



Spatial Options and Policy Direction Regulation 18 Local Plan 2025-2043 consultation

New Forest District Council
(outside the National Park)

February 2026 – Cabinet Version

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Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cllr Derek Tipp – Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Economy

Introduction

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

Consultation to date

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

The Purpose of this spatial options and policy direction document

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

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

Background Context

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

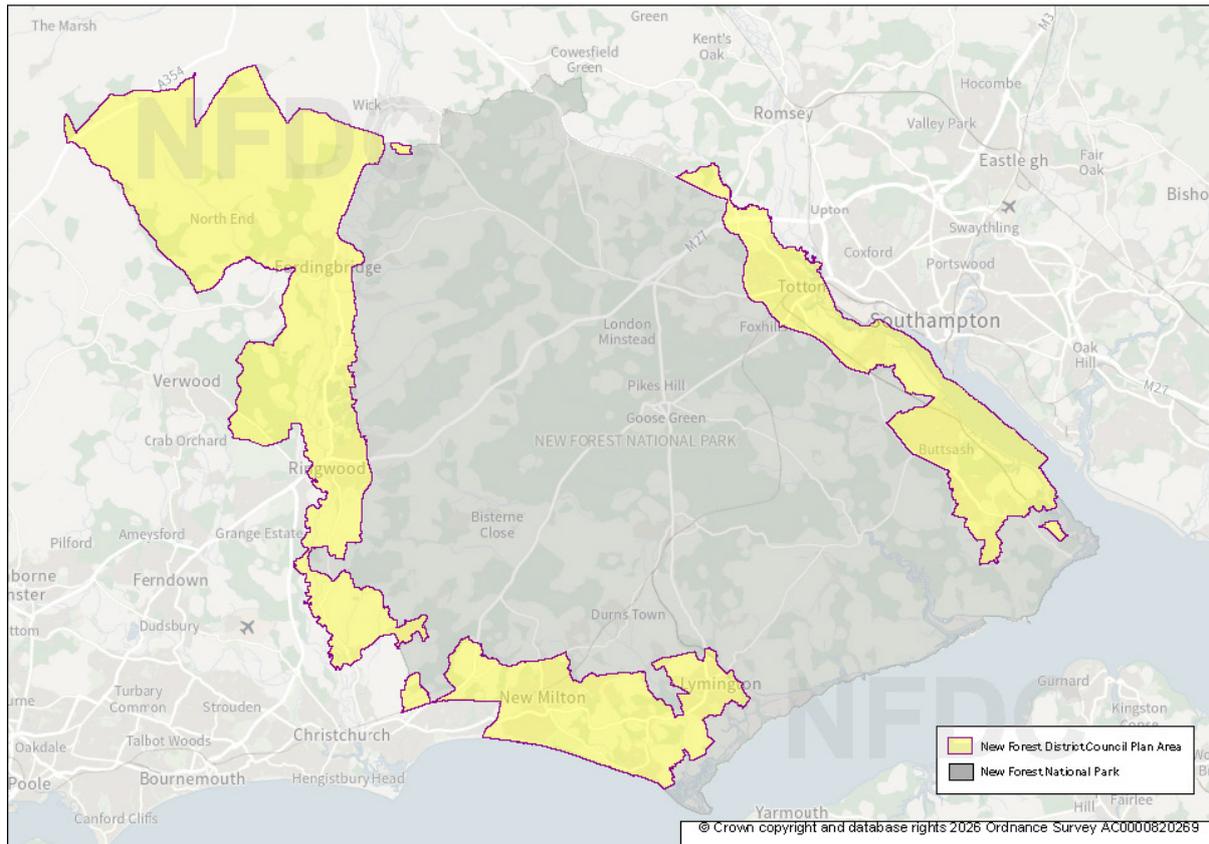


Figure 1 The Plan Area

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

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

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

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

The current Local Plan

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

Local Government Reorganisation

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

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

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

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

Government consultation on a revised planning framework

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

Responding to this Consultation

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

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

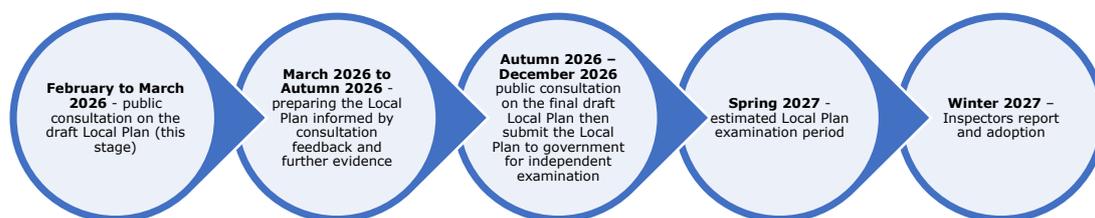
25. If you have any queries, please do contact the team by emailing **policyandplans@nfdc.gov.uk** or calling 023 8028 5345 and selecting option 1.

Timetable and next steps

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Evidence base

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

32. Those documents currently available and published are:

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

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

33. Other studies currently being prepared include:

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

Glossary of key terms

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

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

Draft Vision and Plan Objectives

Our Draft Vision for New Forest District Council 2043

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

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

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

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

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

New Forest District Council 2043 – Our draft Vision

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

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

Local Plan and Sustainability Objectives

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

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

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

Table 1 Local Plan Sustainability Framework

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

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

People – Supporting Inclusive, Healthy, and Resilient Communities

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

Place – Protecting and Enhancing the District’s Unique Character

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

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

Prosperity – Enabling a Thriving and Diverse Local Economy

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

Climate and Nature – Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency

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

Connectivity and Inclusion – Linking People, Places, and Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

Strategic Policy Areas

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

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

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

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

Consultation questions

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Planning context of the area

Strategic context

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

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

What are our constraints to development?

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

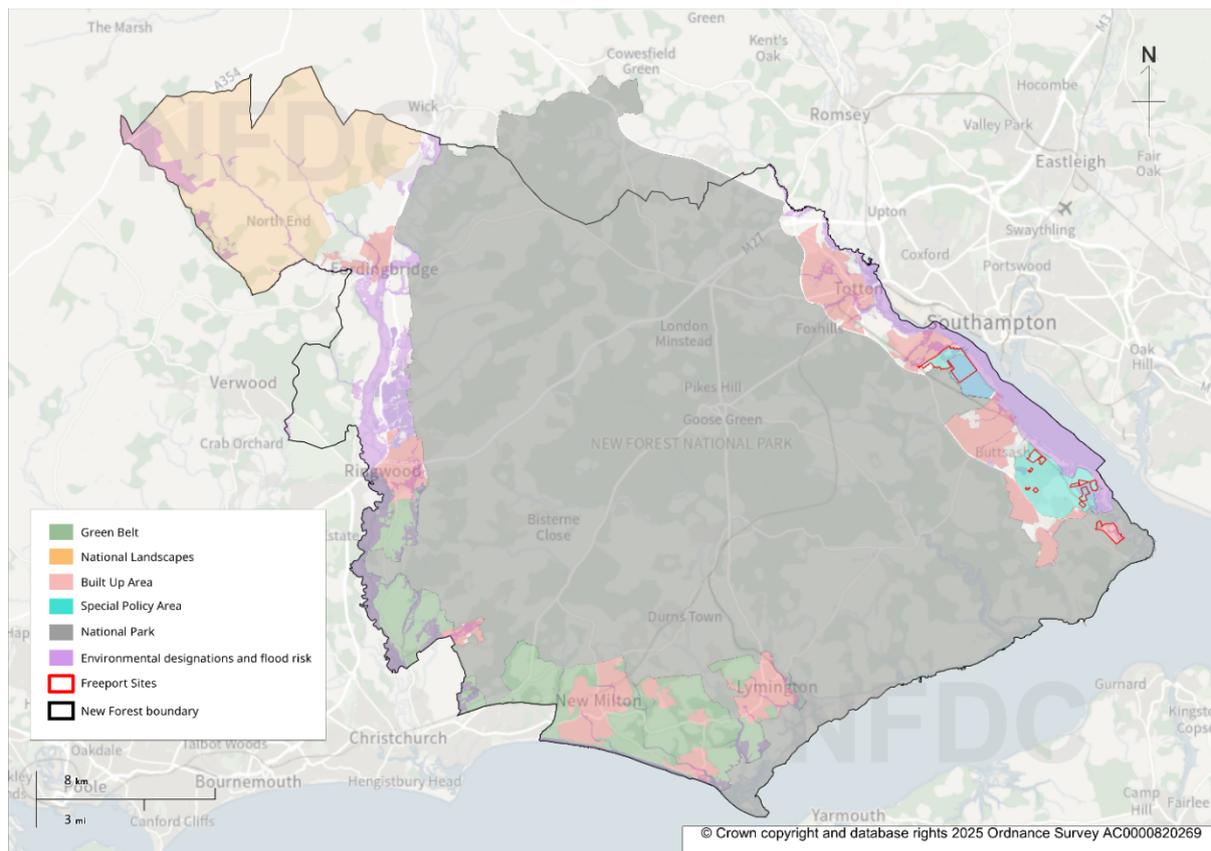


Figure 2 Constraints affecting the Plan Area.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Demographics

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

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

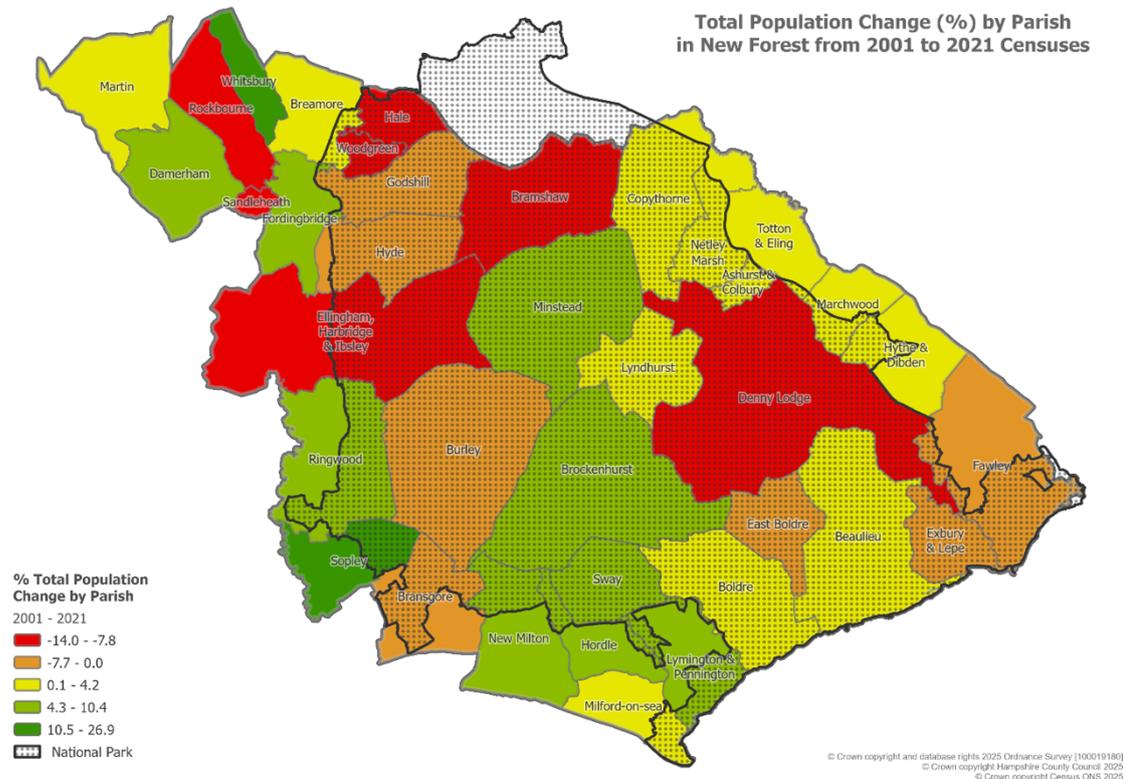


Figure 3 District's percentage population change between the period 2001 to 2021

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

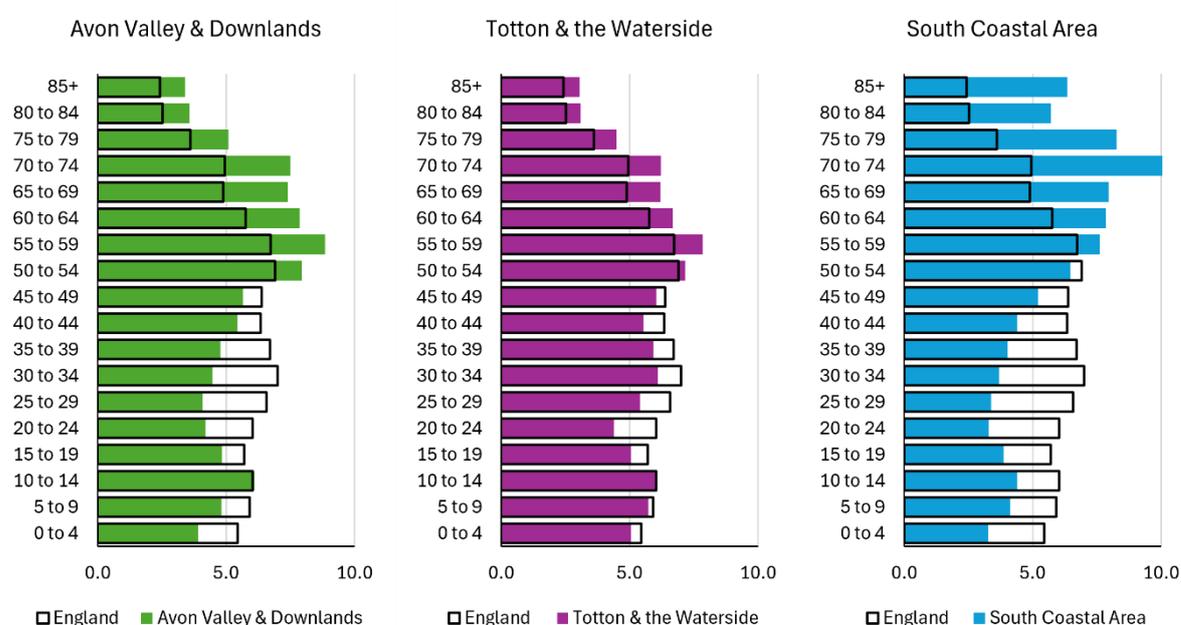


Figure 4 Population profile in each of the Plan Areas three sub-areas

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

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

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

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

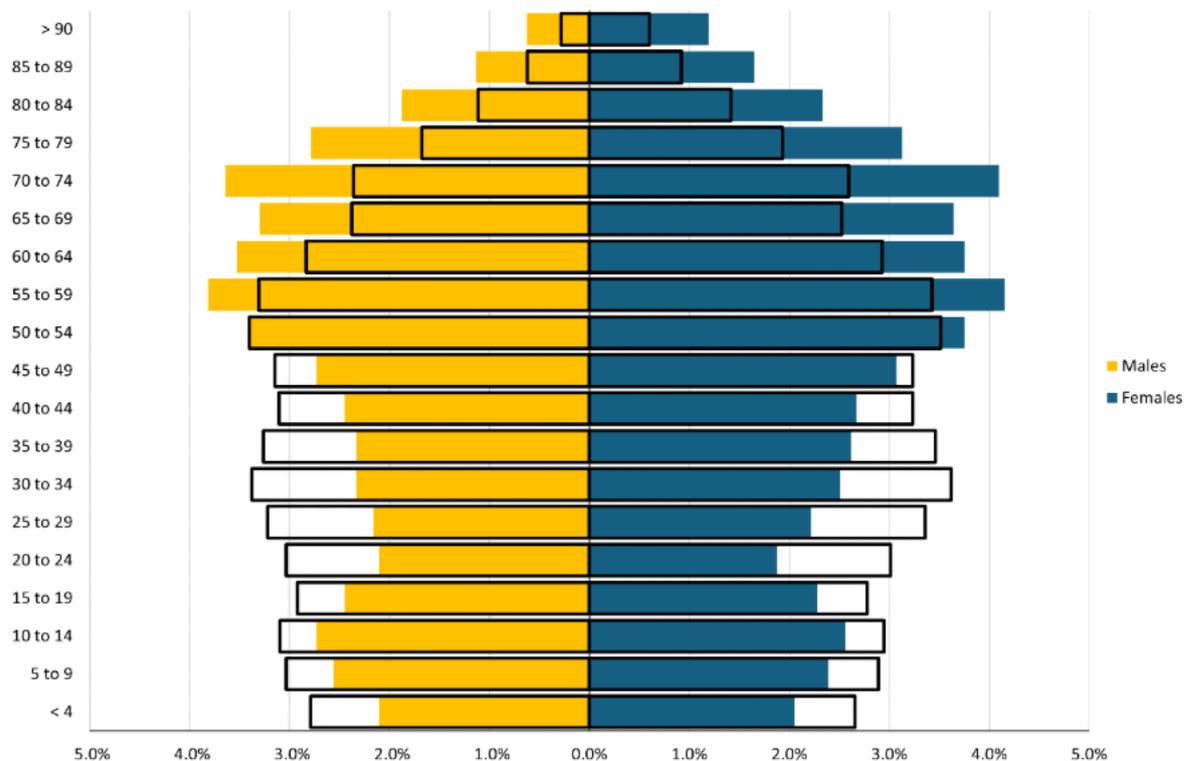


Figure 5 Age and sex structure of the population on Census Day in 2021

Furthering the purposes of the National Park / National Landscape

Aim and Objectives

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consultation questions

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

What development do we need to plan for?

Housing need

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

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

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

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

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

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

Towards a housing target

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

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

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

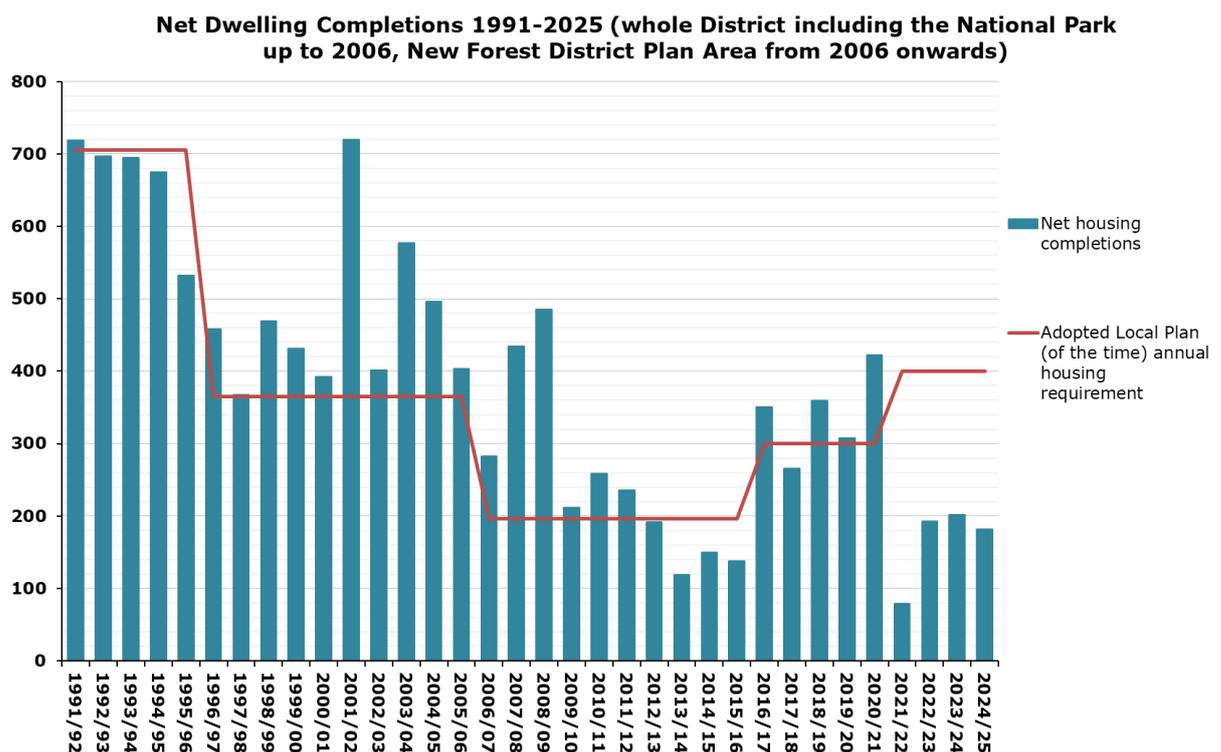


Figure 6 Net housing completions 1991/92-2024/25 (whole District including the National Park up to 2005/06, New Forest District (outside the National Park) Plan Area from 2006/07 onwards)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2 Existing sources of supply 2025-2043

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

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

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

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

Potential future housing supply up to 2043

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3 Total potential sources of supply 2025-2043

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

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

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

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

Other development needs

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

Employment

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

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

Freeport

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

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

Retail

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

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation

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

Sustainable Spatial Strategy

Aim and Objectives

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

What you told us

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

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

Spatial options for the distribution of growth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Option 2: Large expansion of the towns

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

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

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

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

Option 4: New settlement(s)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The approach to balancing brownfield and greenfield land

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

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

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

Policy Direction

A Spatial Development Strategy Approach

140. A potential approach is set out below:

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

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

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

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

Settlement hierarchy

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

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

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

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

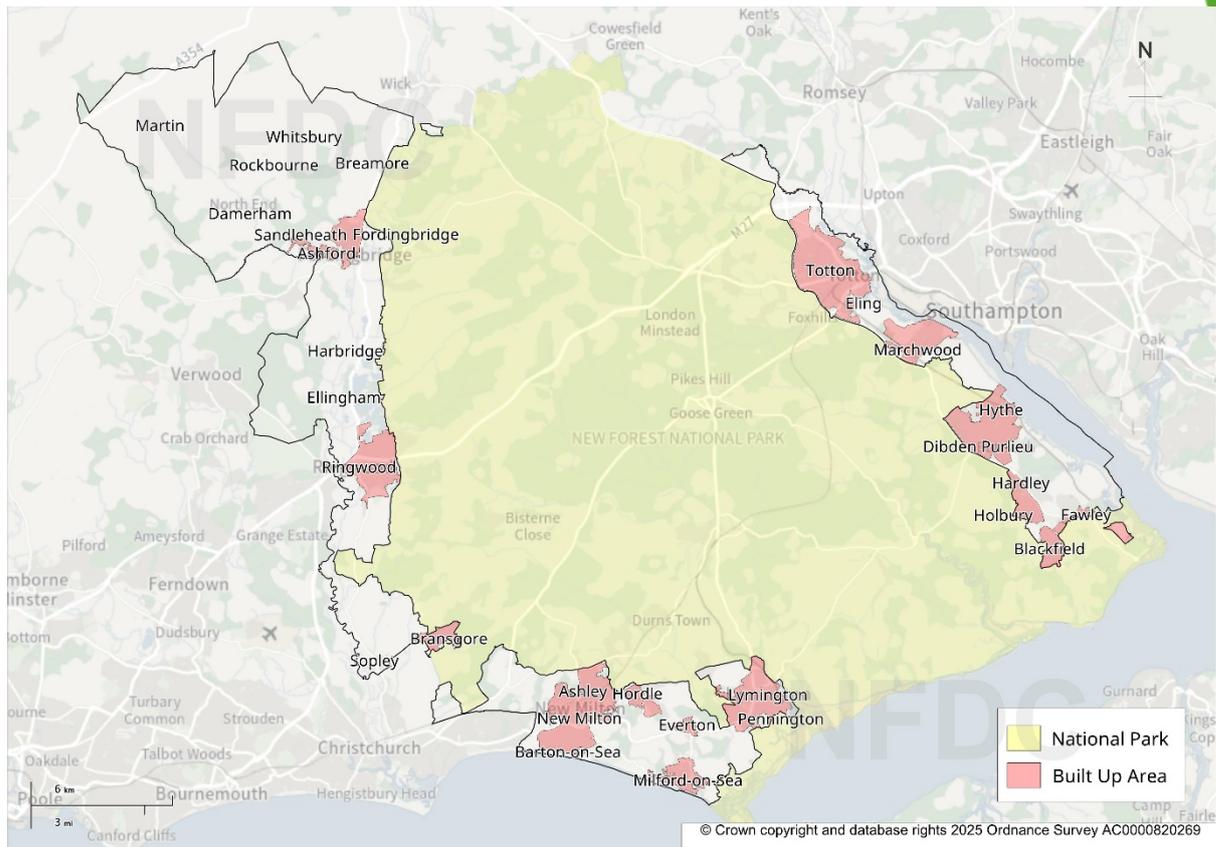


Figure 7 The settlements covered by our plan

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

Policy Direction

Settlement hierarchy

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

149. The proposed approach is as follows:

Proposed strategic approach to the Settlement Hierarchy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

155. Our proposed approach is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Further information / evidence base weblinks

158. Interim Sustainability Appraisal

159. Interim Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Consultation questions

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

Strategic Development Growth Options

What are strategic development growth options

160. Paragraph 77 of the NPPF sets out that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes). Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way.

161. Informed by the interim site assessment work undertaken to date, we have identified 15 different Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs) for consultation. The SDGOs have been defined based on sites (or groupings of sites) which have either been promoted to the Council by developers or landowners or are areas that have been identified by the Council as potential strategic growth opportunities to help address housing and other development needs. In the context of this Local Plan review, SDGOs are being defined as areas that may have potential to accommodate 100+ dwellings.

162. At this stage, these are simply options for consideration, not proposed site allocations. We are seeking your views on these potential Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs) to help shape the next steps.

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

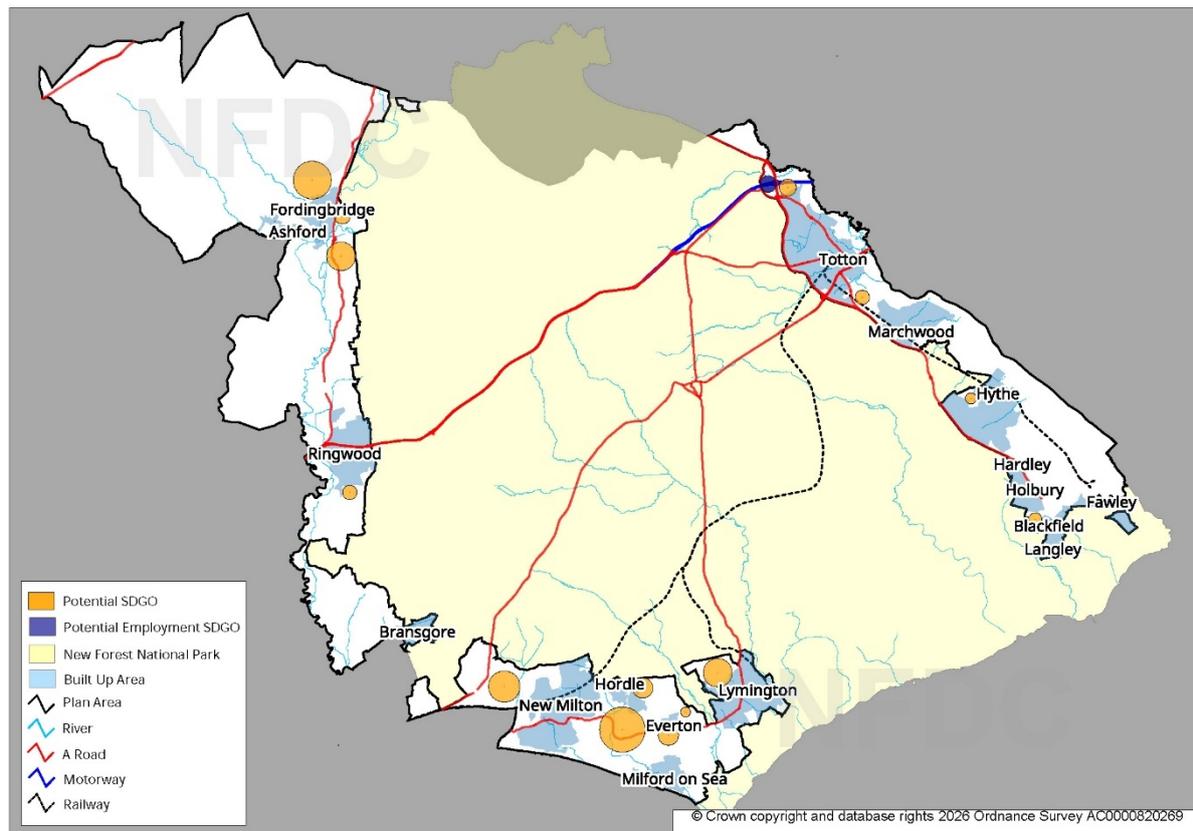


Figure 8 Broad spatial options for development

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

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

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

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

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

171. The following important caveats also apply:

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

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

- location

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

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

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

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

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

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

178. The potential SDGOs for consultation are:

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

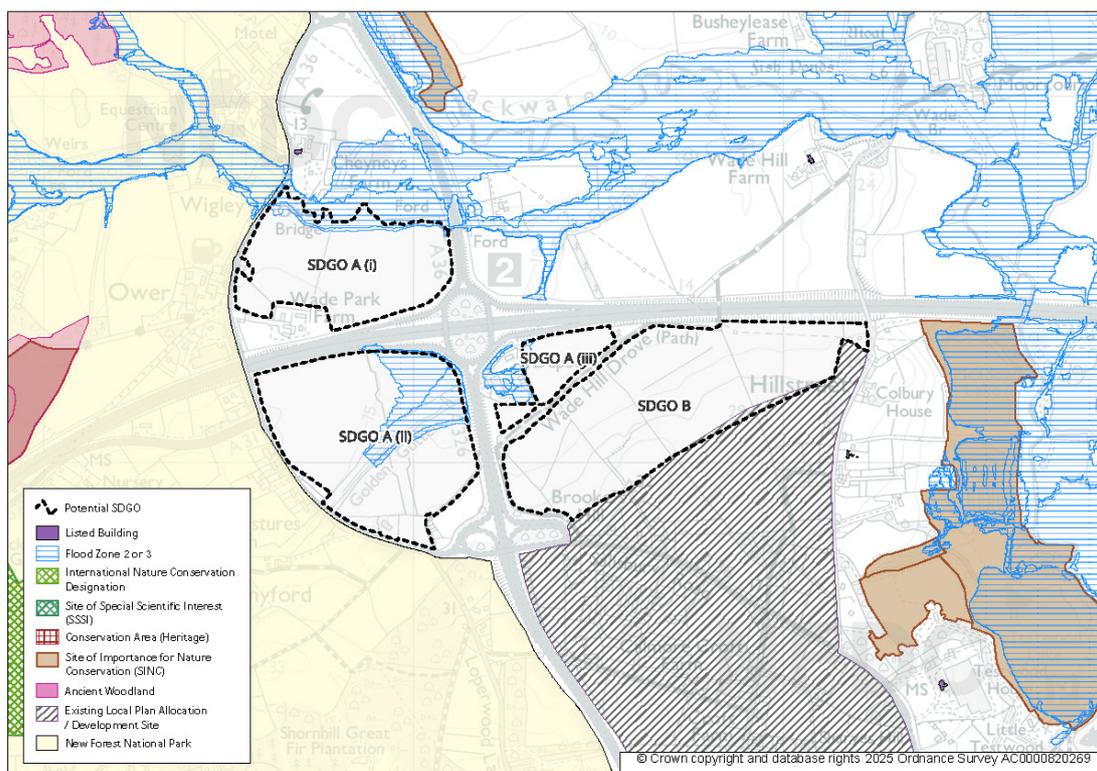


Figure 9 Strategic Development Growth Options A & B

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

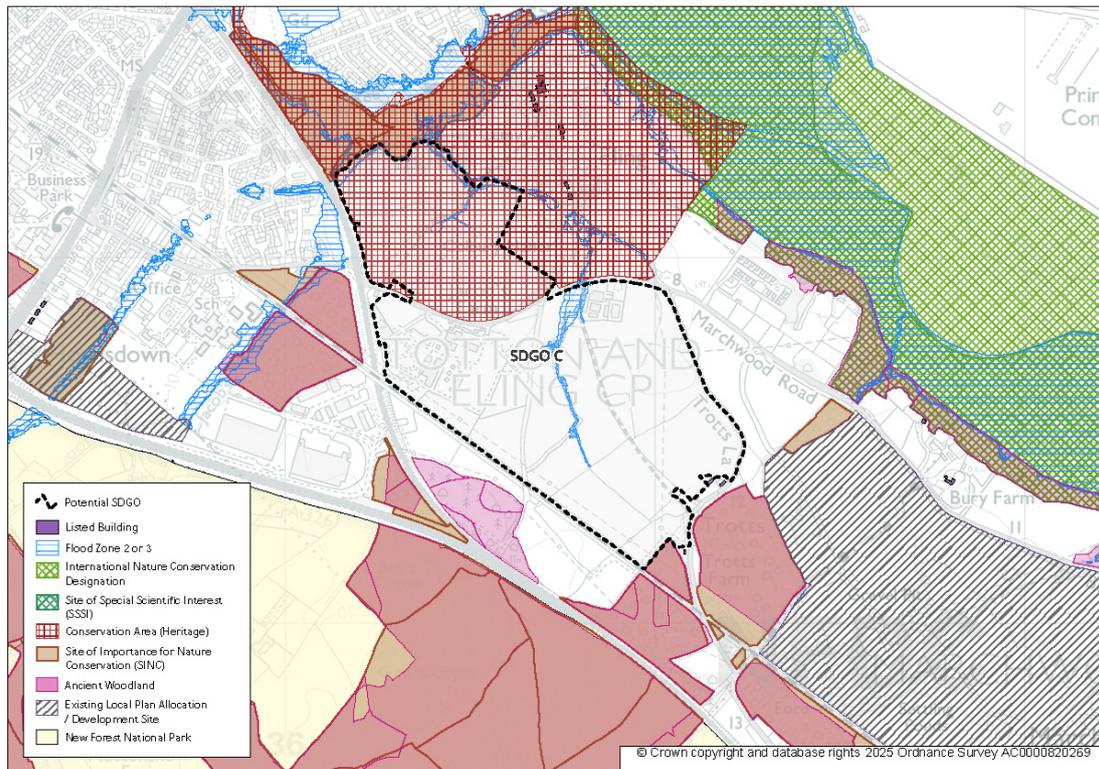


Figure 10 Strategic Development Growth Option C

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

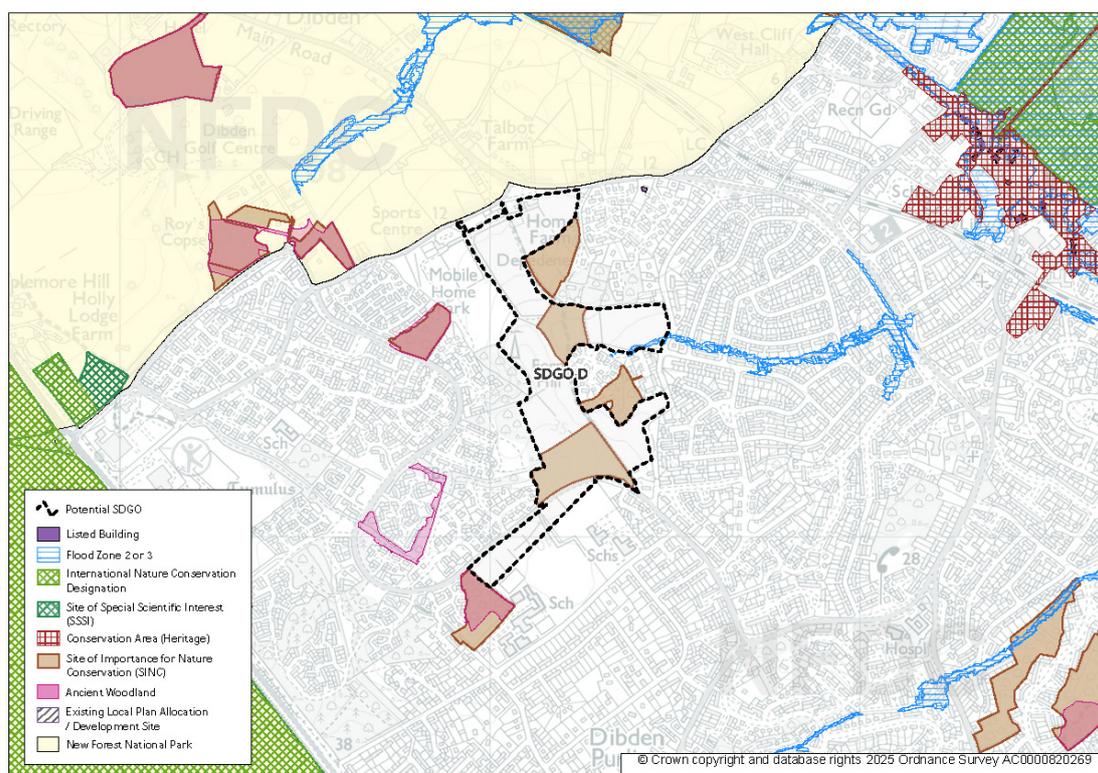


Figure 11 Strategic Development Growth Option D

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

- utilities connections

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

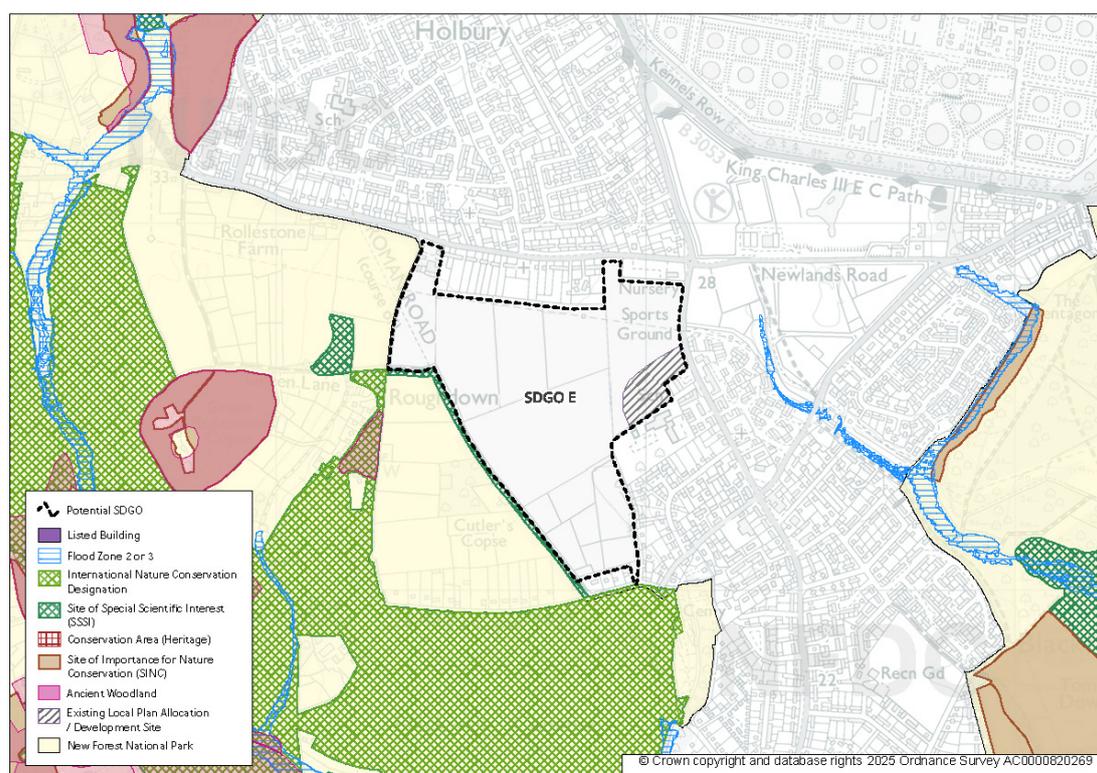


Figure 12 Strategic Development Growth Option E

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

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

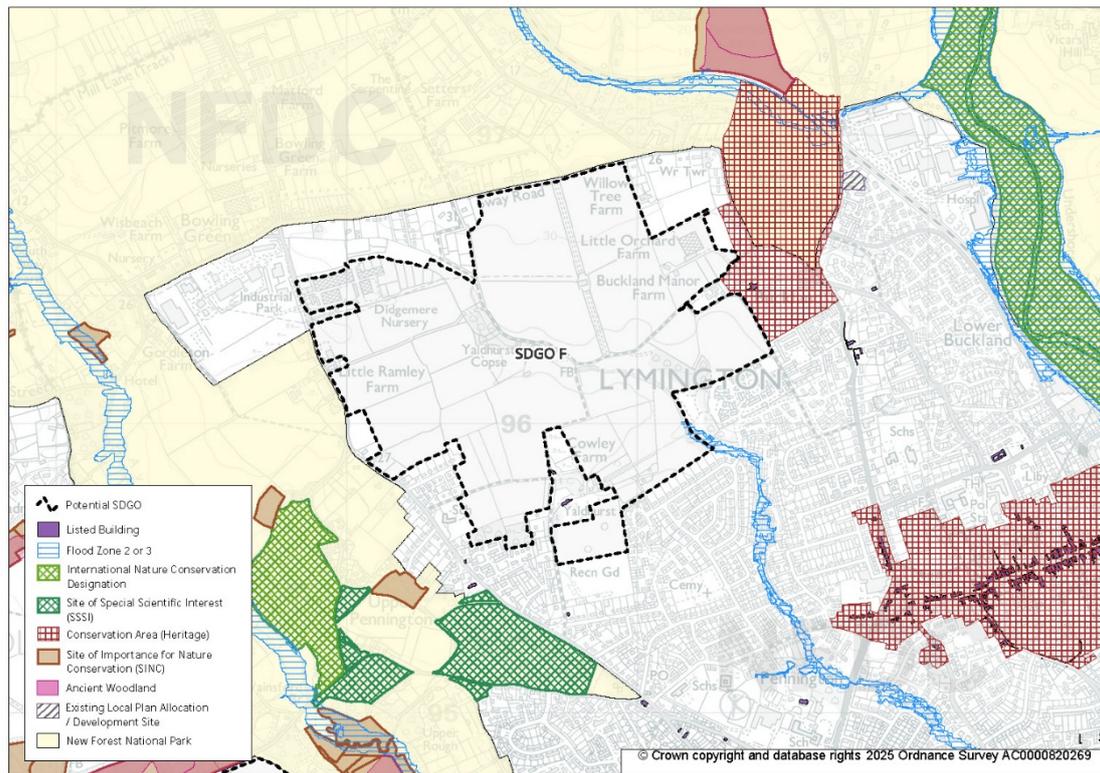


Figure 13 Strategic Development Growth Option F

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

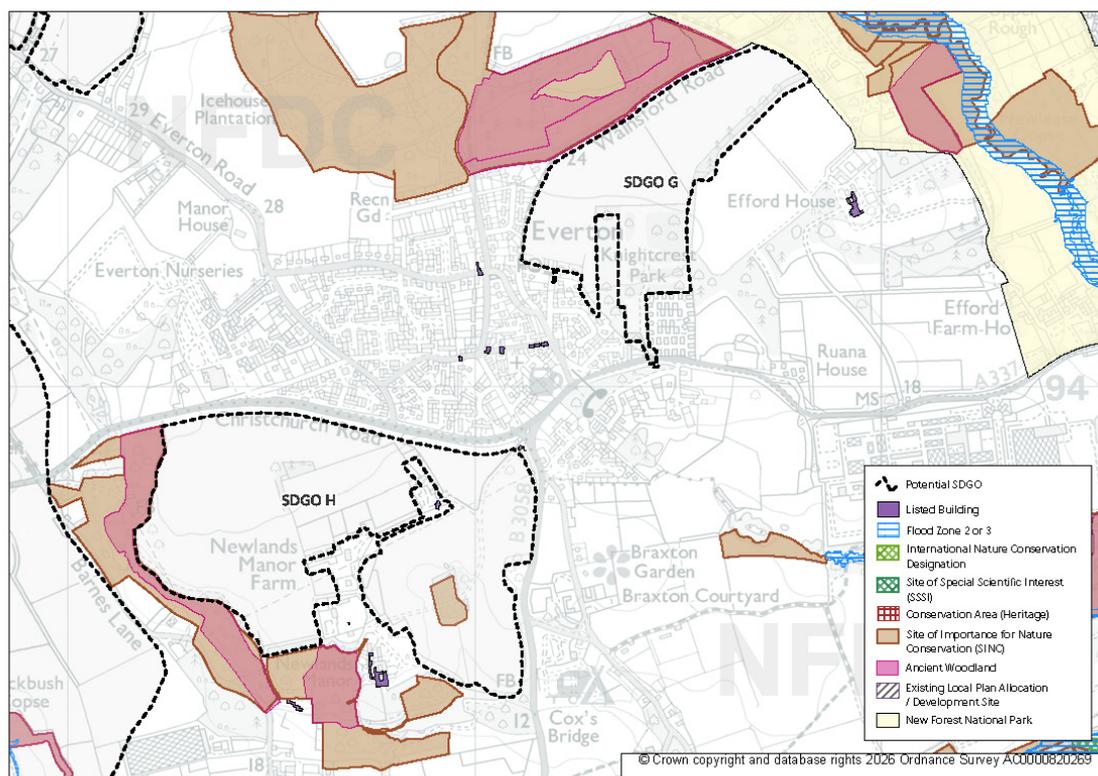


Figure 14 Strategic Development Growth Options G & H

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

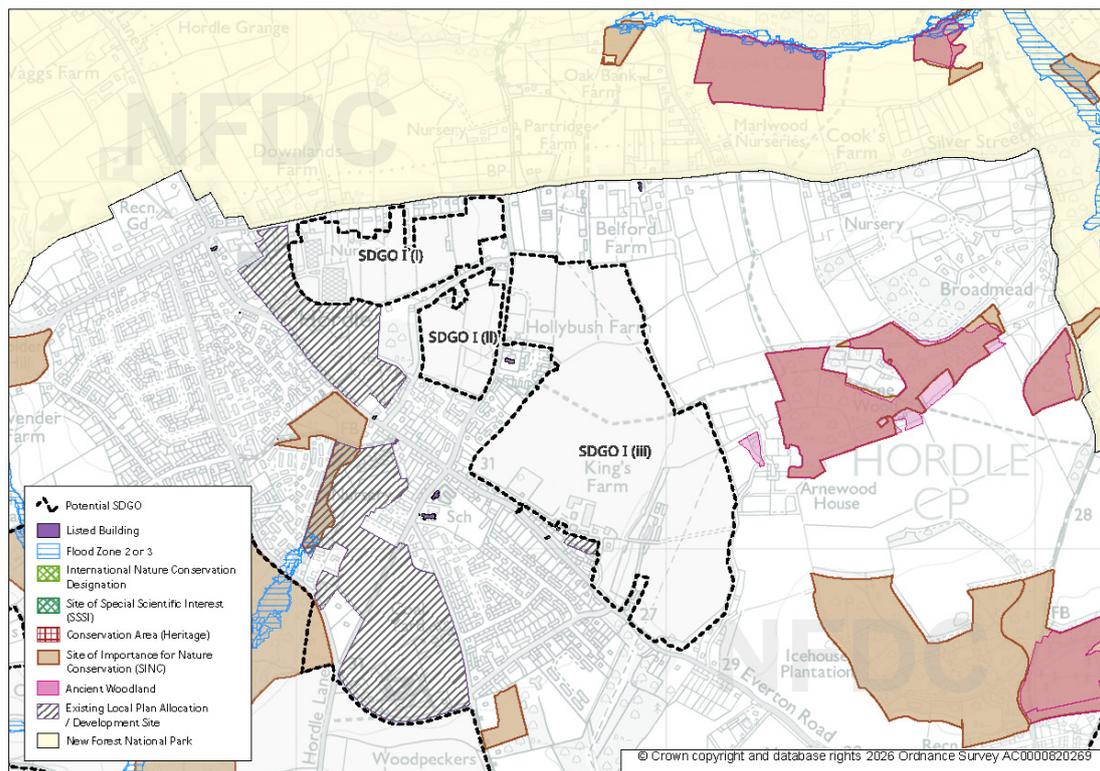


Figure 15 Strategic Development Growth Option I

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

SDGO J (New Settlement): Land around Downton

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

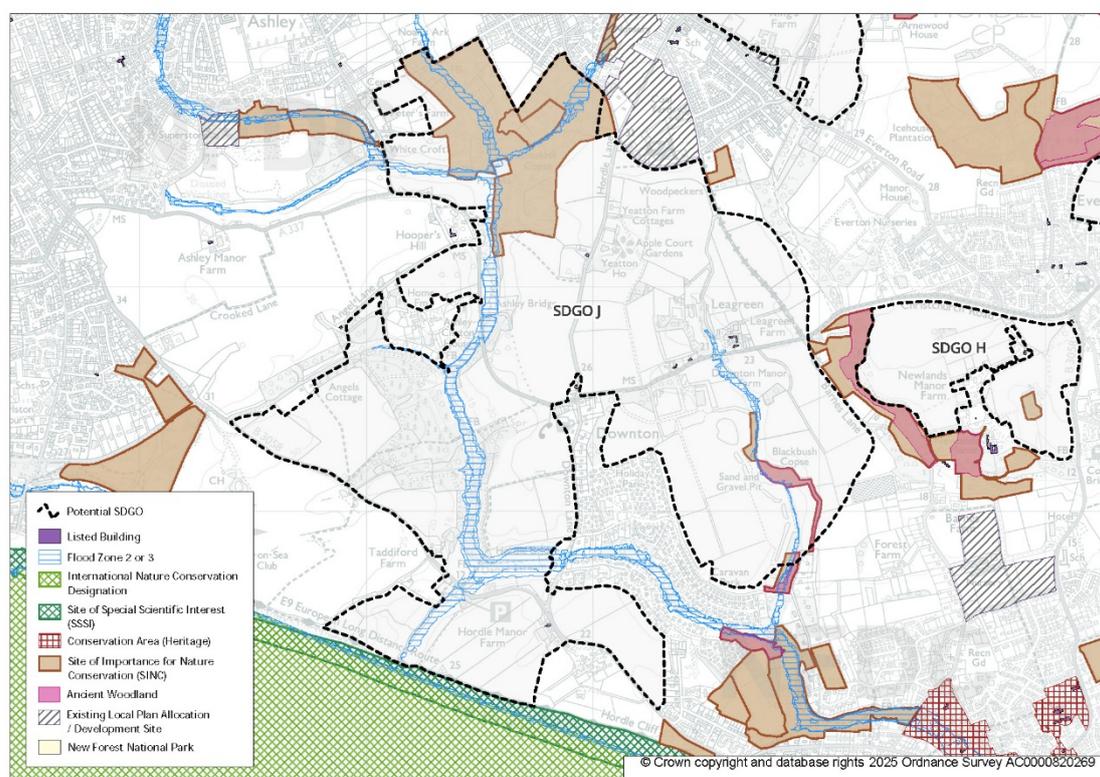


Figure 16 Strategic Development Growth Option J

Potential uses include:

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

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

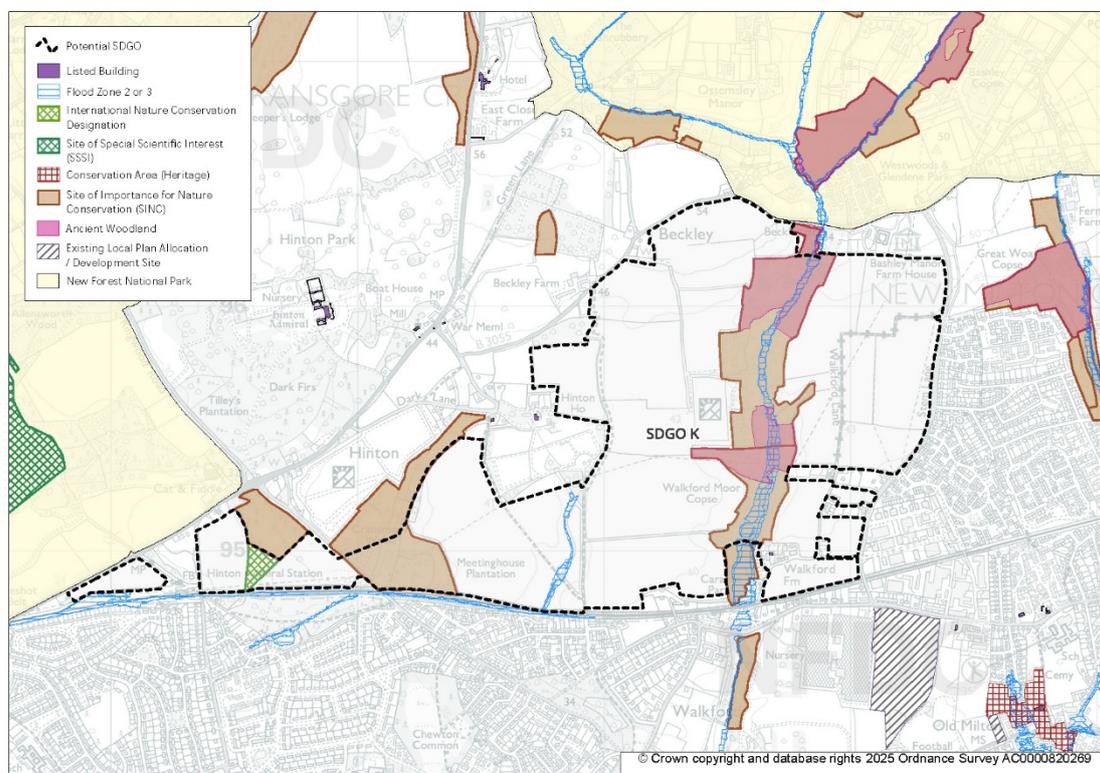


Figure 17 Strategic Development Growth Option K

Potential uses include:

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

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

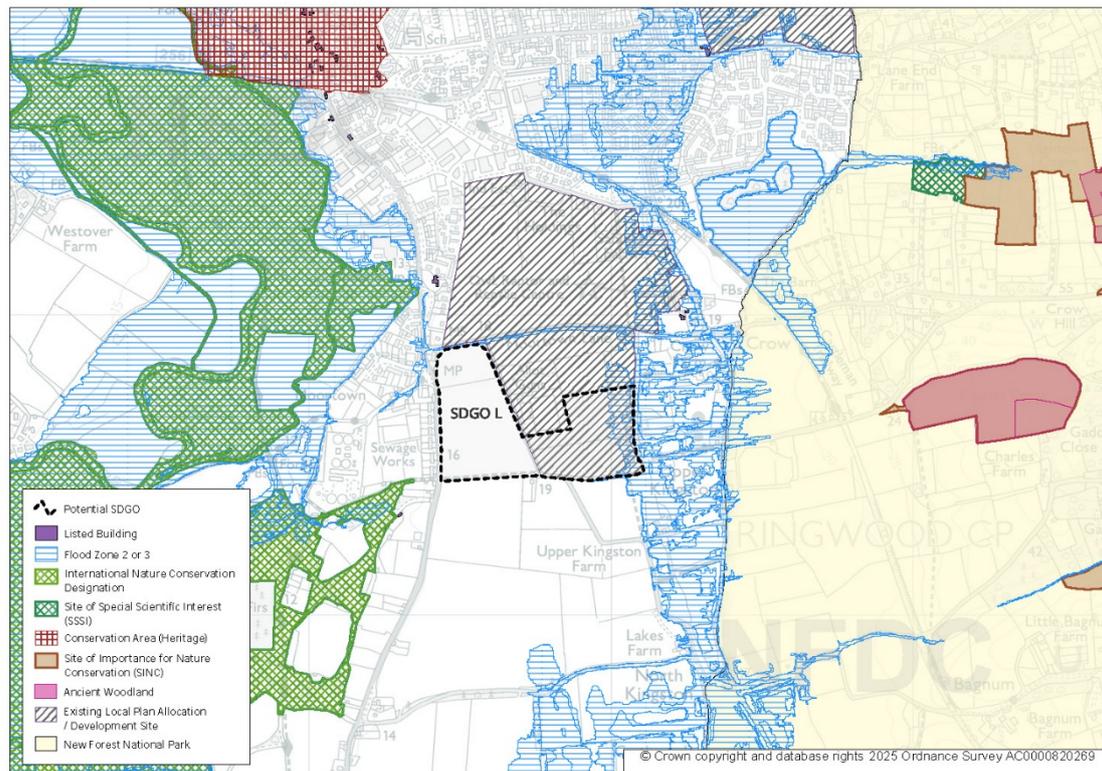


Figure 18 Strategic Development Growth Option L

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

SDGO M (New Neighbourhood): Land southeast of Fordingbridge

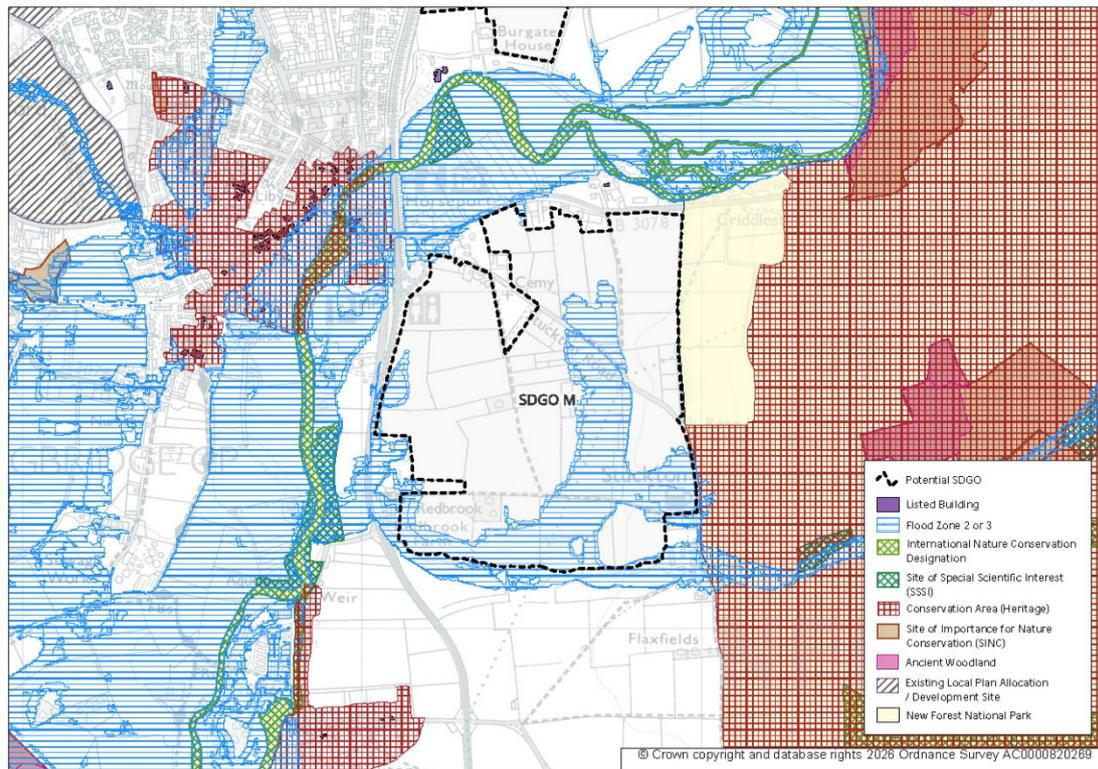


Figure 19 Strategic Development Growth Option M

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

SDGO N (New neighbourhood): Land east of Fordingbridge

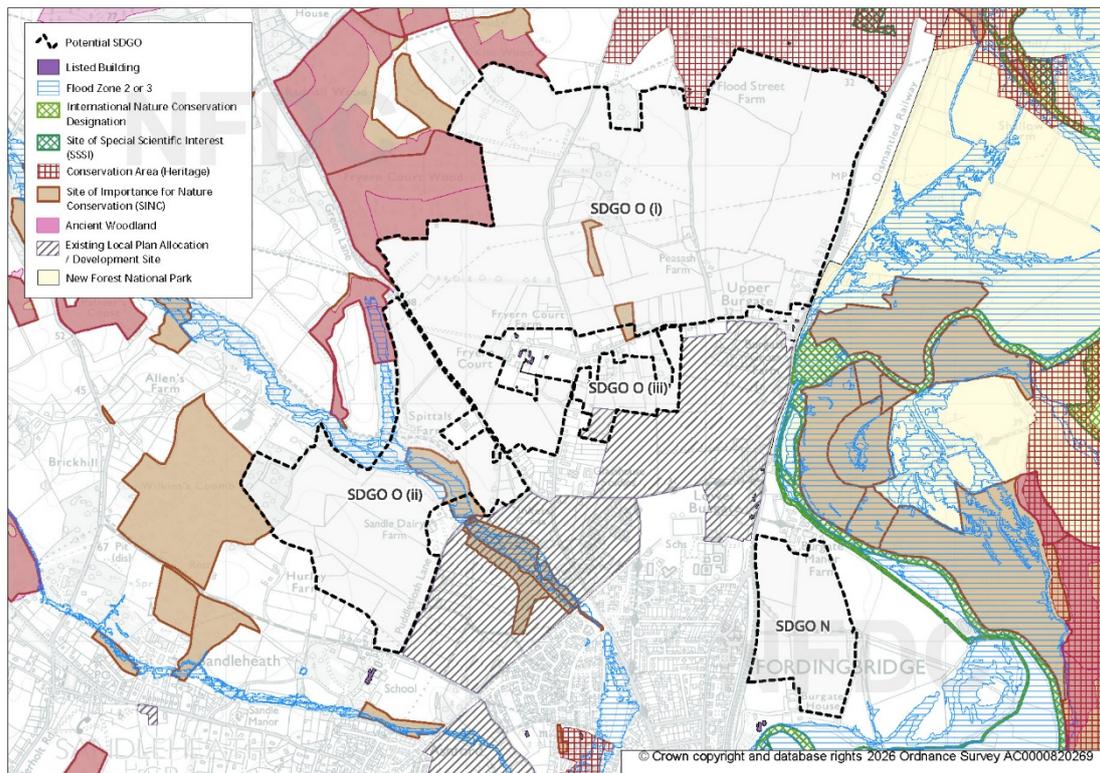


Figure 20 Strategic Development Growth Options N & O

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Potential uses include:

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

Key site-specific issues and considerations include:

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

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

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

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

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

Other Potential Development Site Options

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

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

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

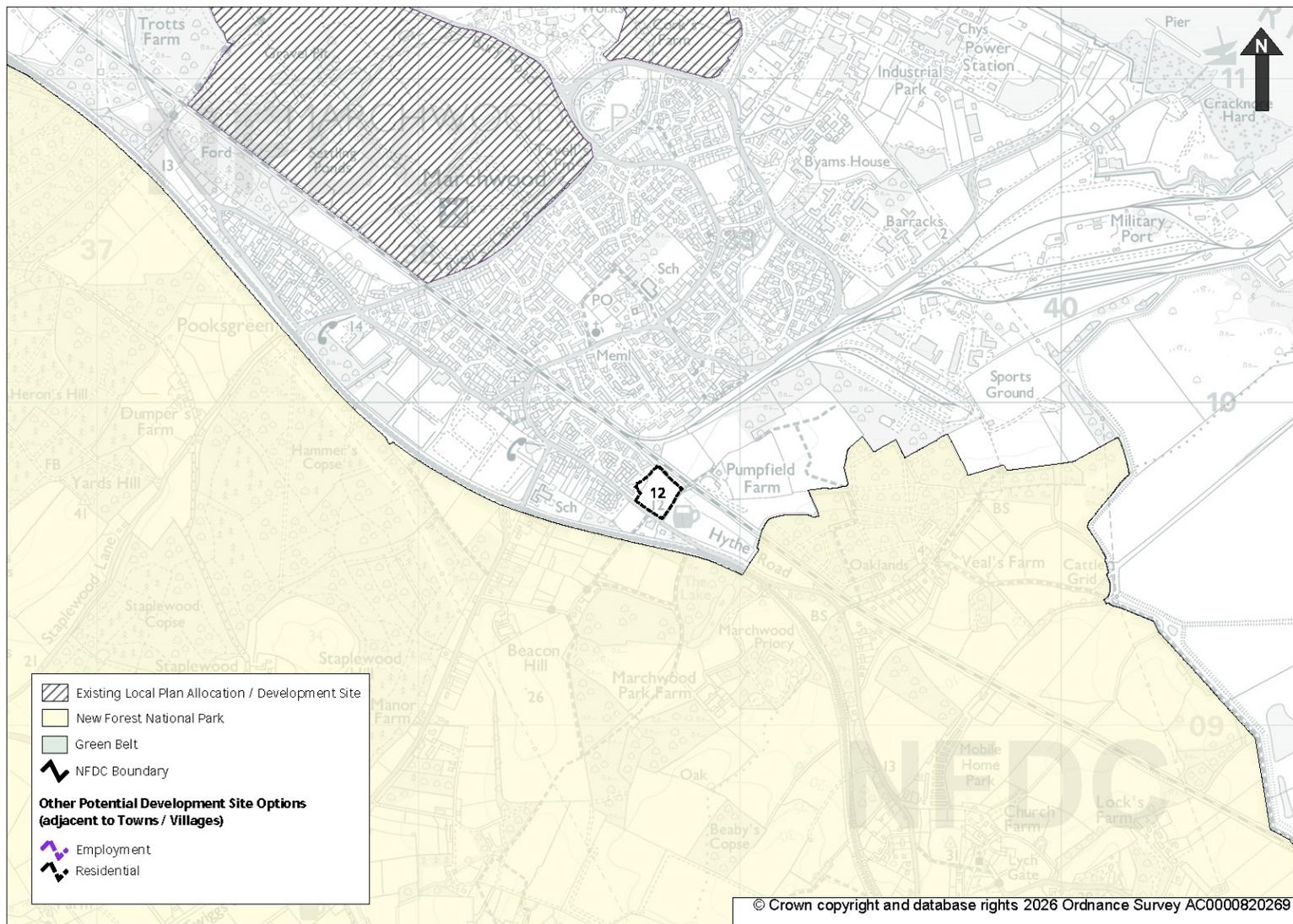


Figure 21 Other potential development site options adjacent to Marchwood

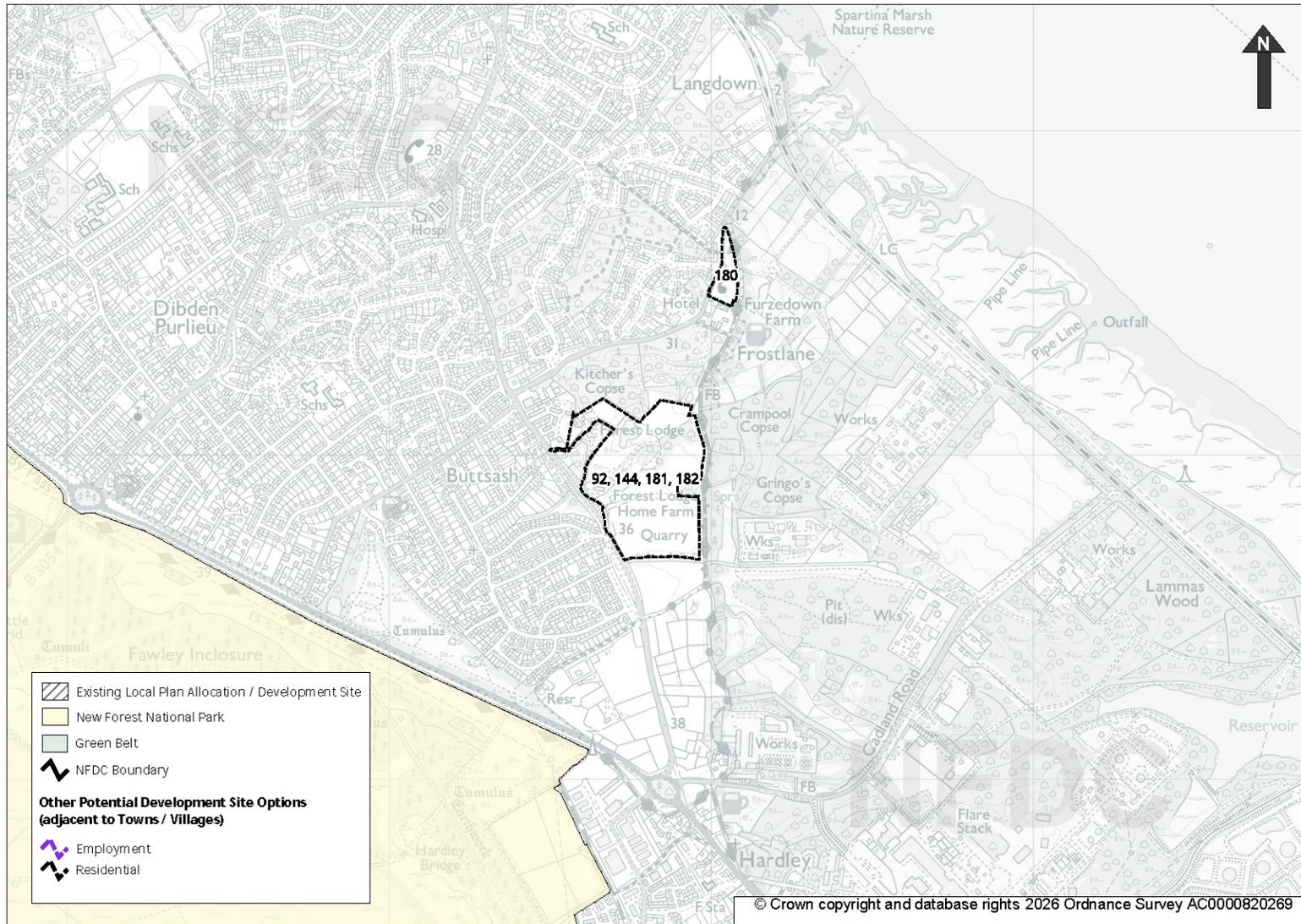


Figure 22 Other potential development site options adjacent to Hythe & Dibden

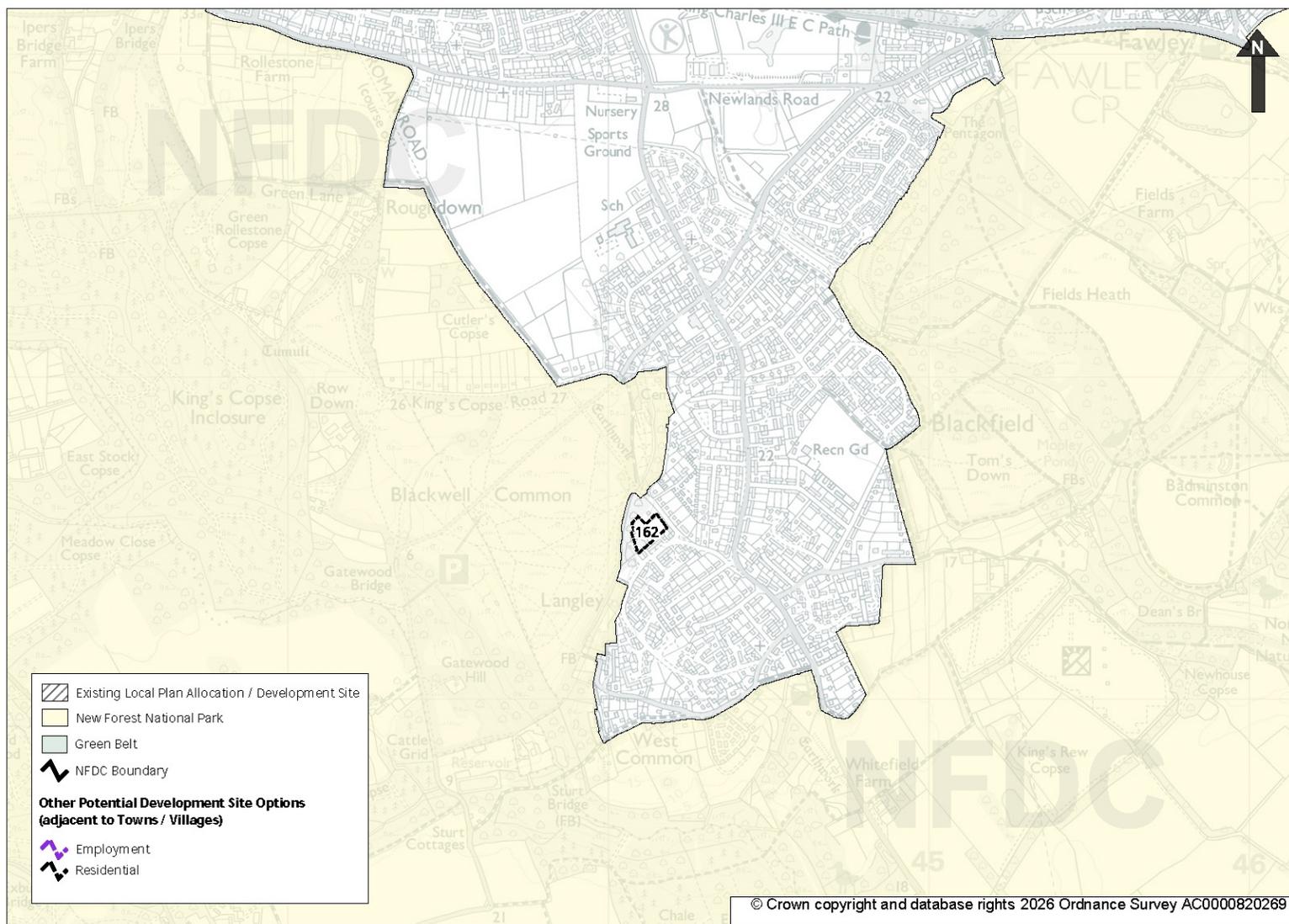


Figure 23 Other potential development site options adjacent to Blackfield

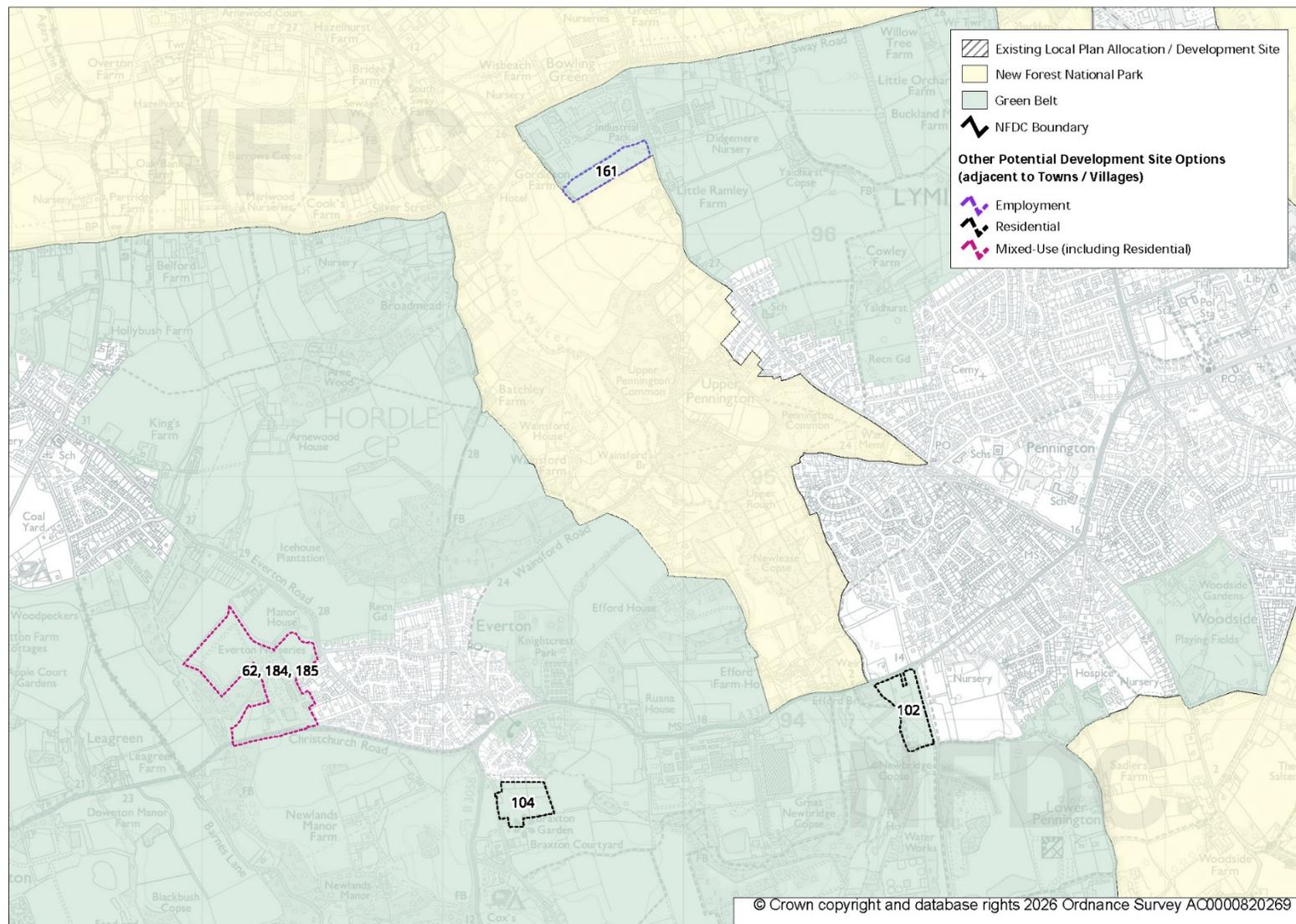


Figure 24 Other potential development site options adjacent to Lymington, Pennington & Everton

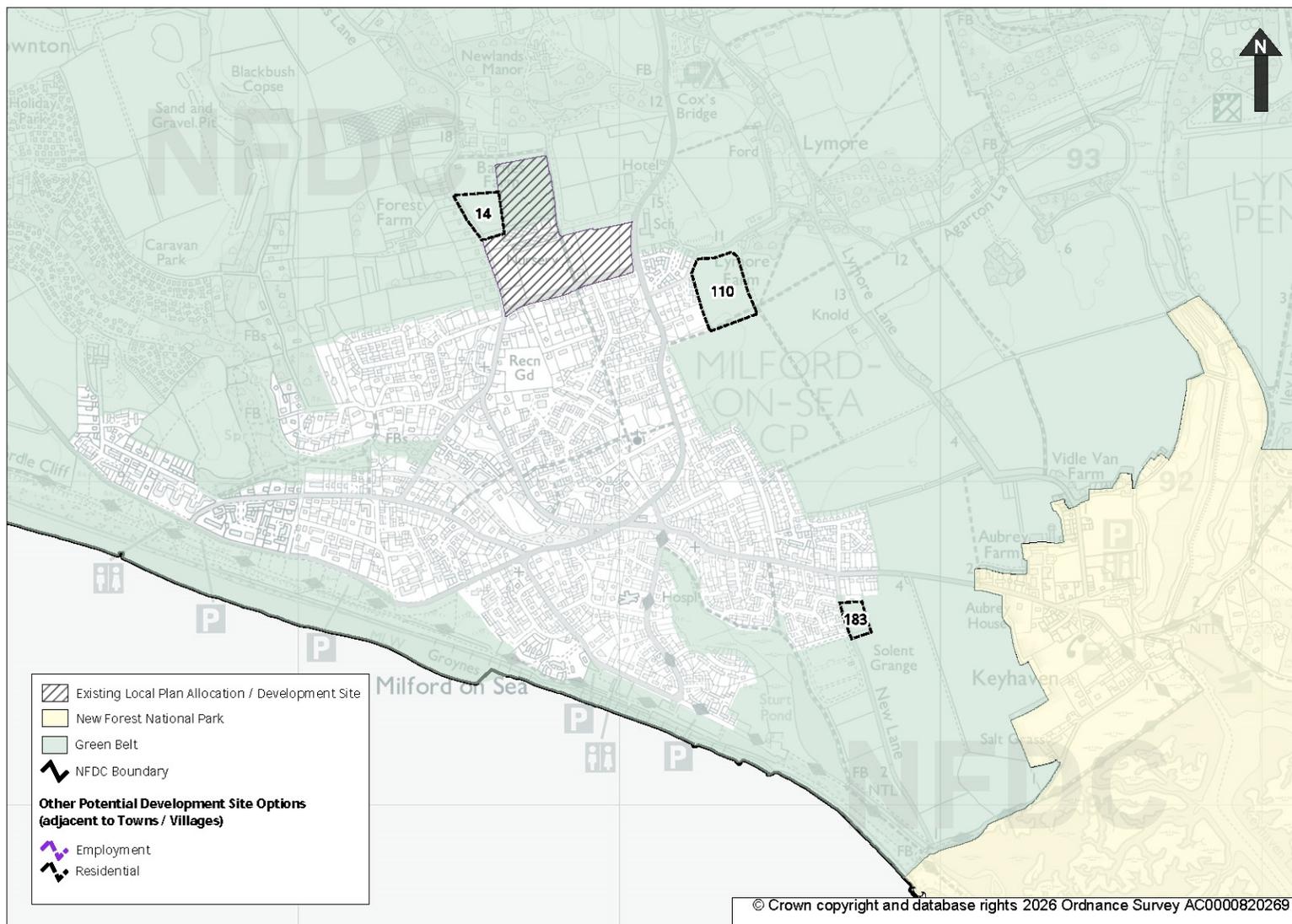


Figure 25 Other potential development site options adjacent to Milford on Sea

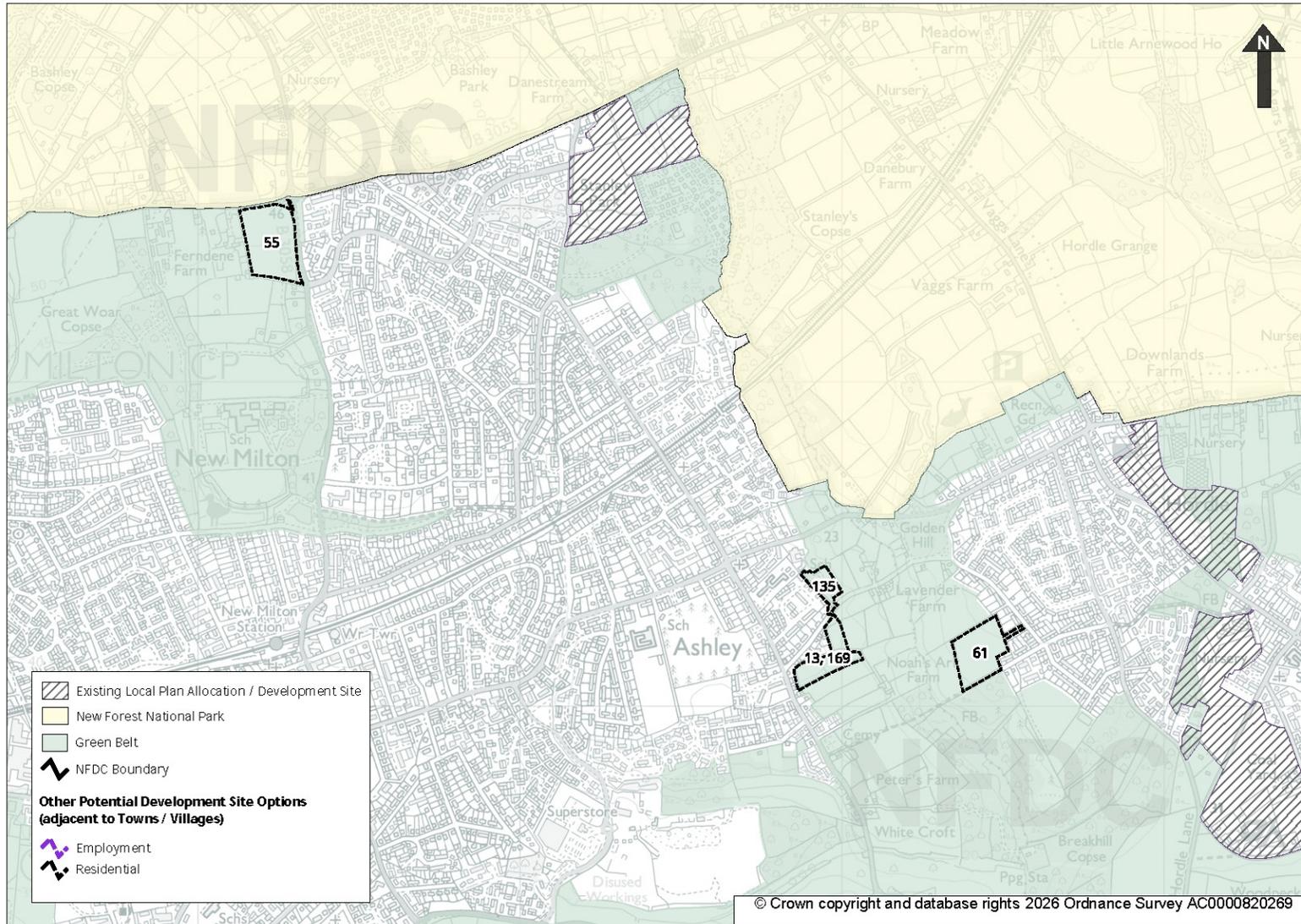


Figure 26 Other potential development site options adjacent to New Milton & Hordle

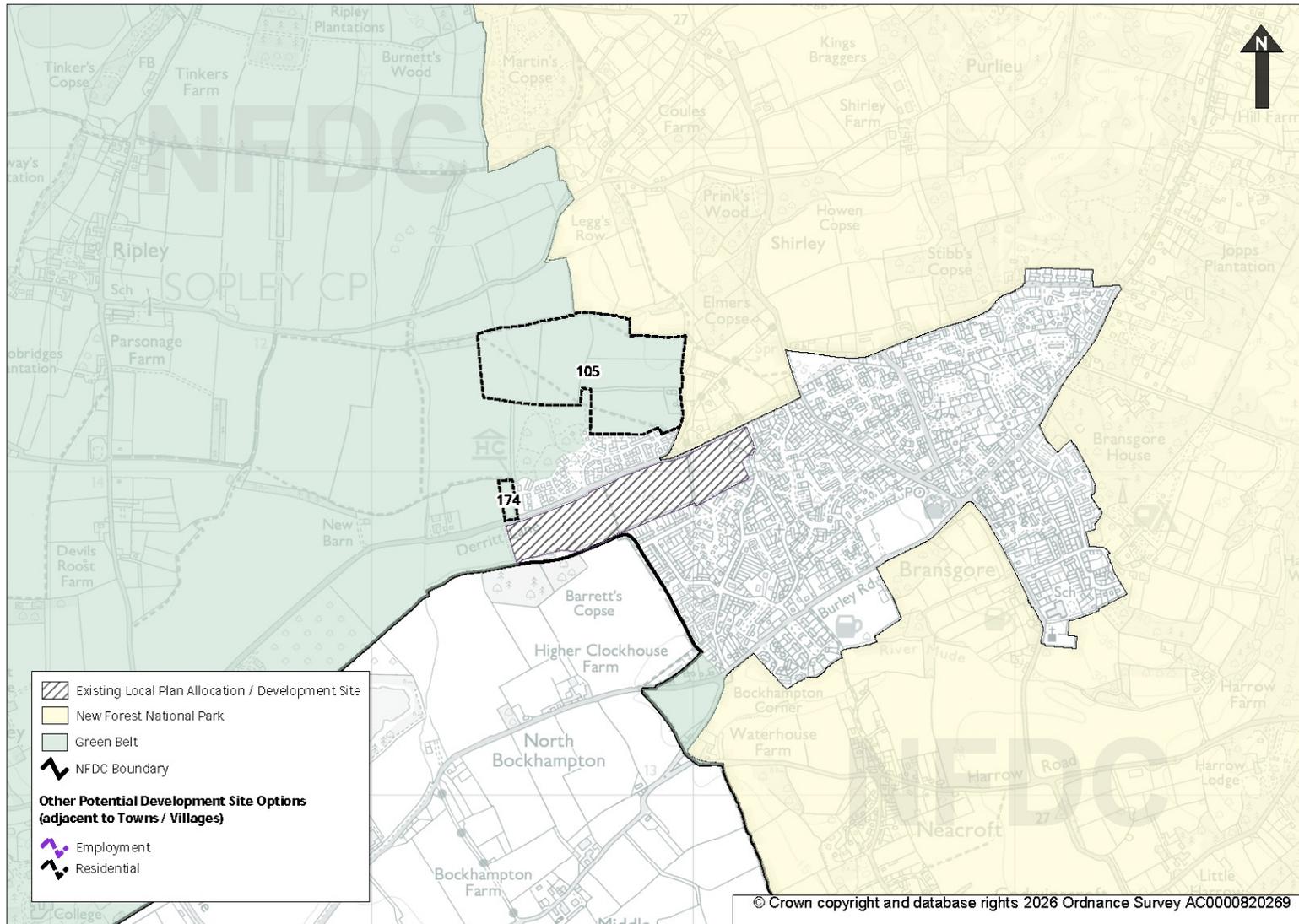


Figure 27 Other potential development site options adjacent to Bransgore

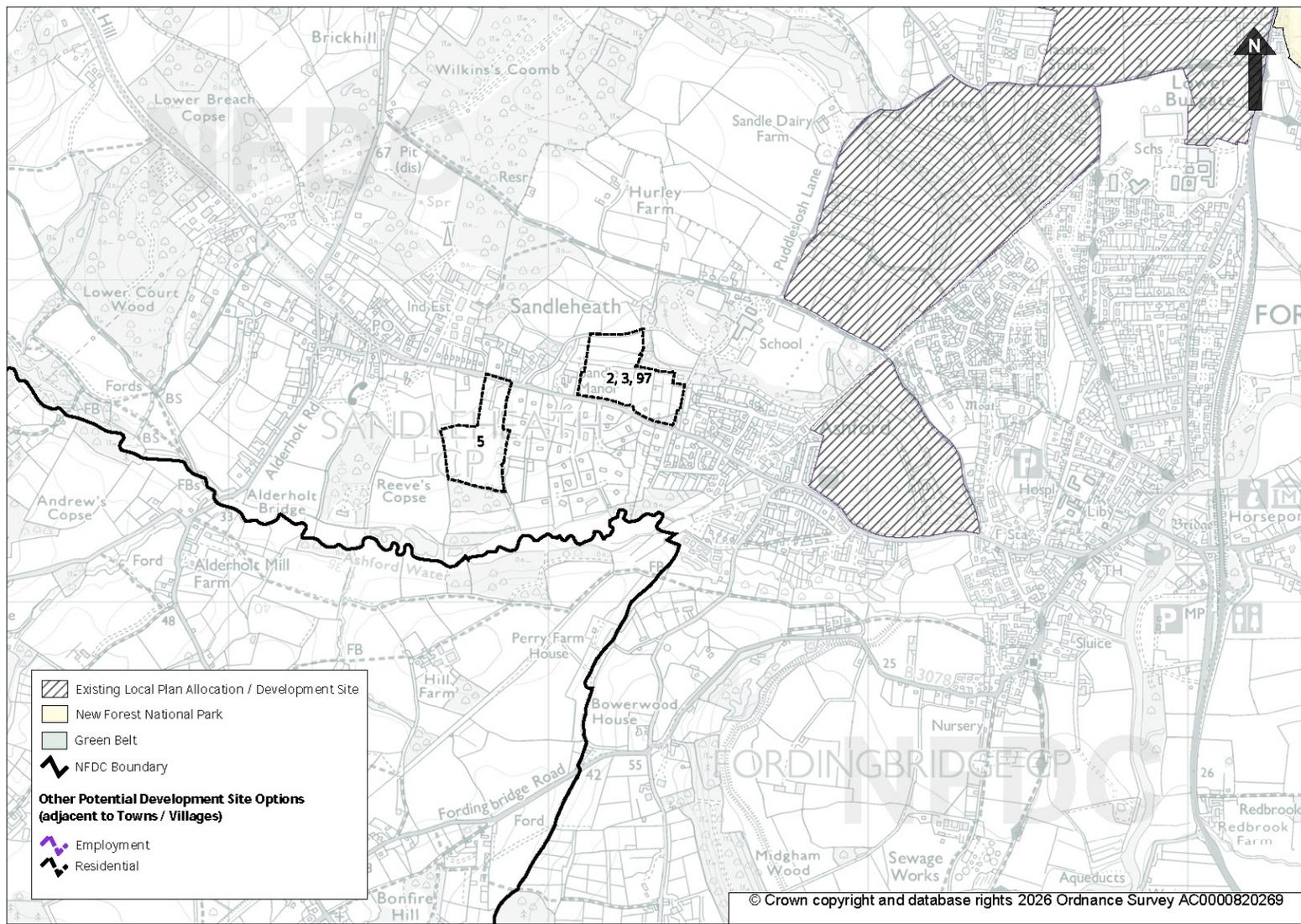


Figure 28 Other potential development site options adjacent to Sandleheath

Potential Cumulative Growth across the Plan Period

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

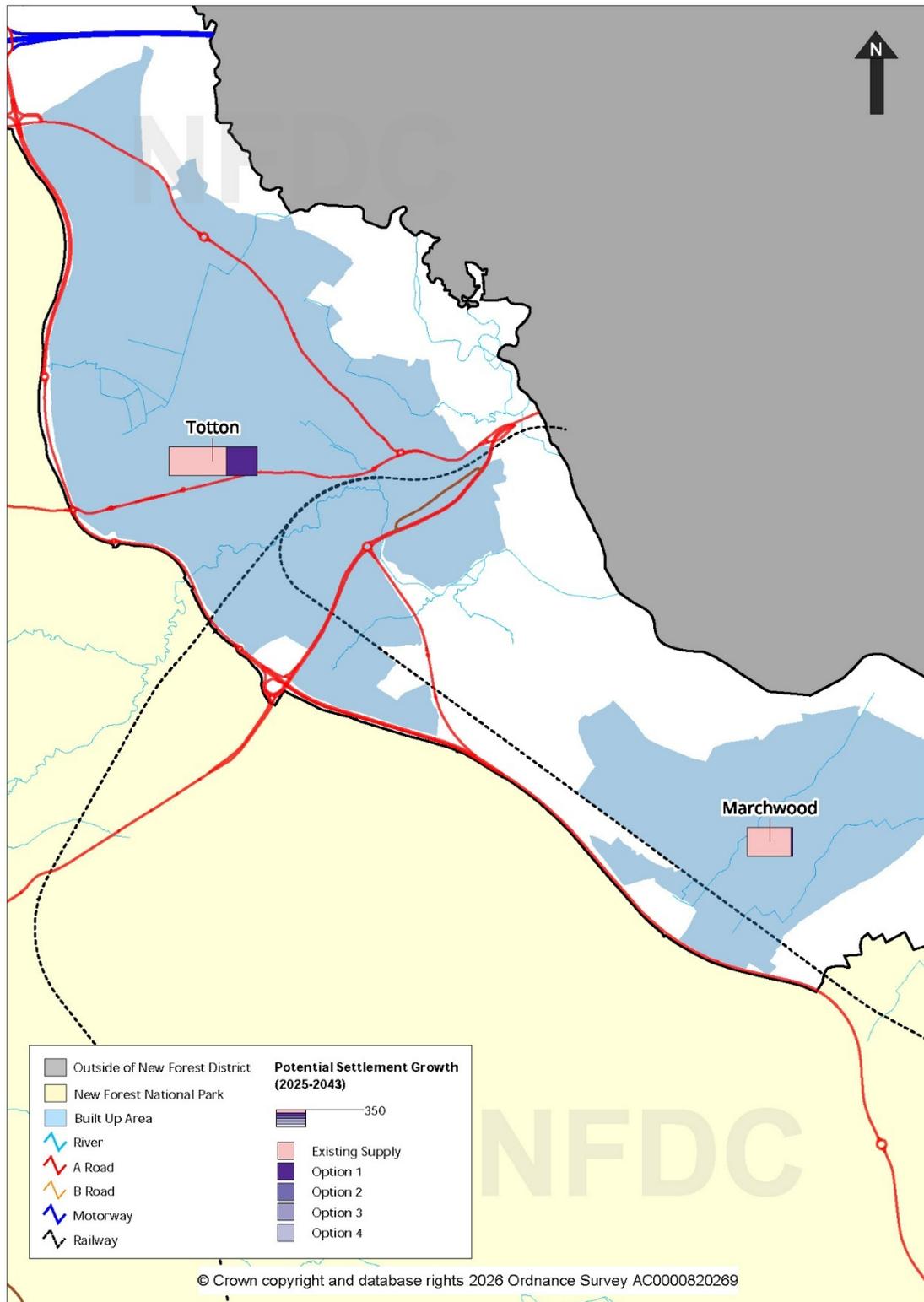


Figure 29 Potential Cumulative Growth in the Waterside Sub-Area (north), 2025-2043

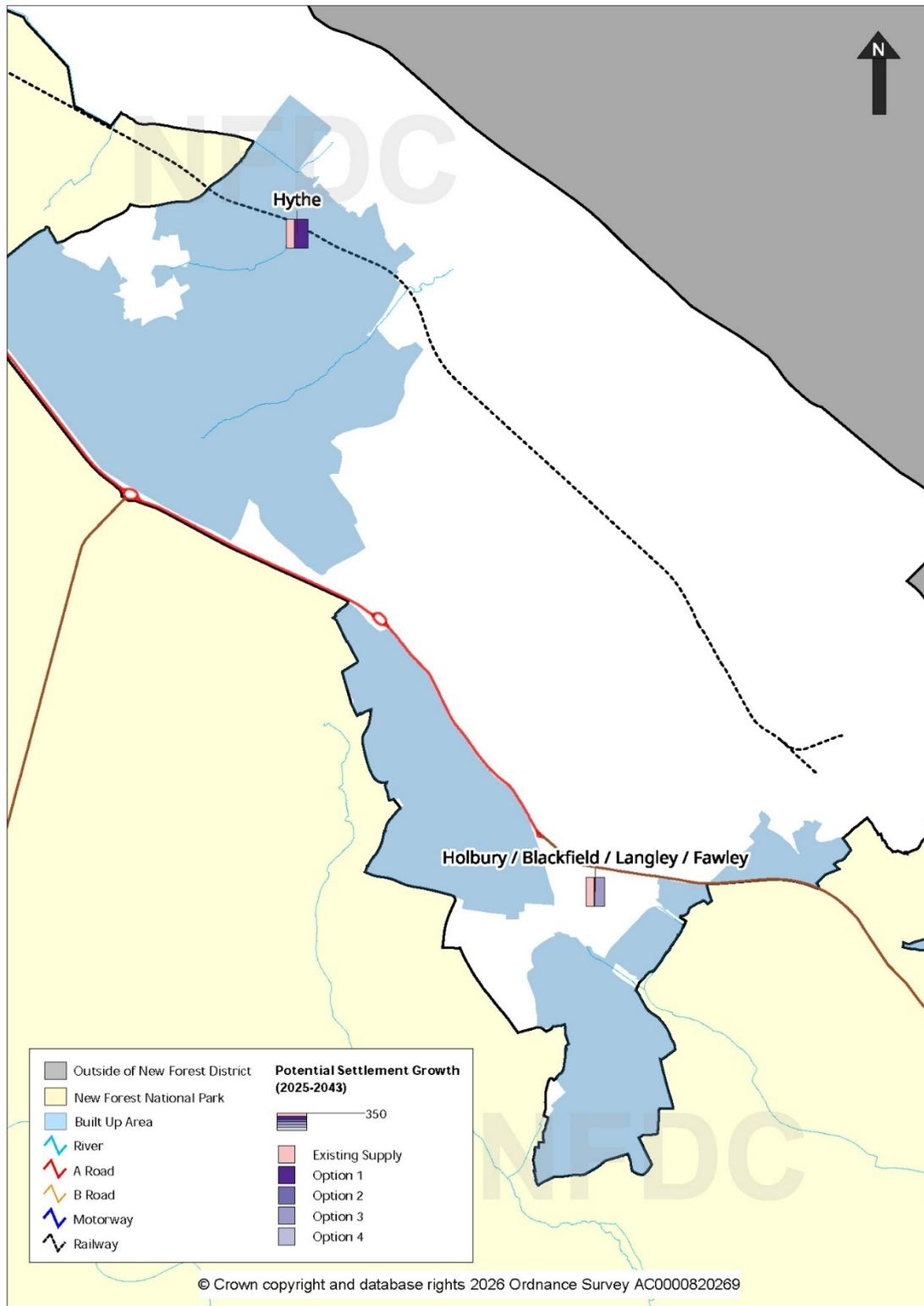


Figure 30 Potential Cumulative Growth in the Waterside Sub-Area (south), 2025-2043

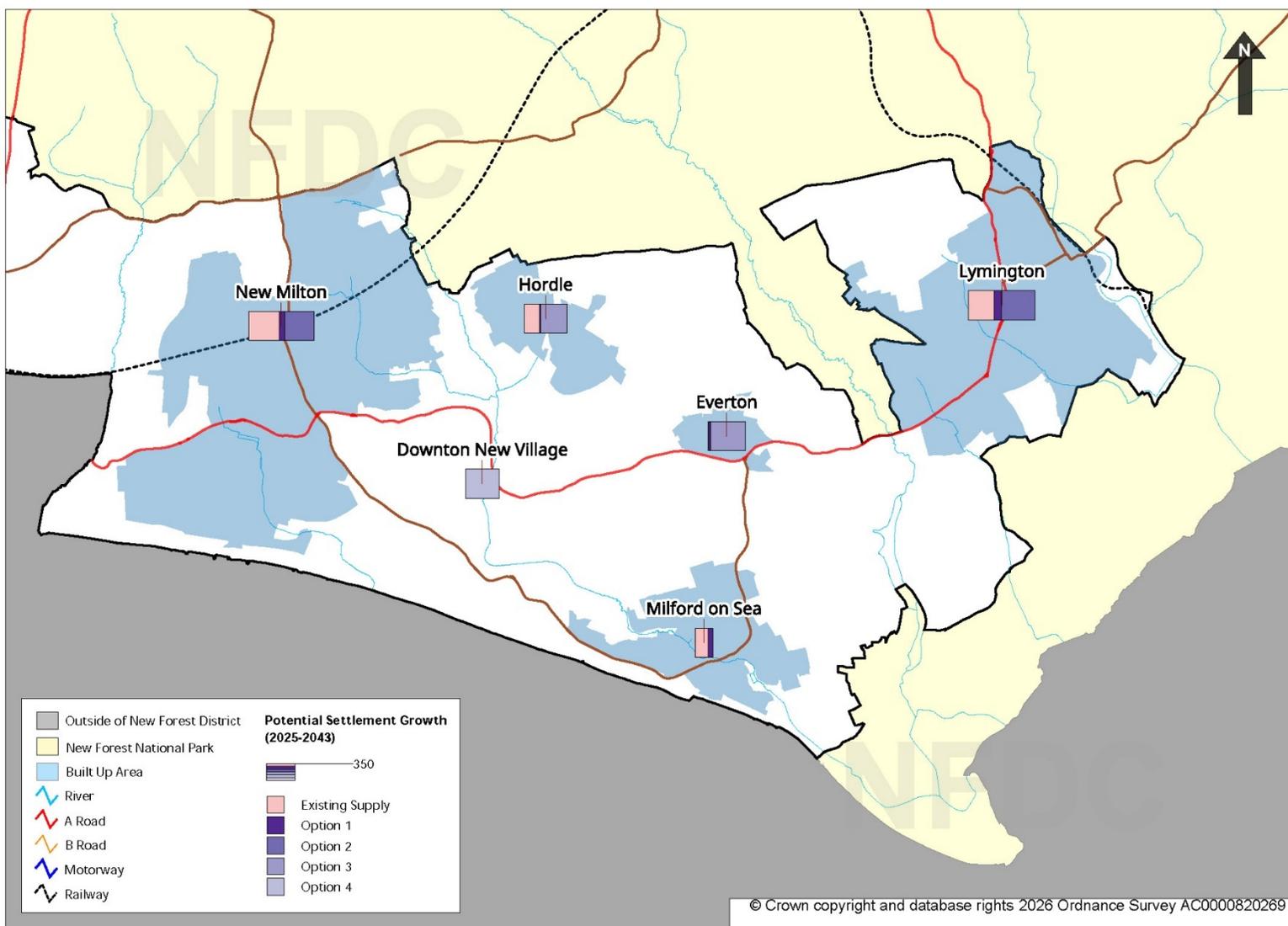


Figure 31 Potential Cumulative Growth in the South Coastal Towns Sub-Area, 2025-2043

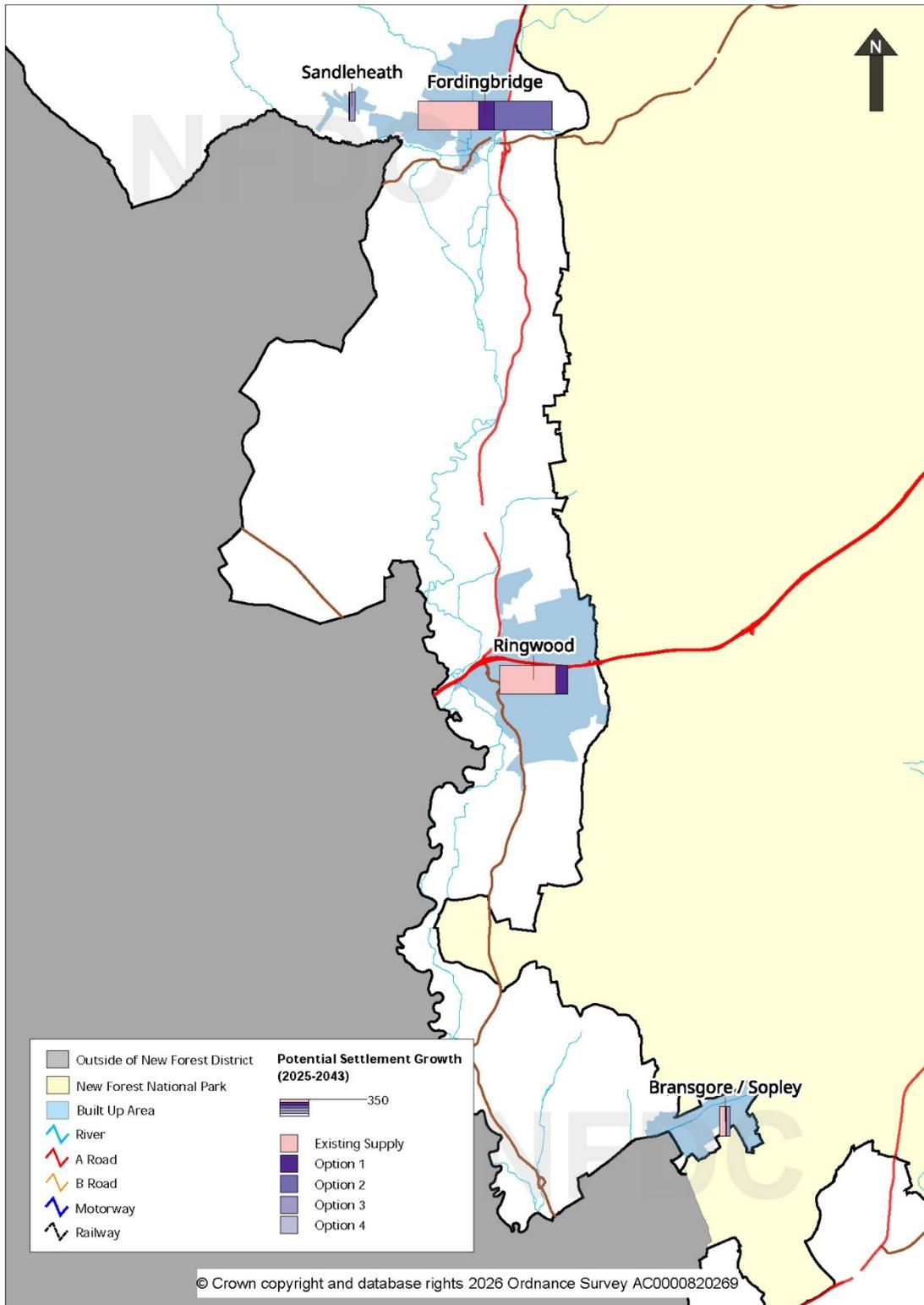


Figure 32 Potential Cumulative Growth in the Avon Valley & Downlands Sub-Area, 2025-2043

Further information / evidence base weblinks

183. Interim Sustainability Appraisal

184. Interim Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Consultation questions

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

Homes for all

Housing

Aim and Objectives

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

What you told us

Housing Mix

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

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

Affordable Housing

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

Second Home Ownership

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

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

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

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

New Forest Housing Needs Assessment (Iceni, 2025)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Second homes

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

Policy Direction

Housing Mix

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

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

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

Possible Strategic Policy Approach: Mixed and balanced communities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Affordable Housing

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

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

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

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

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

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

Specialist Residential Accommodation

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

Possible Policy Approach to Specialist Residential Accommodation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities

Aims and objectives

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

Policy Direction

Gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople

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

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

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

Possible Policy Approach: Gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople

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

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

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

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

Further information / evidence base weblinks

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

Consultation questions

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

Protecting the Natural Environment

New Forest (international sites)

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

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

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

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

Solent and Southampton Water (international sites)

Aim and Objectives

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

What you told us

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

Biodiversity, Local Nature Recovery & Ecological Enhancement

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

Green & Blue Infrastructure

Aim and Objectives

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

Backup Grazing

Aims and Objectives

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

Further information / evidence base weblinks

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

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

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

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

294. **Ecological Enhancement Schedule**

295. **Biodiversity Net Gain**

Consultation questions

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

The Green Belt

Green Belt across the South Coastal Towns and Avon Valley area

Aim and Objectives

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

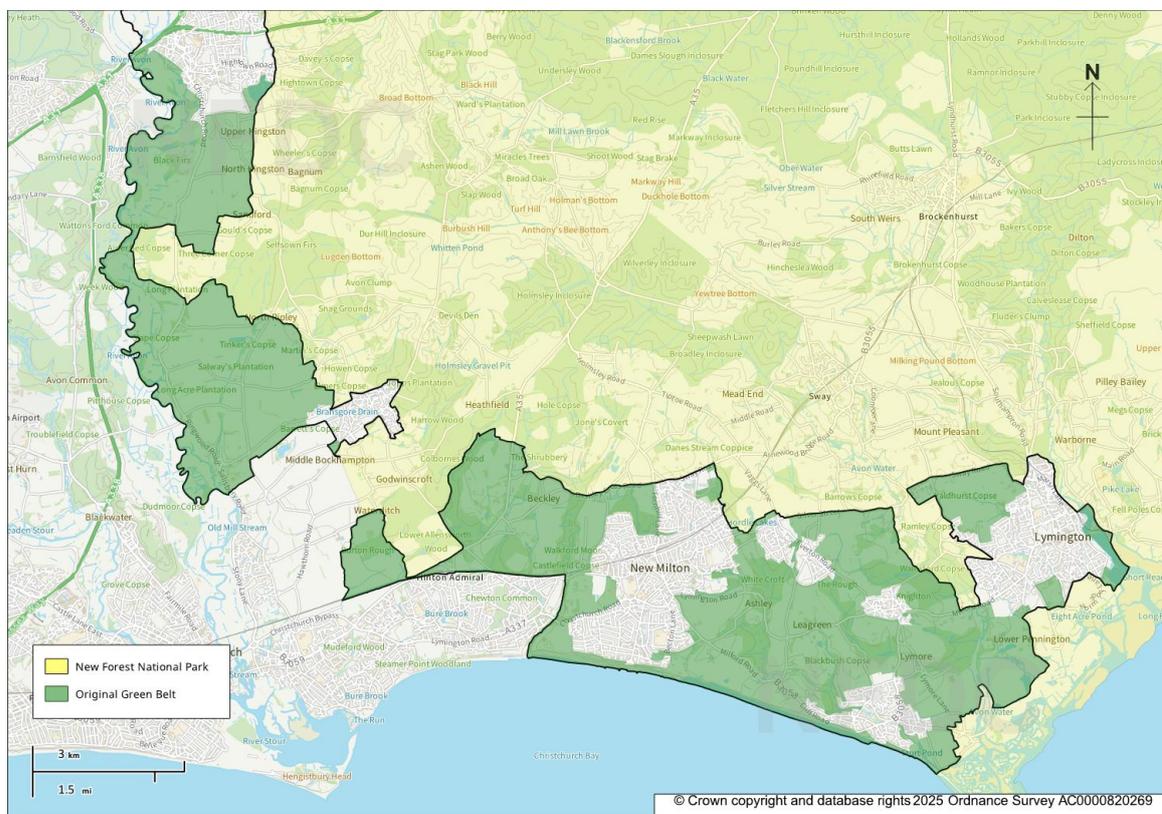


Figure 33 Current extent of green belt

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

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

Grey Belt considerations

Aim and Objectives

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

Alternatives considered and Reasons for Discounting

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

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

Further information / evidence base weblinks

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

Consultation questions

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

High Quality Design, Landscape and Placemaking

Placemaking and Landscape

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

High-Quality Design

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

Proposed Policy: Design quality and local distinctiveness

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

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

New development will be required to:

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

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

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

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

Relationship to Design Code

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

Living Space

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

Policy direction

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

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

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

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

Consultation questions

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

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

Climate Change and Environmental Risks

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy Direction

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

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

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

Flood Risk

Aim and Objectives

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy Direction

Alignment with National Planning Policy

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

Drainage and Surface Water Management

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

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

Flood Risk Management and Mitigation

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

Coastal Change

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy Direction

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

391. The proposed policy approach is:

Proposed Policy: Coastal Change Management Areas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Environmental Risks

Aim and Objectives

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

Policy Direction

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

Proposed Policy: Safe and healthy communities

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

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

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

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

Health and Wellbeing

Aim and Objectives

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

What you told us

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

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

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

Policy Direction

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

Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency

Aim and Objectives

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

419. Paragraphs 165 and 166 of the NPPF outline the requirement of local development plans to consider renewable energy generation, stating that Local Plans should provide a positive strategy for the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy sources, thereby maximising the potential for sustainable development. This includes identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources and any supporting infrastructure. It also requires Local Plans to identify opportunities for developments to draw their energy from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply.
420. Further, Paragraph 167 of the NPPF requires plans to give 'significant weight' to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings. The NPPF additionally requires that local planning authorities recognise the value of small-scale community led projects and the repowering and life-extension of existing sites.

Policy Direction

Renewable Energy

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

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

Energy Efficiency

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

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

Human Air Quality

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

Policy Direction

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

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

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

Contaminated Land

Aim and Objectives

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

Policy Direction

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

Proposed Policy: Contaminated Land

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

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

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

- identify and assess any unacceptable risks

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Further information / evidence base weblinks

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

Consultation questions

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

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

Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity

Economy and Employment Land

Aim and Objectives

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

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

What you told us

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

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

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

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

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

Economic Characteristics of the District

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

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

Economic Needs Assessment (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2025)

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

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

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

Existing employment land supply

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

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

Table 6 Existing potential employment floorspace supply 2025-2043

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

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

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

Policy Direction

Sustainable economic growth

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

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

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

Possible Strategic Policy Approach to Sustainable Economic Growth

A possible approach is to:

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

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

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

Meeting economic needs

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

Possible Strategic Approach to meeting economic needs

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

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

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

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

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

Retention of existing employment sites

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

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

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

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

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

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

Possible Policy Approach: Retention of Employment Sites

The proposed policy approach is to:

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

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

Local employment and skills plans

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

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

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

Rural economy

Aim and Objectives

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

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

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

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

Policy Direction

Rural Economy

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

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

487. A possible strategic policy approach to supporting the rural economy is set out below:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach: Supporting the Rural Economy

The aim of this proposed policy approach is to support the sustainable growth and diversification of the rural economy in a manner that is compatible with environmental and landscape objectives. The proposed approach recognises the importance of agriculture, commoning, rural employment, and local services to the character and resilience of the Plan Area's rural communities.

The approach proposes:

- to support the appropriate growth, diversification, and long-term viability of agricultural, horticultural and forestry enterprises that contribute to the rural economy
- to support infrastructure and facilities that support commoning and the provision of back-up grazing land
- to support appropriate proposals for improvement, intensification or redevelopment of rural employment sites which sustain or enhance rural employment opportunities
- to support the appropriate conversion or adaptation of existing rural buildings for employment, commercial or community uses provided that the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial rebuilding
- to support new environmentally appropriate small-scale development for employment, commercial or community uses where the proposal contributes positively to the local economy or provides for the needs of the local community
- to support appropriate development proposals that support the local delivery of services essential to the rural workforce and communities, including:
 - a. the retention of local shops, public houses, and community facilities, and supporting proposals that can enhance them. For development proposals that would result in the loss of such uses, it is proposed that a minimum of 12 months marketing should be required which demonstrates the existing use is not commercially sustainable
 - b. infrastructure proposals that support digital connectivity, sustainable transport, and access to services

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

488. This proposed policy approach is considered to achieve the right balance between supporting sustaining the social and economic needs of rural communities and maintaining the environmental qualities of the countryside.

489. An alternative option to this policy approach would be to have no policy and rely solely on the NPPF. This is not considered a preferable approach as it would not provide a local strategy that would support and encourage sustainable rural economic growth in the context of this Plan Area. Moreover, it would also increase the possibility of inappropriate development being permitted in locations or in a form that are not appropriate or sustainable in the context of this Plan Area. A much more restrictive policy approach is not considered a realistic option as it would not be consistent with the NPPF.

Port and Marine Business

Aim and Objectives

490. To support the Solent port and marine industries sector whilst ensuring that development is managed effectively and that adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated. Another key aim is to seek to ensure that the opportunities from the Solent Freeport designation are made available to all New Forest residents.

What you told us

491. Most responses stated that they were not sure what the benefits of the Freeport are or expressed concern about environmental impacts. However, the principle of the Freeport designation has been established by the government and is not a matter that the council can influence.

492. Suggestions that were made regarding how the council could ensure that the opportunities from the Solent Freeport designation are made available to all New Forest residents included improving public transport to provide access to Freeport employment opportunities for residents across the District, and to ensure that training for residents is available and opportunities are advertised on the council's website.

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

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

494. The international deep-sea gateway Port of Southampton is of national and international economic importance and plays a central role in the economy of southern Hampshire. The main landside operational area is located within the City of Southampton, but the port operator – Associated British Ports (ABP) – owns a significant undeveloped landholding within New Forest District: Solent Gateway 2 (formerly known as the Marchwood Strategic Land Reserve). ABP have published their **emerging proposals** for this site and undertook a 4-week Non-Statutory Public Consultation in September to October 2025.

[NFDC Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment \(Prior + Partners, 2025\)](#)

495. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment considers the future potential demand for port-related uses on the Waterside. The report also assesses five sites and considers how appropriate (operationally) and viable it would be to accommodate the range of activities supported by the port. The sites assessed are:

- Eling Wharf;
- Solent Gateway – Marchwood Port;
- Solent Gateway 2 (Marchwood Strategic Land Reserve);
- Fawley Refinery Complex; and
- Fawley Waterside.

496. Port of Southampton is one of only three ports in the UK (alongside Port of Felixstowe and London Gateway) capable of handling ultra large container vessels. The report suggests that to guarantee effective competition for ultra large container vessels and other large vessels, these three ports should ensure that they have sufficient spare capacity. The report suggests that effective competition requires sufficient spare capacity to ensure real choices for port users. It also requires ports to operate at efficient levels, which is not the same as operating at full physical capacity.
497. Three scenarios of future demand forecasts for port volumes were developed to assess the parameters for growth of each commodity and cruise passengers at the Port of Southampton to 2043. The future growth scenarios have then been translated into land requirements over the Local Plan Review plan period to 2043. This results in a potential overall increase in land required at the Port of Southampton of between 151ha and 258ha, with the medium scenario being 198.5ha. Given the imperative to support future growth at the Port of Southampton, reflecting its national economic importance as one of only three ports capable of handling ultra large container vessels, the report recommends that the Council considers the medium scenario of 198.5ha of additional port land by 2043.
498. The report concludes that Solent Gateway 2 is the most suitable (operationally) and only viable location to accommodate the identified potential demand for port land. This is due to the site's ability to accommodate large vessels and ability to accommodate deep water berths. The strategic land reserve is 222.4ha in size and could accommodate the indicative potential future land requirement. Under the low and medium scenarios there is the potential to accommodate the existing port-related industries currently located within Eling Wharf, should this site come forward for an alternative use.

499. It is important to caveat that the indicative port need forecasts in the report are 'at a point in time' and that the report necessarily undertook a high-level approach, which provides the indicative scale of potential land demand associated to 2043, rather than a detailed model which would comprise specific and robust assumptions for each commodity type. The assessment is also unable to make adjustments for efficiency improvements within the Port of Southampton. There is potential for some efficiency improvements to be made to accommodate future demand and provide spare capacity. These factors may affect the scale and nature of any proposals for Solent Gateway 2.

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

501. Site-specific policies are also needed to guide future development for the following sites which are either wholly or partly designated in the Freeport:

- Solent Gateway – Marchwood Port
- Solent Gateway 2
- Fawley Refinery Complex
- Fawley Waterside

502. Up-to-date site-specific policies will also be required for the following other sites that are currently in use for port-related activities:

- Eling Wharf, Totton
- Marchwood Industrial Park
- Cracknore Hard Industrial Park, Marchwood

503. Given the importance of marine business to the local economy, a policy on marine related business and access to the water is also needed to ensure that local opportunities for economic development and recreation that are reliant on access to the water are facilitated and protected.

Policy Direction

The Solent Freeport

504. As highlighted, given the significance of the Freeport designation, a strategic policy on the Solent Freeport setting out the council's priorities is needed. Given the Solent Freeport designation (formally designated at a national level), it is considered that the appropriate role for the Local Plan review is to seek to ensure that development is managed effectively and that adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated. It is considered that there are no other realistic policy options available.

505. A potential strategic policy approach to this is set out below:

Possible Strategic Policy Approach: Solent Freeport

The policy approach will need to explicitly reference the Solent Freeport designated tax and customs sites, show the extent of these on a map and explain that site-specific policies will guide future development on these Freeport sites. The council's priorities will be to seek the best outcome for the District and in particular for directly affected communities. These priorities include:

- transport/wider infrastructure: Ensuring Freeport development proposals provide and are supported by the necessary transport and wider infrastructure.
- employment and skills: Ensuring Freeport development proposals provide opportunities/pathways to jobs and skills training, and resource to enable local communities to benefit from any future development arising in the Freeport sites.
- prosperous communities: Seeking to ensure that local communities within and adjacent to where growth may take place are supported and benefit from the Freeport
- environmental sustainability: Ensuring any Freeport development proposals avoid or mitigate their environmental impacts (including potential adverse effects on international/national/local nature conservation designations)

Site-specific policies

Solent Gateway – Marchwood Port

506. Marchwood Port previously served as the UK government’s largest military port. The site continues to be owned by the Ministry of Defence, but since 2017 Solent Gateway (now part of ABP) has the head lease to operate the site to 2051, including managing military movements through the port. As of 2025, the port conducts both military and commercial operations. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment (Prior + Partners, 2025) concludes that the site’s adjacency to ABP proposed Solent Gateway 2 will support the wider expansion of the Port of Southampton. The site’s connection to the rail freight network and berth access suggests the site is suitable to handle a variety of commodities. However, this site is considered part of the existing baseline of land uses, meaning it would not be able to accommodate significant future port demand and therefore would not be able to meet the need identified in the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment.

507. The current adopted Local Plan policy (Policy ECON3) safeguards the site for port and port-related uses. This policy seeks to enable the effective and efficient use of the site and port facility for commercial, economic and local employment generating purposes whilst ensuring that development is managed effectively and that adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated.

Policy ECON3 is considered to remain appropriate and to be consistent with national policies. The Local Plan review proposes to roll this policy forward with some updating to make explicit reference to the site’s status as a Freeport tax and customs site.

Solent Gateway 2

508. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment (Prior + Partners, 2025) concludes that Solent Gateway 2 is the most suitable (operationally) and only viable location to accommodate the identified demand for port land. This is due to the site’s ability to accommodate large vessels.

509. Solent Gateway 2 adjoins the New Forest National Park. The reclaimed land area is designated the Dibden Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Dibden Bay foreshore is part of the Hythe to Calshot SSSI, forming part of the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site.
510. Given that an application for port development at the proposed Solent Gateway 2 is likely to be of a scale that would qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the 2008 Planning Act and thereby require an application to be submitted for a Development Consent Order, it is not appropriate for the Local Plan review itself to allocate the site or to take a position on the merits or otherwise of proposed port development. These are matters for the NSIP process. ABP have published their **emerging proposals** for this site and undertook a 4-week Non-Statutory Public Consultation in September to October 2025.
511. In relation to potential nationally significant infrastructure projects, it is the appropriate role of the local planning authority to seek the best outcome for the District and in particular for directly affected communities, if significant port development is consented. As part of the examination of a NSIP the Council would submit a Local Impact Report to the examiner, giving details of the likely positive and negative impacts of the proposed development on the local area and its communities. To do this, it is important that there is a specific policy in the Local Plan.
512. The existing adopted Local Plan policy (Policy ECON4) sets out that if a Development Consent Order (DCO) is sought for port operations in the Strategic Land Reserve the Council will work to seek the best outcome for the District and directly affected communities. This will be achieved by preparing a Local Impact Report addressing the matters, as identified in Table 7, to set out the likely impact of the proposed development on the District and its communities, and for any negative impacts to identify how and to what extent they may be resolved, mitigated or compensated for.

513. Adopted **Policy ECON4** is considered to remain appropriate and to be consistent with national policies. It is essential that the policy continues to set out how development will be managed effectively and that adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated. The Local Plan review proposes to roll this policy approach forward. The policy will need to be reviewed and updated to reference that part of the site is a designated tax site in the Solent Freeport. It will also need to be reviewed to ensure that all the issues and constraints that a future port NSIP application will need to address are fully covered by the policy. The matters identified in Table 7 below will be the starting point for this.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the proposals are consistent with national and local policies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in terms of the likely direct, cumulative and in-combination effects of construction and operation of a port on International Nature Conservation sites: the Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar Site and SPA, on the Solent Maritime SAC, and on the New Forest SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The likely positive or negative effects of the construction and operation of a port facility on the following matters, taking into account proposed mitigation, compensatory measures or potential planning conditions. • the amenity of local residents and communities including noise and light pollution • the capacity and safe and efficient operation of the transport network including by road, rail, ferry, walking and cycling • landscape character including significant views and the statutory duty to the further the purposes of the New Forest National Park • air quality in the District and wider area, with particular regard to Air Quality Management Areas/Clean Air Zone, human health, and in-combination effects on international nature conservation sites • marine water quality, the marine environment and effects on the foreshore including from ship wash • the local environment, wildlife, ecology and habitats • the local economy and employment including impacts on local businesses (including tourism) and local employment opportunities • the housing market and local housing supply, including the implications of demand for workforce accommodation in both construction and operational phases • infrastructure and utilities' capacity including community facilities and services

- flood risk and other climatic factors
- soil and freshwater bodies
- architectural and archaeological heritage
- green infrastructure, recreation and open space including public access to the coast.

Table 7 Matters to be addressed in a Local Impact Report on proposals for a nationally significant scale of port development in the Solent waterside

Fawley Refinery Complex

514. Fawley Complex, covering an area of 747 hectares, is home to the Fawley Oil Refinery. Owned by a subsidiary of ExxonMobil, it is the largest oil refinery in the UK, operating integrated facilities to produce a range of petrochemical related products. The site hosts logistical capacity to integrate with national and international supply chains and serves as a key employer in the locality. Selected areas of the Fawley Complex site are designated as part of the Solent Gateway tax site within the Solent Freeport. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment concludes that due to the location, nature of infrastructure, safety buffers, operational structures, and potential contamination constraints it is likely that this site would only be able to accommodate liquid bulk, hydrogen production or associated port-related activities. Any future uses would need to be activities that could safely be carried within close proximity to the existing refinery.

515. The complex is currently covered by Saved Policy FAW1 of the **adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** which states that within the Fawley Oil Refinery and petrochemicals complex, land may be developed for uses directly related to the petrochemical industry. Given the findings of the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment regarding future uses on this site, this policy is considered to be relevant, necessary, in accordance with national policies and does not need to be significantly amended. Some updating taking into consideration the recommendations in the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment will be considered, and factual changes to update policy references will be needed.

Fawley Waterside

516. Fawley Waterside is the site of a former oil-fired power station. The site is currently allocated in the adopted Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1 for residential-led mixed development, 10ha employment land and up to around 10,000 square metres of ancillary community, retail, leisure and service uses under Policy SS4. However, the outline planning application 19/10581 for 1,380 new homes and 95,300sqm of new commercial, civic and employment space (for which a resolution to grant subject to s.106 was given in July 2020) was withdrawn in July 2024 due to a lack of viability. The site is now a designated tax site within the Solent Freeport.
517. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment concludes that the physical constraints and channel depths mean that berth access for large vessels to the site is not viable for port activities. The location and transport infrastructure means there is limited potential for port-related industries.
518. The mixed-use development for which the site is currently allocated by Policy SS4 of the adopted Local Plan is also not considered achievable as the development would not be feasible or viable. For the same reasons, the 1,380 dwellings originally envisaged to be delivered at this site have already been removed from the council's housing land supply.
519. The promoter is currently proposing a scheme for renewable energy generation and marine focussed employment development on the site. Redevelopment of the site will follow the regularisation and management of 'meanwhile' storage and distribution uses. The council is currently working with the site promoter to ensure a feasible, viable and appropriate future for this brownfield site.
520. Policy SS4 will need to be replaced by a new policy in the Local Plan review to reflect the most likely (subject to appropriateness and viability) redevelopment use(s) of the site. The council will work with the landowner and other key stakeholders to prepare an appropriate updated Local Plan policy for this site.

Eling Wharf

521. This site is currently used for port-related industries and storage of shipping containers (transported via highways). The site is well utilised with limited potential for further expansion. The Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment concludes that Eling Wharf has the potential to continue to be used in its current function to support 'port-related industries', storage of shipping containers, or alternatively transition to residential, mixed-use or light industrial uses subject to contamination remediation. The physical constraints and channel depths mean that berth access to the site is not viable.
522. Saved Policy TOT11 of the current **adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** allocated the site for mixed-use development including employment, residential, commercial, community and leisure subject to the policy criteria. Should the site in the future no longer be required to accommodate the operational needs of the port-related industry, the site continues to have potential for comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment in the longer-term.
523. The site's location on the edge of Totton town centre means that this is an appropriate location for mixed use development and that there is also potential for residential development as part of a comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment, while significantly improving the local environment and the appearance of the area. However, there are significant issues that would need to be addressed before site could be redeveloped (notably, the contamination issues and addressing potential impacts of development on the adjacent international nature conservation designations).
524. Consideration of what will therefore be the most appropriate use(s) of the site will therefore be undertaken through this Local Plan review process taking into account the appropriateness, suitability and achievability of any development option proposals. The council will work with the landowner and other key stakeholders to update Saved Policy TOT11 and prepare an appropriate Local Plan policy approach to this site for both the short-term and the long-term.

Marchwood Industrial Park and Cracknore Hard Industrial Park

525. Marchwood Industrial Park is a well-established industrial site of 54.8ha. Parcels of the site may have potential for intensification or redevelopment. The site comprises businesses operating in waste management, energy generation, logistics, storage and distribution of automobiles. Cracknore Industrial Park is a 12.2ha site which accommodates businesses in haulage and logistics, storage and distribution of automobiles, equipment rental and shipyard activities. Although smaller in size than Marchwood Industrial Park, areas of the site have potential for intensification or redevelopment.

526. Saved policies MAR5 and MAR6 of the current **adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** encourage and set out the site-specific criteria for any new employment development, redevelopment or intensification of employment uses at Marchwood Industrial Park and Cracknore Hard Industrial Park. These policies are considered to be relevant, necessary, in accordance with national policies and do not need to be significantly amended. Some minor updating taking into consideration the recommendations in the Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment will be considered, and factual changes to update policy references are needed.

Marine related business and access to the water (Non-strategic Policy Matter)

527. A policy on marine related business and access to the water is helpful to ensure that local opportunities for economic development and recreation that are reliant on access to the water are facilitated and protected.

528. Saved policies DM11 and DM12 of the **adopted Local Plan Part 2 (2014)** currently set out the approach for this:

- Saved Policy DM11 identifies existing sites that provide wharves or other boat launching facilities, which make them particularly suitable for marine-related businesses and states that new development should be designed to ensure the retention of wharves, boat launching facilities and vehicular access thereto
- Saved Policy DM12 sets out that development proposals should be designed to enable the continued use of slipways, including public hards, to access inland and coastal waters

529. The existing policies for marine related business and access to the water are considered to be appropriate to facilitate the benefits of an important local resource and are in line with national policy. It is therefore proposed to broadly roll forward the approach set out in saved policies DM11 and DM12 into the Local Plan review. However, the sites listed (a-i) in Saved Policy DM11 will be reviewed to ensure they are still appropriate for inclusion in the policy and to review whether there are other/additional sites that should be included within the updated policy for the Local Plan review.

530. Marine businesses and opportunities for recreation provide key economic and health and wellbeing benefits for residents. The wharves, boat launching facilities and slipways are essential for marine business and recreation and an integral part of the historic character and landscape of the plan area.

Approach to town and local centres

Aim and Objectives

531. The Local Plan has an important role to play in helping to stimulate and enhance the vitality of town and village centres which, in addition to their economic benefits, can form a key part of creating vibrant places where people wish to live and spend their time. It will need to ensure that policies support the provision of an appropriate mixture of town centre uses to best serve the local community and create flourishing places.

What you told us

532. Respondents to the Issues and Scope Consultation were eager to see the council take an active approach to town and local centres to reduce vacancies and make them attractive places to be.

533. Suggestions included reducing business rates, pedestrianising areas, providing free parking and better transport, improving communal areas, encouraging activity, and improving seating and access to green areas. There was also a strong sense that local businesses with a New Forest brand should be encouraged.

534. Respondents also supported converting vacant units to residential ones, where appropriate.

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

535. The NPPF 2024, paragraph 90 requires planning policies to support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities by defining a network and hierarchy of town centres; promoting their vitality and viability; defining the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas; making clear what uses are permitted; allocating a range of suitable town centre sites; and encouraging residential development on appropriate town centre sites. The NPPF also requires a **sequential approach** to be taken towards proposals for town centre uses in out-of-centre locations.
536. As of 2024, the average vacancy rate for the New Forest District Town Centres is 7.1% (calculated from monitoring surveys of the defined shopping frontages in town centres undertaken by the council in autumn 2024) which is substantially lower than **published figures** for national vacancies across England which indicate an average vacancy rate of 13.9% for 2023. The average vacancy rate for New Forest District Village and Local Shopping Frontages was 4.2% in 2024, which is consistent with vacancy rates since 2021.
537. We anticipate commissioning a Retail Needs Assessment to better understand the Plan Area's retail and other town centre uses need and inform future policy options. Additionally, we will be reviewing current Town Centre and Shopping Frontage boundaries to ensure they are up-to-date and consistent with national policy.

Policy Direction

538. It is proposed that the Local Plan will set the approach to town and village centres with an aim to maintain, revitalise, and regenerate where appropriate. Policy will support the sustainability and flexibility of town and village centre locations to help preserve their vitality and viability.
539. The policy will define shopping frontage boundaries as well as the boundaries of town and village centres. Appropriate locations for various uses will be considered, with town centre uses being subject to the sequential test when assessing appropriate site locations.

540. Proposed development should be of an appropriate design, scale and appearance for its proposed location and should not have an adverse effect on the character, viability, or vitality of relevant town and village centres.

541. An alternative option to this policy approach would be to have no policy and rely solely on the NPPF. This is not considered a preferable approach as it would not provide a local strategy that would support and encourage the revitalisation of the town and village centres of this Plan Area.

Approach to tourism

Aim and Objectives

542. Tourism is an important part of the District's local economy. The National Park, whilst out of our Plan Area, is a major tourist attraction for day visitors and those who stay overnight in the many hotels and campsites. Businesses and residents from outside the National Park benefit from the economic and employment opportunities generated within it. Additionally, parts of the Plan Area including the historic towns and villages, coast, and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape generate substantial tourist activity.

543. The Local Plan aims to support tourism in the Plan Area by supporting the appropriate provision of tourist accommodation, and other tourist and visitor facilities. However, it will also take account of the potential negative impacts of tourist activities upon local communities as well as the most sensitive areas of the National Park and other protected areas.

What you told us

544. The majority of respondents to the Issues and Scope Consultation appeared to believe that the level of tourist provision was adequate, though elements of it could be enhanced, with a handful of respondents specifically noting that more could be made of the history of the area. There was a theme throughout of a desire to protect the New Forest as well as prevent second homes and Airbnb's from dominating communities.

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

545. Compared to the regional average, there is a significantly higher proportion of workers in the 'Accommodation and Food Services' and 'Arts, Entertainment and Recreation' industries, which is likely attributable to the popularity of the District for tourism.
546. Employment within the 'Accommodation and Food Services' industry reflects the importance of tourism within the District. The New Forest National Park, whilst outside of the Plan Area, is a major tourist destination. The New Forest has a vibrant visitor economy, which **data** shows is worth in excess of £491 million per year and supports approximately 9,000 local jobs. Over 15 million visitor days are spent in the Park **each year**. The coast and historic towns of the Plan Area are also attractive to tourists, as is the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL), although the CCNL is less well-known and accessible.

Policy Direction

547. The Local Plan will likely set the approach to tourism and associated development in the Plan Area. The benefits of proposed development will be weighed against the potential negative impacts upon local character, amenity, housing balance, and the protection and conservation of the National Park and other sensitive areas.
548. The proposed policy approach will build upon existing saved policies CS19 and DM13, seeking to provide a criteria-based approach to determining where new tourism development is appropriate. Considerations will include:

Possible Policy Approach: Tourism

The proposed approach is to support the local tourism industry by:

- (a) encouraging tourism and provision for visitors which is appropriate to the Plan Area's settlements and countryside and consistent with environmental objectives;

- (b) retaining and enhancing existing serviced (e.g., hotels) and non-serviced (e.g., campsites and caravan parks) accommodation. For development proposals that would result in the loss of such uses, it is proposed that a minimum of 12 months marketing should be required which demonstrates the existing use is not commercially sustainable;
- (c) maintaining and enhancing existing tourist and visitor facilities;
- (d) supporting new tourist provision and initiatives in towns and villages, and also appropriate small-scale tourist provision in the countryside where it is appropriate to the site, location and setting and supports the local economy;
- (e) supporting measures that help manage visitor pressure on the most sensitive areas of the New Forest National Park, including initiatives that redirect activity to less vulnerable locations, enhance visitor education, and protect habitats and landscapes;
- (f) enhancing the visitor appeal of coastal environments and the coastal settlements of Barton, Milford, Lymington, Hythe and Eling. Improve the quality of recreational opportunities and managed access to the coast where this would be consistent with the protection of nature conservation interests;
- (g) supporting car-free tourism initiatives that benefit tourists and local communities.

Further information/ evidence base weblinks

- 549. Economic Needs Assessment (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2025)
- 550. Existing Employment Sites Quality Assessment (NFDC, 2025)
- 551. Port and Marine Business Needs Assessment (Prior + Partners, 2025)

Consultation questions

- 43) How should the Local Plan seek to meet the identified need for business land/floorspace? Are there any business sectors we should focus on?

- 44) Do you agree with our proposed approach to retaining existing employment sites? Do you think there are circumstances where we should allow redevelopment or alternative uses to be considered?
- 45) How should we encourage the use of local employment in new developments? Are there any measures that would be most effective in supporting local employment and skills?
- 46) How should the Local Plan support the rural economy, including agriculture, commoning, and rural enterprise? Are there specific measures or types of rural development you would like to see encouraged or restricted?
- 47) What are your views on the proposed approach to supporting port and marine industries, including the Solent Freeport and Solent Gateway 2? Are there particular issues or opportunities you think should be addressed?
- 48) How do you think the Local Plan best support the vitality and viability of town and village centres? Are there particular uses, improvements, or initiatives you would like to see prioritised?
- 49) Do you agree with the proposed approach to supporting tourism and visitor facilities?

Planning for and Delivering Infrastructure

Aim and Objectives

552. Infrastructure can be categorised into 3 broad types:

- physical (necessary to connect homes and workplaces to the wider environment such as transport, waste and utilities to meet the day- to-day needs)
- green (to maximise ecosystem services that support wild and human life, including blue infrastructure)
- social (to ensure that the communities can function effectively and covers a wide range of assets such as affordable housing, education, healthcare, sports facilities, and libraries).

553. The key aim and objectives of the new Local Plan will be to secure appropriate provision of, or contribution towards, the social and physical infrastructure necessary to manage the impact of new development on existing services and communities. The new Local Plan will seek to protect existing community facilities and services and to ensure that new facilities are located where they are accessible. It will also ensure that development is permitted only where either there is sufficient capacity in the existing local infrastructure to meet the demands arising from that development, or any necessary new or improved facilities will be provided at the time they are needed. The Local Plan will also ensure that **green infrastructure** is appropriately provided or enhanced, with further detail set out in the Green Infrastructure section.

What you told us

554. A large number of respondents expressed concerns over infrastructure capacity for existing settlements which would be stretched even further by future development. There was an overwhelming sentiment among respondents for more GPs and NHS local services including dentists. Concerns regarding there being sufficient school places to support new development were raised. There were also concerns raised over wastewater treatment and drainage, particularly in relation to flooding and water quality. Additionally, a minority of respondents expressed concerns relating to electricity provision.

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

555. The NPPF identifies that all plans should align growth and infrastructure, and strategic policies should make sufficient provision for infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure). The NPPF also requires that plans should set out the contributions expected from development, including for infrastructure, although such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.

556. Most infrastructure is provided by **organisations** other than the council. It can be provided by private companies (for example, electricity or sewage) or the public sector (for example, health, transport, and education). The council's responsibility is to ensure that new development is located and designed to minimise its demand on existing infrastructure and to work with those other organisations to ensure that any additional impacts arising because of development can be effectively mitigated through delivery of new or expanded, high quality infrastructure.

557. There are currently three main mechanisms used to secure infrastructure funding and provision from development:

- **Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Planning Act:** Planning obligations are used to secure the delivery of measures necessary to make a development acceptable. Planning obligations secured through **s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990** (as amended) are entered into as legal agreements between local planning authorities, landowners, developers and any others with an interest in the land. In certain circumstances an applicant/developer may submit a **unilateral undertaking** in respect of a planning obligation.
- **the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge placed on development, such as new homes and extensions to homes, according to their floor area.
- **Section 278 of the Highways Act:** Where development requires work to be carried out on the existing adopted highway, an Agreement will need to be completed between the developer and either the Secretary of State for Transport (for the strategic road network for which Highways England is responsible), or Hampshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority (for the local road network), under **s278 of the Highways Act 1980**.

558. Section 106 Agreements and Section 278 Agreements are used to address the site-specific impacts of a development whereas CIL contributes towards the costs of infrastructure connected with the wider growth of the Plan Area. All eligible development must contribute to any site-specific requirements secured through s106 Agreements and additionally pay CIL. CIL is therefore an appropriate delivery mechanism for infrastructure to support the sustainable development and growth of an area, rather than to make individual planning applications acceptable in planning terms.

559. Planning conditions may also be used to secure non-financial mitigation, to define timing or apply standards. They cannot be used to secure financial contributions but can be used to ensure that certain elements related to the development are provided and therefore enable development proposals to proceed where it would otherwise have been necessary to refuse planning permission. **Paragraph 57 of the NPPF** makes clear that Planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.
560. It is important to understand the limitations of the planning system in relation to infrastructure provision. National policy is that planning obligations, such as to require developer contributions (either through direct provision by way of financial contribution) for infrastructure, should only be placed on developers where they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, and they must also be directly related to the development, and be fair and reasonable in scale and kind. For a development impact to be 'acceptable in planning terms' does not mean that the current situation must be improved upon or made no worse, and it is not the role of the local planning authority, potentially via developer contributions/obligations, to make up historic deficiencies – these are the responsibility of the infrastructure provider and beyond the scope of the planning system.
561. We are preparing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which will identify the infrastructure that is needed to deliver the Local Plan strategy, when it is needed, and how much it would cost. It will also set out infrastructure requirements of any new allocations proposed in the Local Plan review.
562. An early emerging draft IDP has been published as part of the supporting evidence base for this consultation which sets out the position with regard to known infrastructure issues based on information available from infrastructure providers to date. The emerging draft IDP has been developed following engagement with infrastructure providers, prior to and during the Issues and Scope Consultation in spring 2025.

563. The emerging draft IDP summarises that in relation to existing infrastructure capacity, based on information available from infrastructure providers to date, there are no current absolute infrastructure barriers to development overall but that there will be infrastructure requirements associated with proposed new development in the Plan Area in order to ensure future infrastructure capacity can accommodate proposed growth. These requirements could affect the timing of when new development can be delivered, particularly on larger sites. At this stage, given that the scale and locations of development are yet to be selected, it is not possible to establish the extent and type of infrastructure that will be required and when it will be required.

564. As the detail of the amount and location of development to be proposed in the Local Plan review progresses the full IDP will be prepared, working constructively with infrastructure providers, to identify the infrastructure requirements and facilities development sites will need to provide or contribute towards providing, and how/when it should be provided.

565. The timing of infrastructure relative to the development is very important to the community, as people are concerned about pressure on existing communities. While desirable, it is not always practicable to deliver all the planned infrastructure upfront before development starts, but a phased approach is needed so that it becomes available in a timely manner as the development progresses. Further work will be required in terms of viability assessment to ensure that the level of infrastructure provision needed to support development, together with other planning policy requirements, does not undermine the deliverability of the Local Plan.

Policy Direction

Infrastructure, community services and facilities

566. The strategic policy approach is to ensure that all developments provide, or contribute proportionately to the provision of, any on-site and off-site infrastructure, facilities, affordable housing, public open space and habitat mitigation measures that are necessary and reasonably required to support the development and mitigate its impacts to achieve a sustainable development. The mechanism to secure developer contributions will depend on the type of infrastructure and the site circumstances for requirements currently identified to be needed.
567. For proposed site allocations that are owned or will be developed by more than one developer or brought forward in more than one planning application, the various developers/applicants will be required to collaborate on the provision of the infrastructure and facilities which are needed to serve them all. To do this it is proposed that equalisation agreements (or an effective alternative) will be required where the proportionate impacts and costs are fairly distributed across the separate land parcels in advance of making planning applications.
568. It is proposed that the strategic policy will support the development of new infrastructure, including community facilities, in appropriate locations where there is a local need for the infrastructure, and they are in close proximity and accessible to all sectors of the local community.
569. It is proposed that the strategic policy will seek to retain existing services by setting out a presumption against any development that involves the loss of education, health, social and other community services, unless the use of the site or building is redundant, or the service will be provided in another way following a service review.
570. An alternative option to this policy approach would be to have no policy and rely solely on the NPPF. This is not a justifiable option as this would not provide sufficient clarity regarding the requirement of developers to mitigate the impacts of their developments, what infrastructure was needed and when, and how it would be secured.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

571. Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Consultation questions

- 50) What are your views on the proposed approach to existing infrastructure and infrastructure provision?
- 51) What types of infrastructure (physical, green/blue, or social) do you think should be prioritised to support new development in the Plan Area?
- 52) What approaches would you support to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with growth?
- 53) How can we best involve local communities and service providers in planning for and delivering the infrastructure needed to support new development?

Sustainable Transport

Sustainable Transport and Movement

Aim and Objectives

572. The integration of land use and transport planning, including public transport, is essential to delivering communities that are sustainable, healthy, and inclusive. This strategic policy will set out how the transport impact of development should be managed, and how new development should be connected to the transport network.

What you told us

Transport and Connectivity

573. Consultation responses highlighted a clear and consistent need to improve transport infrastructure across the District, particularly in relation to public transport, active travel, and road capacity. Many respondents expressed concern over the reliability and frequency of public transport services, especially in smaller settlements and the Waterside area. The cessation of the Hythe Ferry and lack of rail services on the Waterside line were identified as significant barriers to connectivity and employment access. There was strong support for reinstating these services and for exploring flexible transport models such as dial-a-bus or community minibus schemes to serve more remote areas. Respondents also emphasised the importance of integrating different transport modes to create a joined-up network that supports sustainable travel choices.

Active Travel and Infrastructure Planning

574. The need for safe and accessible active travel routes was a recurring theme, with calls for improved cycleways, pedestrian crossings, and footpaths that cater to all users, including those with disabilities. Respondents advocated for embedding active travel infrastructure into new developments and ensuring connectivity to local services such as schools and shops. Concerns were raised about the adequacy of existing road networks, particularly the A326, and whether they can accommodate future growth. Infrastructure providers and statutory consultees echoed these concerns, stressing the importance of aligning development with transport capacity and ensuring that infrastructure is delivered in step with growth. The Local Plan will therefore explore policy options that prioritise sustainable transport, safeguard strategic transport corridors, and where practicable support modal shift away from private car use.

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

575. Sustainable transport is a key component of sustainable development. Both national and local planning policy promote the idea of sustainable development. Locating jobs and services close to new and existing residential development will help reduce the need to travel by private car and support active travel. The current Local Plan includes policies that support sustainable transport, and the review provides an opportunity to strengthen these in the light of new evidence and priorities.

576. Transport-related emissions are one of the largest contributors to climate change and also impact local air quality. The council is working with Hampshire County Council (as the local transport authority) and other partners to understand the capacity of the transport network and to develop a coordinated approach to transport planning, which will include the preparation of a comprehensive Transport Assessment reflecting the development proposed through the Local Plan review. This policy will also seek to complement schemes proposed by Transport for the South East and align with the Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).

577. A key element set out in the LTP4, is the development and application of a Movement and Place Framework to manage the transport network in accordance with its function in different location. This will encompass the principles of 'Healthy Streets' - a holistic framework, based around ten Healthy Streets Indicators, for creating environments that feel welcoming, comfortable, and safe for walking and cycling, regardless of confidence, age and ability.

578. In terms of specific projects and proposals that sit alongside the LTP4, Town access plans have been developed by HCC with district and borough councils and set out a shared vision for making the best use of roads and public spaces with the aim of improving access to services and facilities. Currently no adopted versions exist for our Plan Area.

579. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), as set out in the government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, are a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. Two LCWIPs cover our Plan Area – one for the Waterside area of New Forest District, and the second covering the remaining District that has been prepared jointly between Hampshire County Council (HCC), New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) and Forestry England.

Policy direction

580. Our proposed approach is to give local effect to national policy and retain elements of the existing approach that are in conformity with national guidance. It will be updated to reflect key transport schemes and priorities for the District, reflecting existing and emerging Town Access Plans and LCWIPs. The policy will aim to improve accessibility and widen transport choices by requiring, as far as possible, all new developments to be served by an attractive choice of transport modes, including public transport, cycle routes, bridleways, and footpaths. The policy will promote healthier lifestyles, the principles of healthy streets and behavioural change by encouraging development that reduces the need to travel. Future development will be focused on the most accessible and sustainable locations. Travel Statements or Plans will be required for major developments to demonstrate trip generation, impacts, and how sustainable travel will be maximised.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

581. No Policy: This is not considered a reasonable option as it would mean relying solely on national policy or the Local Transport Plan, which would not provide sufficient detail on the local context or address site-specific planning considerations.

Parking Standards

Aim and Objectives

582. This policy will set out the requirements for managing vehicle and cycle parking, including ensuring that the transition to electric vehicles is supported through the provision of charging infrastructure. New development will be expected to contribute to a greener, more sustainable district by facilitating movement by walking and cycling and reducing reliance on private car use.

What you told us

583. While the Issues and Scope consultation did not directly reference car parking standards, there were indirect references in relation to:

- **Town Centres:** Some respondents noted that a lack of free parking in town centres discourages residents from visiting and spending time there.
- **Sustainable Transport:** A strong emphasis was placed on reducing reliance on private cars and encouraging modal shift, which implies a need to review parking standards in the context of development and transport planning.

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

584. Managing parking provision is a key factor in influencing travel behaviour. While technological advances such as autonomous vehicles may transform transport in the long term, parking will continue to be a critical issue during the Local Plan period, particularly in relation to congestion and air quality concerns in parts of the District.

585. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows local authorities to set parking standards where there is clear and compelling justification.

Paragraph 107 of the NPPF requires that parking standards take into account:

- accessibility of the development
- type, mix and use of development
- availability of and opportunities for public transport
- local car ownership levels
- the need to ensure adequate provision of charging infrastructure for plug-in and ultra-low emission vehicles

586. Current parking standards used in the Plan Area are based on our adopted **Parking Standards SPD**. A design-led, site-by-site approach may offer greater flexibility and better reflect the diverse character and accessibility of locations across the Plan Area.

587. The council's climate change evidence identifies road transport as a major contributor to carbon emissions. A significant proportion of residents commute outside the Plan Area, and while locating development near public transport can help reduce emissions, more ambitious requirements for both on-street and off-street EV charging infrastructure will be needed to support the transition to cleaner vehicles.

588. Cycling and walking are zero-emission modes of travel and will play a key role in meeting net-zero targets. Provision of charging infrastructure for electric cycles may also encourage uptake for longer journeys.

Policy Direction

589. Parking standards will be updated to reflect national policy and local needs. The council will ensure standards are flexible and responsive to the mix of land uses, location, and accessibility. While active travel will be prioritised, vehicle transport will remain necessary, and electric vehicles will play a key role in reducing emissions.

590. The Local Plan policy will require:

- Taking in to account the existing Building Regulation requirements, ensure EV charging points for all new dwellings (minimum one per unit) and rapid charging points (50kW+) in suitable locations, particularly in non-residential developments
- public charging facilities in accessible locations to serve existing communities and visitors

- design-led parking provision that responds to site context and supports modal shift

591. Cycle share schemes will be supported where appropriate, particularly near centres and transport hubs. In partnership with the relevant Highways Authority, the council will seek to manage these schemes to avoid cluttering the public realm and ensure safety and accessibility.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

592. No Policy: Not considered reasonable, as national policy requires local consideration of parking standards.

593. No EV Charging Requirements: Not considered reasonable to rely solely on Building Regulations due to the need to support the transition to low-emission vehicles and meet climate targets.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

- [New Forest Waterside – Local cycling and walking infrastructure plan](#)
- [New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)
- [Healthy Streets](#)

Consultation questions

- 54) How should we improve public transport and connectivity across our Plan Area? Are there specific services, routes, or areas you feel should be prioritised?
- 55) How can the Local Plan best support safe and accessible walking and cycling routes? Are there particular locations or types of infrastructure you think should be prioritised?
- 56) What measures would help encourage a shift away from private car use towards other transport options including active travel and public transport? How can different forms of transport be better integrated?
- 57) Do you agree with our approach to updating parking standards and increasing provision for electric vehicle charging?

- 58) Are there particular standards or locations you think should be prioritised?
- 59) How can we ensure new development is well connected to sustainable transport options and doesn't significantly worsen existing traffic congestion and/or air quality?
- 60) How can we best involve local communities and stakeholders in planning for transport improvements and infrastructure delivery?
- 61) How should we manage schemes like bikes, e-bike and e-scooter hire schemes, so they encourage active travel but are kept in appropriate places and do not obstruct streets or public spaces?

Open Space, Recreation and Play

Informal Open Space

Aim and Objectives

594. The council aims to ensure that all communities benefit from high-quality, safe, and accessible informal open spaces. These spaces are intended to support health, wellbeing, biodiversity, and social interaction. The policy will seek to protect and enhance the network of informal open spaces, ensuring they are well-connected and integrated with both new and existing development. The overarching objective is to provide opportunities for informal recreation, relaxation, and contact with nature for people of all ages.

What you told us

595. The recent Issues and Scope consultation responses demonstrated strong support for accessible green and open spaces, which are seen as essential for health, wellbeing, and community life. Many respondents expressed a desire for informal open spaces to be accessible by active travel and public transport, and for such provision to be made within all new developments. Concerns were raised about the accessibility and connectivity of existing green spaces, with calls for better routes and safer access. Suggestions included the need for secure dog parks, dog-free areas, and spaces that are well-maintained and feel safe.

596. Delivering space that accommodates dog walking is a complex issue. Providing separate areas for every use risks over-provision, which can affect development viability or lead to imbalanced outcomes—such as more space for dogs than for children or other community needs. While secure ‘off-lead’ dog areas and dog-free zones can be delivered where appropriate, the Local Plan will advocate for flexible, landscape-led layouts that cater to a range of users. This includes designing spaces where well-behaved and properly controlled dog walking can coexist with high-quality, inclusive environments for all people—young or old, with or without pets.

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

597. A policy on informal open space is needed because national policy (NPPF) requires planning for a network of high-quality open spaces to support healthy communities. This is in addition to the need to provide Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace (ANRG), which is specifically required to address recreational impacts on the New Forest protected sites. Evidence shows that informal open spaces contribute to physical and mental health, social cohesion, and biodiversity. The district's unique landscape and proximity to sensitive habitats require careful planning to balance recreation with nature conservation. There are also gaps in provision and accessibility, particularly in some settlements and new developments.

Policy direction

598. The council is considering several policy options. One option is to retain and update existing policies to protect and enhance informal open spaces, ensuring there is no net loss unless spaces are replaced by equivalent or better provision.

599. Another option is to introduce minimum accessibility standards, for example, requiring all homes to be within a set walking distance of informal open space. The council could also require all major new developments to provide informal open space on-site in addition to the ANRG, with design guidance to ensure safety, inclusivity, and biodiversity. Finally, the policy could support the creation of new informal open spaces, green corridors, and connections between spaces, especially where deficiencies are identified.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

600. No Policy: Not considered reasonable, as together with it being a requirement of national policy, it will ensure a strategic approach can be taken across the plan area, particular with regard to minimum accessibility standards.

Children and Young People Play

Aim and Objectives

601. The council's objective is to provide a range of safe, accessible, and inclusive play spaces for children and young people across the district. The policy will ensure that play provision meets the needs of different age groups and abilities and is integrated into both new and existing communities. The intention is to promote healthy, active lifestyles and social development through high-quality play opportunities.

What you told us

602. Feedback from the Issues and Scope consultation showed strong support for more play areas and youth facilities, with calls for provision in all new developments and for a mix of small local play spaces and larger destination play areas.

603. Respondents raised concerns about the lack of spaces for teenagers and emphasised the need for play areas to be safe, well-maintained, and accessible. The importance of inclusive design was highlighted, with a focus on ensuring play spaces cater for all abilities and are located where they are needed most. It was also noted that parks and play areas should be equally welcoming and suitable for all members of the community, recognising that some people can feel excluded or unsafe in some spaces due to poor design, maintenance, or lighting.

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

604. A robust policy is needed because play is essential for children's physical, social, and emotional development. National policy requires robust evidence of need and provision for play and recreation. Evidence also shows gaps in play provision, particularly for older children and in some rural and urban fringe areas. Well-designed play spaces can help address health inequalities and support community cohesion.

Policy direction

605. Policy options under consideration include updating and strengthening our policy that requires play provision in all new residential developments over a certain size, by referencing proportion to the scale and location of the development.

606. The council may set minimum standards for accessibility, quality, and inclusivity of play spaces, with reference to national guidance. There is also the option to support the development of larger, destination play areas in strategic locations, alongside local play spaces. Finally, the council could encourage community involvement in the design and stewardship of play spaces.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

607. No Policy: Not considered reasonable, as together with it being a requirement of national policy as with wider open space requirements, it will ensure a strategic approach can be taken across the plan area, particular with regard to minimum accessibility standards.

Formal Playing Pitches and Indoor Facilities

Aim and Objectives

608. The council's objective is to ensure there is a sufficient quantity, quality, and accessibility of formal playing pitches to meet current and future needs for sport and physical activity. The policy will protect existing playing pitches from loss, unless they are replaced by equivalent or better provision, and will support the development of new and improved facilities, where appropriate in the landscape, taking into account the potential for their evolution and the impacts of such development including lighting, drainage and associated fencing and structures. This could include 4G pitches, to address identified existing shortfalls across the Plan Area for all development, having regard to context when lighting is require, and changing needs.

609. The council also aims to ensure that all residents have access to a range of high-quality, accessible indoor sports and leisure facilities. The policy will protect existing facilities and support new provision where evidence identifies a need. The intention is to promote healthy lifestyles, social inclusion, and community wellbeing through indoor recreation.

What you told us

610. Consultation responses highlighted the need for more sports pitches and courts, accessible to all ages and genders. There was support for new and improved facilities, including all-weather (4G) pitches to allow year-round use. Respondents also raised concerns about the adequacy and distribution of existing facilities, and the need for pitches to be accessible by active travel.

611. Consultation feedback also indicated concerns about the adequacy, affordability, and accessibility of indoor sports and leisure facilities, including swimming pools and leisure centres. There was support for new and improved facilities, particularly in areas of growth and where gaps in provision exist. Respondents also highlighted the importance of affordability and inclusivity.

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

612. A policy is needed because formal playing pitches, together with indoor sports facilities are important for health, wellbeing, and community life. National policy requires robust evidence to protect and plan for sports facilities. There is a need to address gaps in provision, quality, and accessibility, and to respond to changing patterns of participation, the district's changing demographics and future growth areas will require a strategic approach to provision.

613. The Playing Pitch Strategy prepared jointly for the council and the National Park Authority, and identifies current and future needs, shortfalls, and priorities for investment. The Strategy highlights the main issues to address are around capacity constraints, quality of facilities, and future demand across a range of sports. Artificial Grass Pitches have identified shortfalls. Football pitches face notable shortfalls, particularly youth 11v11 pitches, with overplay and exported demand indicating unmet local needs. Rugby Union also shows significant overplay and lacks secure tenure at key sites. While Tennis and Bowls generally meet current demand, some clubs are oversubscribed and anticipate future growth that may strain existing infrastructure. Netball and Pickleball have limited venue availability, with clubs reporting waiting lists and aspirations for expansion.
614. Strategically, the report highlights the need to secure tenure agreements, upgrade poor-quality pitches, and plan for future population growth and housing development. Outside of the Plan area, environmental constraints within the National Park and surrounding protected areas limit opportunities for new facilities, requiring innovative solutions and cross-authority collaboration. Addressing latent and unmet demand, improving ancillary provision, and aligning with national sport strategies are essential to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and accessible sports provision across the Plan Area.
615. A policy is needed to support year-round physical activity and wellbeing through indoor facilities, addressing strategic challenges such as ageing leisure centres, uneven access, and growing demand from population growth and demographic change, with targeted interventions needed in areas of deprivation and inactivity.
616. To address these issues, the Indoor Built Facilities Strategy (IBFS) recommends:
- protecting existing facilities, especially ageing swimming pools and school-based sports halls, through refurbishment and improved community access
 - providing new or expanded facilities in growth areas, including feasibility studies for consolidated leisure centres in Totton and South Coastal Towns

- enhancing facility quality and programming, particularly fitness studios and health & fitness offers, to appeal to broader demographics
- targeting sport-specific gaps, such as squash, gymnastics, indoor climbing, and athletics, through partnerships with national governing bodies and local clubs
- improving accessibility and inclusion, especially in deprived areas, and integrating leisure with health services to support active wellbeing
- exploring new opportunities, such as indoor BMX/skate parks and compact athletics tracks, to meet emerging demand and support talent development.

Policy direction

617. The council is considering several policy options. These include retaining and updating policy to protect existing well used pitches and require replacement if lost to development; requiring new developments to contribute to playing pitch provision, either on-site or through financial contributions; supporting the development of new and improved facilities, including artificial grass pitches, in locations identified by the Playing Pitch Strategy; and promoting community use agreements and shared use of school and other facilities.

618. Policy options also include retaining and updating policy to protect existing indoor facilities and require replacement if lost; requiring new developments to contribute to indoor facility provision, either on-site or through financial contributions; supporting investment in new and improved facilities in areas of identified need, informed by evidence; and promoting community access to school and other facilities, as well as supporting inclusive and affordable provision.

Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Discounting

619. No Policy: Not considered reasonable, as together with it being a requirement of national policy, it will ensure a strategic approach can be taken across the plan area designed to meet the specific needs.

Further information / evidence base weblinks

- 620. Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report (2025)
- 621. New Forest Indoor Built Facilities Study (2025)
- 622. **Fields in Trust Standards**
- 623. **Green Infrastructure Standards - Natural England**

Consultation questions

- 62) What features or improvements would make informal open spaces in your local area more attractive to you and more accessible for you?
- 63) How important is it to provide for a range of play spaces in all new developments?
- 64) Are there particular types of play spaces or open space facilities you feel are missing or needed in your area? (for example, in relation to all inclusive - disabled access, more spaces for girls, improved pathways, natural play areas?)
- 65) Are the existing facilities in play areas and/or open spaces adequate? (For example, in areas such as parks, open spaces and commons)
- 66) Are there any particular types of open spaces you feel are either missing, inappropriate or inadequate in your area? (For example, this may include parks, woodland, gardens or other forms of green or blue spaces such as streams, river or coastal access)
- 67) Do you support the protection and improvement of existing playing pitches, and the creation of new facilities where there is evidence of need?
- 68) How important is it to ensure access to high-quality, affordable indoor sports and leisure facilities for all residents?
- 69) How can we improve access to high-quality, affordable indoor sports and leisure facilities for all residents across the Plan Area?
- 70) Are there any gaps in indoor sports or leisure provision in your area that you would like to see addressed?

71) Do you have any other comments or suggestions about how the Local Plan should address open space, play, sports, and recreation needs in the Plan Area?

Historic Environment

Aim and Objectives

624. The Plan Area is home to an abundance of designated and non-designated heritage assets, all of which contribute towards creating the District's unique character, charm and significance, in addition to its distinctive landscape. As set out in Paragraph 221 of the NPPF:

Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring, and the opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place

625. The council aims to conserve, manage and where possible enhance listed buildings and other built heritage assets in a manner that is appropriate to their significance, such that they remain for generations to come. Further, we aim to ensure that valued local character and distinctiveness is maintained, and that new development is well-designed and is appropriate in scale, density, form and character to its context and landscape setting. This includes recognising and protecting the contribution of registered parks and gardens, historic landscapes, and traditional field patterns to the heritage and identity of the area.

What you told us

626. There was a strong theme throughout most responses that the historical environment should be protected, preserved, maintained, and enhanced. Many felt that heritage asset locations should be enhanced, and that development should be sympathetic.

627. The majority of respondents felt that sympathetic development close to heritage assets was appropriate, though others felt that no development affecting heritage assets was appropriate. Some respondents felt that heritage assets should only be preserved where they were of benefit to the community and funding was available.

628. In terms of securing the long-term use of heritage assets, the majority of respondents felt that heritage assets should be protected, preserved, and maintained. Some suggested greater advertisement and education with historical maps of the forest made available. Some respondents suggested heritage assets be made into 'destinations' with more facilities whilst others felt that heritage should not be overcommercialised. The majority of respondents felt that development should be sympathetic to heritage assets. Some respondents suggested that archaeological sites should not be allocated for development or that developers be responsible for the costs of archaeological surveys and display any notable finds. However, there were other respondents that felt that archaeological sites should not be prioritised for protection.

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

629. The NPPF outlines that heritage assets are “an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”. On this basis, it is important that policies be included in the Development Plan which seeks to protect and enhance our heritage assets, ensuring they continue to form an integral and valued part of the District’s unique character.

Policy direction

Strategic Policy on Heritage

630. Proposals affecting heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

631. The Local Plan will introduce a strategic policy on heritage that seeks to conserve and enhance the built, historic and natural environment within New Forest District, including local character, identity, cultural heritage, the variety of local landscapes and the special landscape character of the District. The policy will support such proposals and set out a presumption in favour of the retention and reuse of heritage assets to better conserve and enhance the historic environment.

632. The policy will consider non-designated heritage assets, and how to best preserve and enhance them in a manner appropriate to their significance. The policy will additionally set out how the council will work with partners, developers and the local community to ensure evidence-backed decision making on matters affecting heritage assets.

Development Management Policies on Heritage

633. The Local Plan may introduce development management policies to guide proposals affecting heritage assets, subject to the outcome of the Government's forthcoming consultation on a national suite of Development Management policies. These policies will be designed to complement national policy and provide locally specific guidance where appropriate.

634. Where proposals affect the significance of a heritage asset, applicants will be required to provide clear and proportionate evidence to justify any impacts. This includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, and locally valued rural and industrial heritage features. Policies may also address:

- Change of use and retrofit of heritage assets, ensuring proposals demonstrate a whole-building approach to climate resilience, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, and carbon reduction, while safeguarding heritage significance.
- Reuse of non-designated heritage assets in rural areas, where buildings are capable of conversion without significant structural alteration or replacement.

- Historic rural roads, paths and trackways, with development resisted where it would reduce their biodiversity, landscape, amenity value or historic character. Particular attention will be given to new access points and physical alterations, and to the impacts of additional traffic.

635. These policies will be subject to refinement following national consultation and may evolve to reflect the final scope of national DM policies. The direction of travel outlined here is intended to inform future policy development and stakeholder engagement.

636. Considerations for a policy could include the following:

Policy: Historic Environment

The council will conserve, and where appropriate enhance, the Plan Area's historic environment and heritage assets in accordance with national policy and legislation, including the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework. Development proposals must:

- preserve or, where appropriate, enhance the significance, setting, and contribution of designated heritage assets to local character.
- be supported by evidence proportionate to the scale of development and the significance of the asset, demonstrating:
 - a clear understanding of the asset's significance;
 - the impact of the proposed works on the asset's significance, including its historic fabric and setting;
 - justification for any harm, including how harm has been avoided or minimised, and how public benefits outweigh any residual harm;
 - efforts to retain, repair, or reinstate historic features where appropriate.
- be assessed using a balanced judgement, having regard to the scale of harm and the significance of the asset. Non-designated heritage assets will be identified through recognised sources such as local lists, Historic Landscape Characterisation, or expert evidence.
- prioritise the retention and, where appropriate, reuse of heritage assets over demolition, to better conserve and enhance the historic environment.

- support retrofitting of heritage assets to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, provided proposals take a whole-building approach and do not cause unacceptable harm to the asset's significance, in accordance with Historic England guidance.
- where a change of use is proposed, demonstrate that harm to the asset's significance has been avoided or minimised, and that the building cannot reasonably be used in a less harmful way. Any remaining harm must be justified and weighed against public benefits, including securing the optimum viable use.
- demonstrate the likely impact of development on archaeological remains and include appropriate mitigation measures. Findings from investigations should be made publicly accessible.

Consultation questions

- 72) Do you agree with the suggested policy direction for heritage?
- 73) National guidance sets the overall approach to non-designated heritage assets. How can the Local Plan give appropriate consideration to these?
- 74) Are there any key heritage considerations that you feel we have omitted?

Arts and Culture

Aim and Objectives

637. The council aims to foster a vibrant and inclusive cultural life across the district, recognising that arts and culture are vital to the wellbeing, identity, and economic prosperity of communities. The objectives are to support the creation, protection, and enhancement of cultural facilities and opportunities; to encourage public art and creative placemaking in new development; and to ensure that arts and culture are accessible to all residents and visitors, regardless of age, background, or ability.
638. The policy will seek to support the council's upcoming draft Creative and Cultural Strategy Framework (2026-2032), which aims to strengthen communities, enrich wellbeing and drive sustainable growth. This will be achieved by championing culture alongside nature and using creative and cultural activities to reflect the district's landscapes and distinct identities.

What You Told Us

639. Consultation responses on the Issues and Scope consultation highlighted a range of suggestions for incorporating arts and culture into the Local Plan. Respondents proposed the inclusion of public artworks in town centres, the creation of sculpture parks, and the development of multi-use art venues.
640. There was also support for additional funding and protection for local museums and art galleries. Several respondents felt that funding for arts and culture is often lacking or subject to cuts, and that more should be done to support these sectors. A small number of respondents questioned whether arts and culture should be a priority for the council, suggesting that the focus should remain on housing and essential services. However, there was a clear theme that valued cultural facilities should be supported and protected, and that new provision should be encouraged where possible.

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

641. A policy on arts and culture is needed to ensure that the district's cultural assets, which are currently spread across the district, are protected and enhanced through collaboration, so that opportunities for creative expression and participation are available to all. National planning policy recognises the importance of cultural wellbeing and the role of cultural facilities in creating healthy, inclusive, and sustainable communities.

642. Arts and culture contribute to economic growth, tourism, education, and social cohesion, and can help to create distinctive and attractive places. Evidence and consultation feedback indicate that there are gaps in provision, risks to existing facilities, and opportunities to do more to support cultural life in the district. Without a clear policy, there is a risk that arts and culture may be overlooked in the face of competing priorities.

Policy direction

643. The council is considering a range of policy options to support arts and culture in the Local Plan. These include:

- Introducing a policy to safeguard existing cultural facilities and support their enhancement or replacement where necessary.
- Encouraging the inclusion of, or contributions towards, public art and creative placemaking in new development through CIL and S106, not only in town centres and public spaces but also along key routes such as promoted long-distance footpaths, gateways, and other strategic locations where art trails, sculptures, or landscape features can enhance character, wayfinding, and community engagement. Which will align with the ambitions of the draft Creative and Cultural Framework Strategy (2026-2032).
- Supporting the development of new cultural venues, such as galleries, performance spaces, and community arts hubs, especially in areas of identified need.
- Working in partnership with local artists, cultural organisations, and communities to promote access to arts and culture for all.
- Considering the use of planning obligations or developer contributions to fund public art or cultural infrastructure as part of major developments.

Consultation questions

- 75) What can the Local Plan do to protect arts and cultural venues like museums, exhibitions and theatres?
- 76) Do you have any other comments or suggestions about how the Local Plan should address arts and culture in the Plan Area?