

## **NEW FOREST DISTRICT (OUTSIDE THE NATIONAL PARK) LOCAL PLAN REVIEW (Part 1) – PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PLANNING STRATEGY**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The current adopted Local Plan for New Forest District (outside the National Park) requires review. The reviewed Plan must conform to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set by the Government. The Council is reviewing the Local Plan as a two part document. Part 1 of the Local Plan Review will establish a new planning strategy for the area and identify strategic land allocations (It will replace the Core strategy adopted in 2009). Part 2 will follow on from Part 1 and will provide the detailed site specific policies and non-strategic development management policies necessary to implement the agreed strategy in Part 1 of the Local Plan. The Local Plan Review covers the period 2016-2036. This report relates to Part 1 of the Local Plan Review. The stage has now been reached where it is appropriate to consult the public on key strategic matters arising from the review work. The purpose of this report is to agree a document for the purpose of public consultation.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The current Local Plan for New Forest District (outside the National Park) covers the period 2006 – 2026 and consists of the Core Strategy adopted in 2009 (Part 1) and Part 2: Sites and Development Management adopted in 2014. The current Local Plan largely pre-dates the National Planning Policy Framework which was introduced by national government in March 2012. The Council accepted at the Examination of the Sites and Development Management document that an early review of the Local Plan would need to be undertaken by this Council. The Government has since set targets for local planning authorities to publish Local Plans that are fully compliant with the NPPF. Although not clear, for this Council a key date seems to be March 2018. The Local Plan Review will consider an extended plan period – 2016 to 2036.
- 2.2 The change introduced in the NPPF which has had the most significant implications for future planning in the New Forest District is the way in which strategic planning for growth is undertaken. Previously regional plans established agreed locations for growth and, conversely, areas (like the New Forest) where there should be development restraint. The NPPF, which seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing, requires that Local Plans meet the full “objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area”, unless specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. This means that this district must now plan to accommodate as much growth as possible without conflicting with the NPPF policies to protect certain areas such as (for example) wildlife and nature conservation sites, Green Belt, or areas at risk from flooding. This represents a significant change in the planned strategy to restrain the level of growth in and around the New Forest that has been in development plans for the last quarter of a century.
- 2.3 Two key pieces of work are fundamental to the local plan review work.
- i.) The Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which assesses the level of new housing development which would serve the needs of the area, and
  - ii.) The Sustainability Appraisal work, which assesses the suitability of all land parcels within the Plan Area to accommodate future development.

- 2.4 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment work was commissioned jointly with the National Park Authority and undertaken by G.L. Hearn. At the time the study was undertaken, the work concluded that within New Forest District (outside of the National Park) the need was for between 587 and 687 additional dwellings per annum (or between 11,740 and 13,740 dwellings in total). This compares with the current Local Plan which was required to provide for 196 dwellings per annum, up to 2026. As of April 2016, outstanding provision made under our current Plan is for around 2,800 dwellings.
- 2.5 The main focus of the Local Plan Review work is addressing the need to allocate additional land for housing. In view of the significant increase in the level of development the District is now expected to seek to accommodate, officers have undertaken a technical piece of work, called a 'Sustainability Appraisal' which has assessed all land parcels outside of the existing settlements within the plan area for their suitability for future development. The methodology used for this piece of work is set out in Section 5 of the Public Consultation document (see Appendix 1). The findings of the appraisal work have informed the suggested locations for possible future development identified in the public consultation document (Appendix 1).
- 2.7 In summary, the technical work has identified land which could accommodate the following levels of new housing development. As can be seen in the table below, significant areas of land within the Green Belt will need to be released for development for the level of provision to be close to "objectively assessed need". (See section below on Green Belt.)

	<b>New allocations - All sustainable sites identified in SA process (outside settlements)</b>	<b>Total provision - new allocations plus existing commitments (of 2,800)</b>
Sustainable sites not in Green Belt (GB)	3,200	6,000
Sustainable sites including 'weak to moderate' Green Belt	4,900	7,700
All identified sustainable sites including strong and moderate Green Belt sites	7,200	10,000

- 2.8 Possible strategic site allocations have been identified in the following locations:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Initial estimate of potential</b>
Totton and the Waterside sub area	About 2,050 homes
North of Totton	About 990 homes
West of Marchwood	About 880 homes
North of Marchwood	About 180 homes
Coastal Towns sub area	About 2,960 homes
North of Lymington (Green Belt)	About 870 homes
South West of Lymington (Green Belt)	About 240 homes
North of Milford on Sea (Green Belt)	About 270 homes
North East of Everton (Green Belt)	About 120 homes
Central Hordle (Green Belt)	About 180 homes

<b>Location</b>	<b>Initial estimate of potential</b>
North of Hordle (Green Belt)	About 150 homes
North East of Hordle (Green Belt)	About 200 homes
North West New Milton (Green Belt)	About 300 homes
North East of New Milton (Green Belt)	About 130 homes
South East of New Milton (Green Belt)	About 200 homes
South West New Milton (Green Belt)	About 300 homes
<b>Avon Valley and Downlands sub area</b>	<b>About 1,880 homes</b>
West of Bransgore (Green Belt)	About 120 homes
South of Ringwood (Green Belt)	About 750 homes
East of Ringwood	About 400 homes
North of Ringwood	About 130 homes
North West of Fordingbridge	About 380 homes
East of Ashford	About 100 homes
<b>Estimated total potential on strategic sites District outside the National Park</b>	<b>About 7,040 homes</b>

2.9 As well as the need to find additional land for housing development, the plan consultation document also addresses a number of other matters such as future needs for employment and other forms of development.

### 3. OTHER KEY MATTERS

#### Green Belt

3.1 Government policy continues to attach great importance to Green Belts. A significant part of the area (from southern Ringwood through to Lymington) is Green Belt. (See page 14 of Appendix 1). The Green Belt in the District dates from more than 60 years ago and was designated originally to prevent coastal settlements from merging. As part of the Local Plan's evidence base the Council has commissioned a study of the Green Belt to assess how it performs today against the five Green Belt purposes defined by Government. These are:

- 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.

The Green Belt study has considered how strongly parcels of land within the current Green Belt fulfil these Green Belt purposes (ranking them from strong to weak). The results of the study indicate that most of the existing Green Belt continues to fulfil Green Belt purposes strongly. However, it has identified a limited number of locations where its performance is weaker.

3.2 The sustainability appraisal work which has been undertaken shows that some Green Belt land in the District is in otherwise 'sustainable' locations for new development and could play a role in helping to address future housing needs. As indicated in para. 2.7 above, a critical issue which the Council needs to address in preparing the Local Plan Review is the extent to which the Council should accept development within the Green Belt to address some of the housing need. One of the purposes of this public consultation is to give the public the opportunity to give their views on this matter to inform the preparation of the Plan. In broad terms, the sustainability appraisal work shows that there are sustainable sites which could provide for around 1700 homes on Green Belt land that performs 'moderately' and a further 2,300 homes could be provided in sustainable locations if some Green Belt land that still performs 'strongly' in Green Belt terms is used to accommodate development.

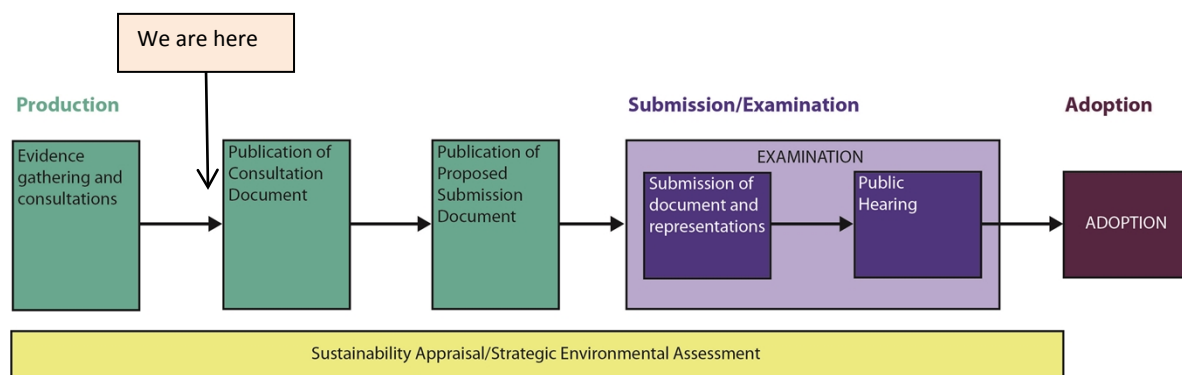
### Working with others

3.3 The Council has been actively involved in the work done by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) in preparing an agreed spatial planning position statement for the Solent LEP area. Totton and the Waterside Parishes are the only parts of the Plan Area within the PUSH area. The PUSH Spatial Position Statement sets out an agreed spatial distribution for future housing and employment land provision for the Southampton (and Portsmouth) housing and employment markets which will be tested through the preparation of Local Plans. The PUSH spatial strategy assumes 3600 new homes can be accommodated in Totton and the Waterside. There is also a small requirement for additional employment land (around 3-5 hectares).

3.4 There has been close working with the National Park Authority, at officer and member levels, including joint commissioning (where appropriate) of studies providing the evidence base for both the District Council's and Park Authority's local plans. Similarly, officers are working with Dorset Councils on cross-boundary issues.

## 4. OVERVIEW

4.1 As illustrated by the diagram below, we have now reached the stage of the local plan preparation process where public consultation on key matters is appropriate.



4.2 The public consultation will give the public and other interested parties an opportunity to voice their views on key issues the plan will address before the Council finalises what should be proposed in the Plan. The consultation document, along with supporting background information will be available for all to view and comment on on the Council's website, and hard copies of the document will be made available to view at NFDC local offices and libraries across the district. We will ask people to write in to us (post or email) and let us know their views. Those wishing to promote sites will have the opportunity to provide the Council with evidence supporting proposals, and those

disagreeing with the sites that have been identified will have an opportunity to explain the reasons why they think a site is unsuitable for development. Written comments received will be taken into account when preparing the Local Plan Submission document. Submission of the Local Plan for public Examination is programmed for late 2017.

- 4.3 It is proposed that the public consultation period run from 15<sup>th</sup> July to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016. In support of the consultation process, three information 'drop-in' events are planned to enable members of the public to have an opportunity ask Officers questions about the document. The drop-in events will all be from 4:00pm to 7:30pm. They will be held at Totton & Eling Community Centre on Monday 25 July, at Fordingbridge Avonway Centre on Tuesday 26 July, and at The Lymington (Community) Centre on Wednesday 27 July.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 All direct costs contained within budgets

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There will be significant environmental implications arising from the outcome of the Local Plan Review, not least arising from the need to build on significant areas of previously undeveloped land within the District. However, the sustainability appraisal (which is a key part of the plan-making process) will ensure that choices are made which are the most sustainable options, and appropriate policies will be included in the Plan which, as far as possible, ensure high quality development and the mitigation of any potentially harmful impacts.

## **7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None.

## **8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 No direct implications.

## **9. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder welcomes this paper and looks forward to hearing residents' views as to how the Council should best balance the provision of new homes with the protection of the District's environment in the context of Government policies to encourage the building of more houses.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agree:

- i) to the publication of the document set out Appendix 1, subject to final editing, for the purpose of a public consultation to inform the preparation of the Local Plan Review Part 1;
- ii) to authorise the Policy and Strategy Service Manager, in consultation with the Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, to make editing changes in preparing the document for publication;
- iii) that the public consultation period should run from 15th July to 16th September 2016.

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### Background Papers:

To be published on 15<sup>th</sup> July alongside  
public consultation document:  
Green Belt Study  
Landscape Study  
Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report  
Sustainability Appraisal Site Assessment

Other published documents