and loss of sense of remoteness, will vary according to site location and the design and form of development proposed. Visual impacts concern the degree to which proposed development will become a feature in particular views (or sequences of views) and the impacts this has on people experiencing views.

f) Backup grazing land

110. Commoning is a way of life with a long history in the New Forest. The grazing of animals helps to suppress brambles, gorse, and other coarse vegetation, thereby creating the landscape of open lawns and trees. Backup grazing land outside of the forest is important to Commoners and can essentially act as functionally linked land to the open forest habitats in the core of the New Forest. The cost of grazing land is often significant and a serious constraint to the long term viability of Commoning.

111. Historically there has been no published map of where backup grazing land is, which makes it difficult to protect. Concerns have been previously expressed that this land was being lost to other uses (incl. development), without due consideration of the impact that the loss of such land can have on the New Forest SPA.

Consultation questions:

30. What should be our approach to ensuring that people don't harm the particularly environmentally sensitive parts of the New Forest, for example additional rangers, considering providing a new country park or new more local areas of accessible green space?
31. What are the key mechanisms we should use to achieve benefits for the environment? and how can this be measured?
32. Should we look to introduce biodiversity net gain targets above the mandated 10%?
33. How can we make greenspaces more accessible? Should we include minimum standards of access to green space (e.g. by size and type)?
34. How should we look to address the issue of backup grazing land? If so, what evidence is there to inform future considerations?

Green Belt

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

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Why does it matter?

113. Whilst the Plan Area surrounds the National Park, the south-western part is also within the South West Hampshire and the adjoining South East Dorset Green Belt. A Green Belt for this area was first confirmed in 1958 and now stretches from Lymington at the east, Wareham to the west and Ringwood and Verwood to the north.

What are the issues?

114. Green Belt designation covers land outside defined settlement boundaries in all the South Coastal Towns sub-area, and all the Avon Valley and Downlands sub-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. Our last **Green Belt study** was published in 2016.

115. In the latest 2024 NPPF a new classification of 'grey belt' was introduced. 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 Green Belt purposes (specifically those relating to limiting unrestricted sprawl, preventing coalescence and preserving setting and special character of historic towns) but excluding those areas or assets of particular importance listed in footnote 7 of the NPPF (other than land designated as Green Belt).

Consultation questions:

35. How should our previous **Green Belt study** be updated and what factors should be considered?

36. Are there current Green Belt sites that you feel have the potential for more positive uses?

Strategic Development Locations and Opportunities

116. We need to allocate land to meet the need for development, particularly considering the new housing targets from government. Whilst small scale development can be delivered quickly and can help regenerate existing urban areas, the scale of need means we will need to consider larger scale allocations.

Why it matters?

117. Strategic sites can offer the best opportunities to deliver sustainable development through contemporary approaches to place making and climate change adaptations. Larger sites can ensure the provision of infrastructure through on-site delivery and environmental mitigation can be designed as part of the overall scheme, providing easy access for new residents.

What are the issues?

a) Review of existing strategic site allocations

118. Our current adopted Local Plan includes strategic site allocations and some of these have progressed to deliver new homes and others are progressing through the planning process. The current status of the Adopted Local Plan strategic site allocations is set out in Appendix A.

b) Review of other existing site-specific proposals

119. The **Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management** adopted in 2014 sets out a number of detailed proposals and policies, including some smaller site specific allocations for development. Although the current Local Plan (2016-2036) Part One: Planning Strategy was adopted in 2020 many of the Local Plan Part 2 policies are still in place.

120. Given the amount of time since adoption it would be appropriate for us to consider whether any allocations from both plans that have not progressed to development should be continued or whether alternative uses should be considered, or the allocation is removed entirely.

c) Potential new strategic site allocations

121. We will also need to consider whether there are any additional strategic site allocations that could be brought forward through our review. The 'call for sites' carried out at the end of 2024 is likely to help identify new land and we anticipate similar exercises being carried out during the Plan's preparation.

Consultation questions:

37. Where existing site allocations have not yet come forward or progress has stalled, do you have any views on what the approach should be to those sites?

38. Are there further sites for any type of development that we should consider?

Open Space, Sport, Recreation and Play

122. Access to a range of high-quality open spaces and recreation opportunities is a key consideration when planning for both new development and existing communities.

Why it matters?

123. Open spaces provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby. They have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure. They can also help provide alternative recreational areas away from sensitive ecological sites and can be an important component in the achievement of sustainable development.

124. Open spaces can also be a focal point for community social activities. As part of a wider commitment to equalities, open spaces should meet the needs of all users, older and younger, male and female, able-bodied and physically impaired, as well as simple preferences for a range of passive and active forms of recreation.

What are the issues?

a) Approach to formal sport

125. Formal sports are those activities which use both indoor and outdoor facilities for organised activities such as playing pitches and indoor sports facilities. Audits and quality assessments of existing facilities are already well under way and are being informed by consultation and interviews with local sports clubs, sport's governing bodies, leisure centres, schools, providers of pitches and facilities and clubs, etc.

126. The current and anticipated future demographic and socio-economic profile of the Plan Area will be reviewed to ensure a clear understanding of the size and activity rates of the communities that the indoor and outdoor sports facilities strategy are likely to need to serve.

b) Approach to parks, amenity open space and greenspace

127. This category includes parks and gardens, amenity open space, play areas, accessible natural & semi-natural greenspace, cemeteries and churchyards and allotments.

128. Quantity and access standards will be applied to ensure the Plan Area has sufficient accessible provision of the full range of open space types to serve the needs of all users.

129. As well as the above, the provision of country parks is also being considered. Created to provide recreational attractions, country parks typically provide a range of facilities and a supervisory service via car borne visitors. Country parks are usually operated as a single unit and managed by statutory bodies, or private agencies or a combination of both. The New Forest has one country park at Lepe, with Moors Valley and Avon Heath Country Parks located just outside the Plan Area in Dorset.

c) Approach to equipped play areas

130. Equipped areas of play are currently being assessed with regard to their quantity, access, and quality of provision. Standards will be proposed in response informed both by national benchmarks, the results of this assessment, previous policy, and local consultation.

131. The current policy approach for the provision for play areas are that where they are proposed to be provided, they should have a range of equipment to fully engage users.

132. Our existing policies also promote an inclusive approach to make new equipped play areas accessible to all ability ranges.

133. In addition, there is a need to ensure that existing play equipment meets accessibility standards.

Consultation questions:

39. What should we do to ensure there is sufficient provision of open space, which is also functional and attractive to our residents?
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40. What do you believe should be our approach to providing open space? This could be either creating a few new larger sized destinations for play areas, sports pitches, smaller scale areas as part of new developments or a new country park?

Historic Environment

134. The historic environment forms an important part of the Plan Area's character, landscape, and settlements. Significant elements of the historic environment are termed 'heritage assets' and include any building, monument, site, place, area, or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, including below-ground archaeology.

135. Designated heritage assets include scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas. Our Plan Area contains many **heritage assets of national importance**, as well as undesignated heritage assets which contribute positively to its special character and appearance.

Why does it matter?

136. The historic environment is a key part of the distinctive character of the Plan Area. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that need to be conserved so that they can be enjoyed and contribute to the quality of life and social vitality of existing and future generations. It is sensitive to change and needs to be properly understood to make sure it is sensitively managed and properly conserved. There may be opportunities to enhance the significance of the historic environment and it is important that these are identified and realised.

137. The NPPF requires local plans to 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.

What are the issues?

138. Our review will consider the need to update the current policy approach to the historic environment in the Adopted Local Plan (**Part 2: Sites and Development Management Document**). In line with the NPPF, the policy framework will ensure great weight is given to protecting heritage assets and their settings.

139. It is important that adverse impacts associated with development, whether they are direct, such as new building, or indirect, such as traffic generated by development, are avoided. If they are not capable of being avoided, adverse impacts will require compelling justification. Impacts must then be minimised and mitigated.

Consultation questions:

41. What should our approach be in relation to the historic environment?

42. How can we secure the sustainable long-term use of our heritage assets, and help to protect archaeological features as part of new development?

Prosperity

Promoting a strong local economy that delivers its inclusive aspirations through effective partnerships, attracting investment, and increasing skills and employment opportunities.

Economy

140. We published an **Economic Profile of the District** in 2022 highlighting that the New Forest is the fourth largest economy in Hampshire. The leading business sectors are the marine, land-based activities, hospitality & leisure, manufacturing, and care sectors.

141. We will need to consider whether changes to retailing and the demand for floorspace mean that policies for retailing and town centres need updating. There are also policies related to tourism, and marine-related businesses (including protecting their waterfront access) in the 2014 Part 2 Local Plan, that the Council will need to consider updating. . Evidence studies will also be carried out to understand the demand for new employment floorspace within other areas and not just town centres.

Why does it matter?

142. The NPPF sets out 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.

143. 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.

What are the issues?

a) Need for employment land/floorspace

144. Ensuring we make provision for the delivery of an appropriate amount and type employment floorspace across the Plan Area to meet the need for local economic growth is something we need to address. The new Local Plan will need to set out the amount of floorspace or land to provide across the Plan Area, with the distribution based on the spatial strategy for the distribution of development. We will also need to consider the protection of existing employment land.
145. 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.
146. The Partnership for South Hampshire published an '**Economic, Employment and Commercial Needs (including logistics) Study**' in 2021 which includes some information on future needs in the east of the Plan Area. We will also be commissioning our own needs study for the New Forest as part of our evidence base.

b) Where can employment land or floorspace be delivered?

147. Potential locations for new employment allocations will need to be considered and these could form part of mixed-use new communities, providing local jobs near to where people live. Any new sites should relate to the scale and type of likely commercial demand for employment in these locations as identified by the economic needs evidence base. For example, this may include smaller scale office and industrial units.

c) Solent Freeport

148. 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 ABP Strategic Land Reserve. Marchwood Port is also a Freeport custom site. The **Solent Freeport Full 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. The incentives to support investment on tax sites are now in place, including business rates relief and other incentives to support capital investment. At the same time, business rates growth which results from that investment will be pooled and reinvested in the area.

d) Port employment

149. We will be commissioning a study to examine the indicative potential need for and the implications of the potential expansion on the Port of Southampton for land in the Plan Area. This will help to inform the policy approach and in particular the review of policies related to Marchwood Port, ABP Strategic Land Reserve and the former Fawley Power Station.

e) Protection of Employment Land

150. Whilst there is considerable pressure to identify land for housing development, we will need to consider the degree to how we protect existing employment sites and whether there are any sites not suitable for continued employment use that should be allocated for housing. When considering this, it will be important to ensure the local economy is still able to function well and to grow and adapt to future requirements.

f) Town and local centre uses

151. Town centre uses are defined within the **NPPF**, with retailing experiencing a decline in traditional 'high-street' shopping as consumers switch to on-line ordering and home deliveries, a trend which accelerated during the pandemic. Existing local centres, however, continue to provide a reasonably good range of services and facilities for the communities living within and around them.

152. Our current adopted Local Plan currently defines town centre boundaries and primary, and secondary shopping frontages, where different planning policies apply. Local shopping frontages are also defined for shopping parades elsewhere in most towns and in the large villages. We will need to consider whether the policy approach to these areas is still appropriate, with the objective of ensuring that they are/remain areas that are vibrant and resilient. We would also welcome your views on whether the extent of the town centre and shopping frontage boundaries is still appropriate.

g) Tourism

153. Tourism is an important part of the 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. There can be pressure for tourism related development that cannot be accommodated within the National Park. In addition, parts of the northwest of the Plan Area (e.g. Fordingbridge and Cranborne Chase) and the coast (e.g. Lymington) attract tourists.

Consultation questions:

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|--|
| <p>43. How can we make our high streets more vibrant?</p> <p>44. How can we ensure that the opportunities from the Solent Freeport designation are made available to all New Forest residents?</p> <p>45. Are there any existing employment sites that are no longer appropriate, or attractive for that use and should be considered for alternative development?</p> <p>46. What should be our approach towards town centres and primary, secondary, and local shopping frontages? Do the boundaries that appear on our policies map need to be changed and if so, how?</p> <p>47. In relation to tourism, should we consider allocating new, or protecting existing, land or sites for new tourist attractions or accommodation?</p> |
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Transport

154. Having sufficient and appropriate transport infrastructure is key as it is a vital way for how we move around the Plan Area, and wider New Forest, for both work and recreation.

Why it matters?

155. The location of development can be critical to both the demand for travel and the way that demand is met. Residents of new homes will be significantly less reliant on the car-use if they are able to access other modes of travel. In the 2021 Census, across New Forest District nearly 12% of people responded indicated that they did not have a car, this number increased in the towns of Totton (nearly 20%) and Ringwood (nearly 17%).

156. Lower density development, and poorly located development tends to be associated with increased car use due to the difficulty in providing viable public transport services at a frequency or cost that is a realistic alternative to the car. It is important to consider the issue of how to potentially increase densities close to services and facilities in accessible locations and along accessible transport corridors.

157. The new Local Plan will identify future opportunities to achieve connectivity through sustainable modes of transport and active travel, a priority in the **Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4**. In terms of distance, many of the main towns in the Plan Area are located relatively close to one another, albeit around the edge of the National Park. Green Infrastructure and new walking and cycling routes provide opportunities to facilitate modal shift, acknowledging that public transport will be important, particularly for longer distances.

158. The approach to transport is also important in the context of designing and delivering high quality places and sustainable communities including a move towards Healthy Streets. Healthy Streets is a human-centred framework for embedding public health in transport, public realm, and planning. Focusing on the needs of people to use the environment can lead to more attractive places with more space for landscaping and tree planting. Conversely insufficient road access or parking provision can lead to adverse environmental impacts.

What are the issues?

a) Roads

159. Development inevitably leads to increased traffic on local roads, alongside background traffic growth. The NPPF makes clear that development should only be prevented on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual impacts on the road network would be severe. Where site specific development is being considered, plans should ensure that any significant impacts from development in terms of capacity and congestion or on highway safety should be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

b) Public transport

160. Although parts of our Plan Area have excellent local and regional rail links, there are large areas in the Avon Valley and the Waterside that do not have easy access to rail.

161. The towns and villages of the Plan Area, which surrounds the National Park, are currently relatively well served by bus with at least hourly frequencies connecting the local towns and providing access to Christchurch, Bournemouth, and Southampton. Some community transport provision is available across the Plan Area but is not an NFDC function. The viability of bus services in the future is unclear with current public subsidies subject to regular review.

162. Whilst the location and form of development are important to achieving modal shift, the provision of improved wider transport infrastructure is reliant on investment by the public sector (UK Government and County Council) and the private sector (e.g. public transport operators). Higher density residential development should ideally be located close to existing public transport or be demonstrably capable of supporting new public transport routes.

c) Travel by water

163. The Plan Area also has two ferry routes, the Hythe to Southampton ferry and the Lymington to Isle of Wight ferry. There may be potential opportunities to further support and encourage water-based travel in the area, notably on the Waterside.

d) Active travel

164. Active travel comprises walking and cycling. This mode of travel offers health and wellbeing benefits as well as being zero carbon in operation.

165. The design and layout of development is important to encourage active travel choices. On larger sites the provision of attractive and convenient cycling and walking infrastructure is essential. Streets and public spaces can be designed so that the car does not dominate. All new buildings should have secure and accessible cycle parking.

166. The County Council has prepared a **New Forest Waterside Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2022)**. This identifies cycling and walking improvements required at the local level across the Waterside to encourage more people to cycle or walk for local journeys. The County Council, NFDC, the National Park Authority and Forestry England have been working together to prepare a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the rest of the New Forest. This is expected to be finalised in 2025 and is expected to identify an extensive network of cycle routes across the area together with walking zones for the main residential settlements.

Consultation question:

48. What are the key transport issues to be addressed to help new development come forward?

49. How can our planning policies help make you, and others, travel by the sustainable modes of walking, cycling and public transport?

Viability

167. Many of the requirements that we place on development, including the percentage of affordable housing, that we can realistically seek on housing development sites will be based on viability evidence.

Why does it matter?

168. The principle of securing developer contributions towards this infrastructure (and affordable housing) remains the same as before in the NPPF, with both S106 and the **Community Infrastructure Levy** (CIL) are able to be collected. There are public benefits arising from the use of these contributions, in providing infrastructure to support development. However, we will need to produce robust evidence to allow us to ensure that development proposed creates sustainable development and incorporates many of the topics covered in this document.

What are the issues?

169. The value of a scheme is calculated through the 'residual valuation' method and is done at a plan level approach rather than on a case-by-case basis. This method establishes scheme value and then deducts the costs incurred to develop the scheme. These costs are comprised of build costs (materials and labour), developer's profit, finance costs, professional fees, land costs and Section 106 costs. If there is any surplus after these costs have been deducted from the scheme value, the scheme could accommodate additional affordable housing, CIL, or Section 106.

170. If scheme value is lower than total costs, then an adjustment needs to be made. One of the key variables on the cost side needs to fall (either land cost, profit, build costs or CIL) to ensure the scheme is viable.

171. Our last viability study was undertaken as part of our previous Local Plan review. As part of preparing our new Local Plan, we will need to undertake a new viability assessment which will also look to review our CIL Charging Schedule. Our previous study was undertaken prior to the imposition of nutrient neutrality issue which is known to have significantly impacted viability.

Next Steps

Issues and Scope consultation

172. This Issues and Scope consultation is the first stage in preparing our new Local Plan and runs from:

Dates to be confirmed post Cabinet decision.
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173. It is important to clarify that at this stage no views have been formed on the scale of growth, which sites and locations should be allocated for new development, how adopted policies should be updated or whether there should be any additional policies. Key evidence base studies, and the responses to the Issues and Scope consultation document will help to inform and contribute to the development of detailed planning policies and proposals at later stages of the plan making process.

174. The next stage in the preparation of the Local Plan, following this consultation, is expected to be the preparation of a range of draft planning policies and proposed site allocations to meet the level of growth we are planning for. We hope to consult on these in the form of a full draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) later this year. The development and consideration of spatial options will also need to take account of a range of influences such as the plans of adjoining authorities and planned infrastructure provision.

175. Following consultation on the draft Local Plan the Council will prepare the final version of the new local plan (Regulation 19) that it intends to submit for Examination – known as the ‘Publication’ or ‘Pre-submission’ Local Plan. There will be another round of consultation at this stage and the opportunity for comments to be made on whether the proposed local plan is ‘sound’ and legally compliant. The timetable for this is still to be determined but all information on the plan-making timetable will be updated in the Council’s **Local Development Scheme** which currently only timetables to the end of the 2025. This timetable will be updated in response to the comments made in this Issues and Scope consultation and taking account of any further announcements of changes in legislation from government.

Consultation question:

50. Are there any issues that you feel we have missed and should be addressed?

How to respond to the consultation

Details to be provided once consultation arrangements are finalised.

Glossary of key terms

A glossary of key terms can be viewed via:

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

Appendix A

Status of strategic sites

The status as of February 2025 of the Adopted Local Plan strategic site allocations is set out in the table below. For the most up to date information on the progress of each of the below sites please visit the [Strategic Sites Progress](#) page on the New Forest District Council website.

Site	Minimum proposed new homes / floorspace	Homes permitted or with committee resolution to grant	Current planning status
Strategic Site 1 Land to the north of Totton	1,000 homes 5ha employment land	623 (80 of which delivered as of 1 April 2024)	Some planning permissions in place and homes being delivered
Strategic Site 2 Land south of Bury Road, Marchwood	700 homes (plus a potential further 300 homes on land currently occupied by the solar array)	0	No planning application(s) submitted currently. Phased to commence from 2030/31
Strategic Site 3 Land at Cork's Farm, Marchwood	150 homes	150	Outline planning permission. Reserved Matters planning application pending decision
Strategic Site 4 The former Fawley Power Station	1,380 homes 10,000 sqm community uses 10ha land for business and industrial use	0	Outline planning application withdrawn in July 2024

Site	Minimum proposed new homes / floorspace	Homes permitted or with committee resolution to grant	Current planning status
Strategic Site 5 Land at Milford Road, Lymington	185 homes	90	Land south of Milford Road, Pennington – outline planning permission granted, reserved matters planning application granted Land north of Milford Road, Pennington – full planning application pending decision
Strategic Site 6 Land to the east of Lower Pennington Lane, Lymington	100 homes	0	Outline planning application pending decision for majority of the site. Full planning application pending decision on remaining area of the site
Strategic Site 7 Land north of Manor Road, Milford on Sea	110 homes	170	Outline planning application pending decision

Site	Minimum proposed new homes / floorspace	Homes permitted or with committee resolution to grant	Current planning status
Strategic Site 8 Land at Hordle Lane, Hordle	160 homes	10	The Coal Yard – full planning permission granted Land at Hordle Lane – outline planning application pending decision
Strategic Site 9 Land east of Everton Road, Hordle	100 homes	97	Full planning permission granted with works underway on site
Strategic Site 10 Land to the east of Brockhills Lane, New Milton	130 homes	164	Full planning permission granted
Strategic Site 11 Land to the south of Gore Road, New Milton	160 homes	178	Outline planning application pending decision
Strategic Site 12 Land to the south of Derritt Lane, Bransgore	100 homes	100	Full planning permission granted
Strategic Site 13 Land at Moortown Lane, Ringwood	480 homes	443	Hybrid planning application

Site	Minimum proposed new homes / floorspace	Homes permitted or with committee resolution to grant	Current planning status
			pending decision
Strategic Site 14 Land to the north of Hightown Road, Ringwood	270 homes 3ha employment land	400 3ha employment land	Outline planning application pending decision
Strategic Site 15 Land at Snails Lane, Ringwood	100 homes	0	Outline planning application refused in 2021
Strategic Site 16 Land to the north of Station Road, Ashford	140 homes	198	Full planning permission granted and development started
Strategic Site 17 Land at Whitsbury Road, Fordingbridge	330 homes	406 (7 of which delivered as of 1 April 2024)	Some planning permissions in place and homes being delivered
Strategic Site 18 Land at Burgate, Fordingbridge	400 homes	518 (36 of which delivered as of 1 April 2024)	Some planning permissions in place and homes being delivered

Overall through the current strategic site allocations there is an indicative figure of new homes totalling 5,995 with 3,547 either with being built, having been granted planning permission or have a resolution to grant permission (subject to the completion of legal agreements).

Status of sites within Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management DPD

The number of homes from the sites in the table below is 1,095.

Site Name	Allocation / Planning Permission Reference	Status on Progress
Land at Durley Farm, Totton	TOT1 First allocated in 2014 Identified Reserve Site in 2005	The site is situated on the southern edge of Totton. The site consists of agricultural land and a woodland and grassland Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). No recent progress has been made in bringing the allocation forward for development.
Land at Hanger Farm, Totton	TOT3 Permissioned: 07/89872 Detailed, 05/83625 Detailed – 330 dwellings	This is a greenfield site with highway access points in place and there are no onerous infrastructure requirements. This site has longstanding detailed permissions for 330 dwellings. However, there has been no further progress with building out the site for well over 10 years.
Manor Farm Building, Hanger Farm, Totton	Permissioned: 03/78798 Outline, 05/85757 Reserved Matters – 13 dwellings	This site adjoins Hanger Farm (TOT3) and is owned by the same developer. This site has longstanding permissions for a net gain of 13 dwellings. However, there has been no further progress with building out this site for well over 10 years.
Land at Jackie Wigg Gardens, east of Brokenford Lane, Totton	TOT6 First allocated in 2005	This is a small remaining parcel at the very southern end of the wider TOT6 allocation. The rest of the TOT6 allocation has now been built out. No recent progress has been made in bringing forward this small remaining parcel. The parcel is still in active commercial (car repair/light industrial) use.
Bus Depot, Salisbury Road, Totton	TOT9 First allocated in 2014	The site is in a mainly residential area and is currently in use as a bus depot. No recent progress has been made in bringing the site forward for residential development.

Site Name	Allocation / Planning Permission Reference	Status on Progress
Land at Eling Wharf, Totton	TOT11 First allocated in 2005	No recent progress has been made in bringing the site forward for residential-led mixed-use development. The site is being used for port related needs. There are significant constraints affecting redevelopment opportunities on this site including: the site is likely to be heavily contaminated from previous industrial uses and therefore remediation will be required, forecast sea level rises and flood risk including the site adjoining land that is within Flood Zone 2 and 3 will need to be addressed, and impacts on the adjacent Solent and Southampton Water Natura 2000 sites will need to be addressed.
Land between Cracknore Hard Lane and Normandy Way, Marchwood	MAR1 First allocated in 2014 Identified Reserve Site in 2005	The site is currently in use as a car park. No recent progress has been made in bringing the site forward.
Land off Mulberry Road, Marchwood	MAR4 First allocated in 2014	This site is an area of grassland within a residential area. No recent progress has been made in bringing the site forward.
Land at Cabot Drive, Hythe	HYD2 First allocated in 2014	NFDC's housing development team has been in dialogue with Hampshire County Council to acquire this small site. Negotiations are ongoing.
Land adjacent to Blackfield Primary School, Blackfield	BLA1 First allocated in 2014	This site is part of a former golf course at the northern edge of Blackfield adjacent to the north of Blackfield Primary School. No recent progress has been made with the site forward.
LYM4 Land at 142-144 Southampton	LYM4 First allocated in 2014	The southern third of the allocation has been implemented delivering 4 dwellings. The remaining undeveloped portion of this site has an extant planning permission for 6 dwellings for

Site Name	Allocation / Planning Permission Reference	Status on Progress
Road, Lymington	Permissioned: 10/96153 – 6 dwellings	which foundation trenches have been dug but no further work has happened for several years. The site is currently overgrown scrub.
Fox Pond Dairy Depot and Garage, Milford Road, Lymington	LYM5 First allocated in 2014	The site is in currently in use for a mix of commercial uses. No recent progress has been made in bringing the site forward for the uses envisaged by the allocation. A full planning application (19/11555) sought to develop the southern part of the site for A1/A5 use which was refused in April 2020 and subsequently dismissed at appeal. Some Prior Approval applications have been made for small-scale residential development (18/11353, 17/10576, 17/11278 – all refused) and an application for a first-floor extension to the existing office building (20/10501 – refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal) on parts of the area of the northern part of the site.
Land off Park Road, New Milton	NMT3 First allocated in 2014	This is a greenfield site on the northwest edge of New Milton next to an existing residential area. No recent progress has been made in bringing the site forward.
Land east of Caird Avenue, New Milton	NMT4 First allocated in 2005 NMT6 First allocated in 2014	The site is situated to the south of Carrick Way and is currently used for industrial purposes and as part of the mineral / gravel workings on the Solent Industrial Estate. The western portion of the site (NMT4/NMT5) is allocated in the 'made' New Milton Neighbourhood Plan for commercial development only as residential development is no longer considered possible on the site. Policies NMT4 and NMT5 are therefore superseded by Policy NM3 of the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan. The eastern part of the site (NMT6) is in use for gravel processing / extraction.

Site Name	Allocation / Planning Permission Reference	Status on Progress
Ashley Cross Garage, Ashley Lane, New Milton	NMT8 First allocated in 2014	No recent progress has been made in bringing the site forward. The site is currently in commercial (garage/car showroom) use.

Appendix B

Design Principles

Key principle	Outcome
Active, inclusive, and safe - Fair, tolerant, and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities	Development proposals will support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities where people feel safe, healthy, socially connected, and proud of where they live.
Environmentally sensitive - providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment	New development will respect and make use of the natural and historic character of the Plan Area and ensure that all residents and visitors can benefit from the advantages these characteristics offer.
Well designed and built - featuring quality built and natural environment	Sustainable communities offer: sense of place - a place with a positive 'feeling' for people and local distinctiveness user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people sufficient range, diversity, affordability and accessibility of housing within a balanced housing market, appropriate size, scale, density, design, and layout, including mixed-use development, that complement the distinctive local character of the community, high quality, mixed-use, durable, flexible, and adaptable buildings, using materials which minimise negative environmental impacts. Buildings and public spaces which promote health and are designed to reduce crime and make people feel safe.

Key principle	Outcome
	accessibility of jobs, key services, and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling.
Well connected - with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services	Sustainable communities offer: transport facilities, including public transport, that help people travel within and between communities and reduce dependence on cars. Facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling and an appropriate level of local parking facilities in line with local plans to manage road traffic demand. Widely available and effective telecommunications and Internet access, good access to regional, national, and international communications networks.
Thriving Community/offer - with a flourishing and diverse local economy	Sustainable communities feature: a wide range of jobs and training opportunities, sufficient suitable land and buildings to support economic prosperity and change, dynamic job and business creation, with benefits for the local community a strong business community with links into the wider economy economically viable and attractive town centres.
Future proofed - climate resilient, adaptable, and fit for the future	Development and infrastructure should be fit for the future and incorporate resilience to climate change as well as allowing flexibility to adapt to new smart technology such as that emerging for independent living.