

NFNPA 507/16

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 22 SEPTEMBER 2016

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – CONSULTATION DRAFT

Report by: David Illsley, Policy Manager

Summary:

Following significant changes in national planning policy since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2010, the Authority is undertaking a review of the local planning policies covering the National Park. The review will result in the production of a single revised 'Local Plan' to provide the planning framework for the whole of the New Forest National Park.

It is important to emphasise that the consultation draft Local Plan at Annex 1 represents a non-statutory stage in the Plan-making process. The Government has made it clear that all planning authorities must have up-to-date Local Plans in place and the consultation proposed for Autumn 2016 on this draft document aims to inform the production of the Submission draft Local Plan in 2017.

Members are asked to endorse for the purposes of public consultation the draft Local Plan attached as Annex 1 to this paper. The draft Local Plan builds on the existing Core Strategy policies where appropriate (a number of the policies remain largely unaltered) and reflects national planning policy on issues including addressing local housing needs and the protection afforded to National Parks. The draft Plan includes the proposed allocation of land in the National Park for development for the first time since the Park was designated in 2005, as well as detailed planning policies that seek to support the socio-economic well-being of local communities; protect the landscape and habitats of the New Forest; and safeguard the built heritage of the Park.

Recommendation:

Members endorse the 'New Forest National Park Local Plan Review – Consultation Draft' document – Annex 1 – for the purposes of public consultation (3 October – 28 November 2016).

1. INTRODUCTION

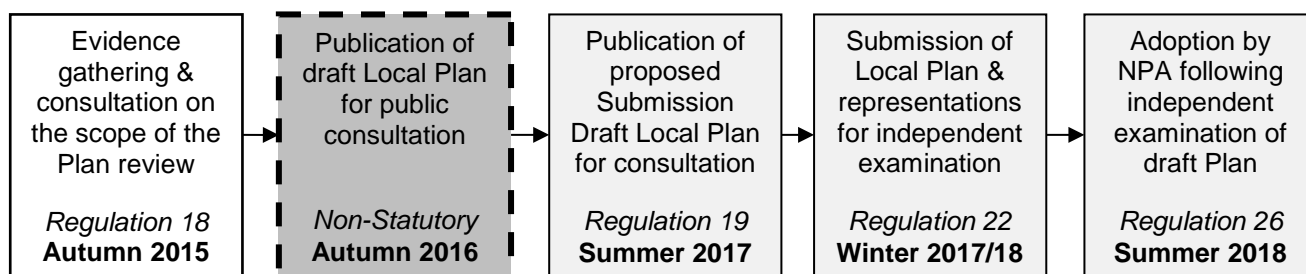
- 1.1 The National Park Authority adopted its first set of Park-wide planning policies in December 2010 with the formal adoption of the *Core Strategy & Development Management Policies DPD*. The Core Strategy distilled over 1,000 inherited planning policies into a single, succinct document, ensuring that for the first time the whole of the New Forest National Park was planned as a single entity.
- 1.2 British planning law is based on the 'Plan-led' system, with Section 38(6) of the *Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* confirming that planning decisions should

be made in accordance with the ‘development plan’ unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is therefore vital that the Authority continues to have in place up-to-date planning policies that support the two statutory Park purposes and related socio-economic duty. The Local Plan is a key instrument through which the Authority can influence the scale and location of new development, manage impacts on landscape and biodiversity and enhance the built heritage of the Forest. The Authority is also a full minerals and waste planning authority and the planning framework for the New Forest is set out in the separate *Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan* (adopted 2013). Therefore minerals and waste planning matters are not covered in this review.

- 1.3 Since 2010 there have been significant changes to national planning policy and the Local Plan Review must respond accordingly. These changes include: (i) the *Localism Act 2011* which give local communities powers to support development through the production of Neighbourhood Plans; (ii) the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012; (iii) the launch of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) resource in 2014; and (iv) amendments to national Permitted Development Rights aimed at removing smaller applications from the system.
- 1.4 In undertaking the review, it should also be acknowledged that the Authority’s adopted planning policies have stood up well to scrutiny through appeal decisions. This can be attributed to: (i) the legal framework and purposes for National Parks, set out in the *National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949*, remaining unaltered; (ii) the NPPF’s reiterated commitment that National Parks have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty; and (iii) the NPPF’s recognition that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not override other considerations, and that in National Parks a restrictive approach is appropriate. It is also consistent with the Authority’s own self-assessment work which concluded that the vast majority of the adopted policies were in general conformity with the NPPF¹.

2. STAGE IN THE PROCESS

2.1 Following endorsement at the Planning Development Control Committee in June 2015, the Authority undertook an initial public consultation on the scope and main issues to be included in the Local Plan in Autumn 2015. This stage represented Regulation 18 in the Government’s formal planning regulations and set out below is a summary of the main steps in preparing a Local Plan, with the stage the Authority has reached highlighted (more detail can be found in the Local Development Scheme).



¹ Endorsed by the Planning Development Control Committee in July 2012 – paper NFNPA PDCC 120/12

- 2.2 Following consideration of the responses received during the initial public consultation in Autumn 2015 (set out in more detail in the 'Consultation Statement' that will accompany the draft Local Plan when it is published for consultation), a series of topic-based meetings were arranged in Spring 2016 to discuss some of the main issues to be included within the revised Local Plan. These included:
- Discussions with Historic England on the planning policy approach to protecting the historic and built environment of the New Forest (linked to the first Park purpose);
 - Under the Localism Act's 'duty to cooperate', meetings with neighbouring planning authorities to discuss cross-boundary issues including meeting housing needs and habitat mitigation measures (more details are provided in the separate 'Duty to Cooperate Statement' that will be published alongside the draft Plan);
 - A meeting with groups representing local socio-economic interests in the Forest. The meeting provided positive feedback on the existing planning policies and suggestions for how they could be updated;
 - A meeting with parish councillors from the four 'defined villages' to discuss the review of the defined village boundaries and the allocation of sites; and
 - Discussions with representatives of many of the larger Estates in the New Forest. This focused on how the planning policy framework for the area could support their continued stewardship of the Forest.
- 2.3 In addition, regular updates on the Local Plan Review have been given to the Parish Quadrant meetings throughout 2016, and the New Forest Consultative Panel. The Authority also continues to liaise closely New Forest District Council at both officer and member level. This has included the joint commissioning of evidence base studies on housing need, flood risk and habitat protection.

3. PROPOSED CONSULTATION DRAFT DOCUMENT (ANNEX 1)

- 3.1 Government guidance confirms that Local Plans should be concise, concentrate on the key planning issues facing the local area and be based on a proportionate evidence base. The proposed consultation draft document (Annex 1) represents the current position in the preparation of a detailed Submission draft Local Plan and this work will continue to Summer 2017 following the next stage of consultation.
- 3.2 The proposed consultation draft document follows the structure and format of the existing Core Strategy and a number of the existing planning policies for the National Park remain unaltered. Set out below is a summary of the main areas where it is proposed to amend the existing policies in light of changes in national planning policy and the experiences of applying the existing policies over the last five years.

Natural Environment

- Clarify that, where justified, contributions towards habitat mitigation measures will be sought from new development across the National Park. A full Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be undertaken to inform the preparation of the Submission draft Local Plan in 2017.
- Additional wording to the policy on supporting renewable energy development to clarify the appropriate scale (in light of the recently 'called in' appeal decisions).

Built Environment

- Additional wording on the impacts of verge damage to the local distinctiveness of the Forest, confirming that planning conditions could be used to address the issue.

Vibrant Communities

- The proposed allocation of sites to contribute towards meeting identified housing needs. The proposed sites are focused in the larger villages of the New Forest and were all put forward during the 'Call for Sites' process undertaken in 2015/16.
- In response to feedback during the Regulation 18 consultation and the identified housing needs in the Park, a proposed policy restriction on the size of new dwellings to ensure new development is focused on meeting local housing needs.
- Planning policy support for the production of comprehensive 'Estate Plans' to inform the consideration of applications for new Estate Worker housing.
- A separate policy under which to consider future applications for commoners' dwellings.

Supporting the Local Economy

- Amendments to enable existing employment sites to be used for a variety of employment purposes to support the economy of the National Park.
- 3.3 The NPPF requires planning authorities to meet identified housing needs wherever possible. In response to this, the proposed consultation draft Local Plan plans for an increase in the level of new housing through the allocation of land for residential development; continued support for rural exceptions sites; and support for housing to meet the specific needs of commoners, agricultural workers and Estate workers. However, even with this proposed approach the level of residential development falls below the housing need identified within the Park. The Authority will therefore be required to justify this position - based on the impact that such a scale of development would have on the purposes behind National Park designation - when the final draft Local Plan is submitted to the Government for independent examination in 2017.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 It is proposed to run the eight -week Local Plan public consultation from early October 2016. This will include notifying statutory and other consultees that the document is available; running a series of public drop-in events spread geographically across the Forest; and ensuring that everyone who commented on the initial public consultation and 'Call for Sites' process is notified. As with other public consultations run by the Authority, full use will be made of social media to raise awareness, including the monthly e-newsletter and the *Park Life* newspaper due out in early October 2016.
- 4.2 Alongside the consultation draft Local Plan, a range of supporting documents will be made available including evidence base studies; a draft Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) report; background topic papers; a 'Consultation Statement'; and a 'Duty to Cooperate Statement' setting out how the Authority has liaised with neighbouring planning authorities.

4.3 As set out in our Local Development Scheme (March 2016), the intention is to bring the final Submission Draft Local Plan to the full Authority meeting in June 2017. Planning authorities who have not updated their local plans since the publication of the NPPF in 2012 are required to have submitted their revised local plans by March 2018 or there will be significant consequences. The timetable for the production of the revised Local Plan for the New Forest National Park allows this deadline to be met.

Recommendation:

Members endorse the ‘New Forest National Park Local Plan Review – Consultation Draft’ document – Annex 1 – for the purposes of public consultation (3 October – 28 November 2016).

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Papers:

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Annex 1: New Forest National Park Local Plan Review – Consultation Draft

Equality Impact Assessment:

A full Equalities Impact Assessment of the Authority’s Local Plan will be undertaken at the next statutory stage in the Plan-making process.

Resources:

Significant resources required during the Plan-preparation process, co-ordinated by the Policy team. This includes public consultation and ultimately independent Examination.