



## **New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) Neighbourhood Planning Protocol**

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### **1. Purpose of this Protocol**

1.1 [National guidance](#) confirms that in supporting neighbourhood planning, authorities should be proactive in providing information and constructively engage with the community throughout the process. Beyond their statutory responsibilities, planning authorities have the discretion to tailor their support to take account of local circumstances. The purpose of this Protocol is therefore to broadly define:

- how the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) will undertake its statutory duties with regard to neighbourhood planning; and
- the advice and assistance that will be provided by the NFNPA to Town and Parish Councils within the Park that are producing Neighbourhood Plans.

1.2 The NFNPA will provide planning support during the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and will liaise with the Electoral Services teams in the constituent local authorities (New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Wiltshire Council) when required at the referendum stage.

### **2. Neighbourhood Planning and the New Forest National Park Local Plan**

2.1 We will endeavour to offer advice and assistance to local communities in the neighbourhood planning process as far as possible. The support available will be dependent on the available resources and the requirement for the NFNPA to produce our own revised Local Plan for submission to the Government by early 2018. Local communities have the opportunity to engage in the Local Plan-making process to influence the planning framework for their parish.

2.2 It should also be highlighted that the work on our Local Plan will be beneficial to local communities who wish to prepare Neighbourhood Plans. This includes the evidence base used to support the National Park-wide Local Plan.

### **3. The NFNPA's statutory responsibilities**

3.1 The NFNPA will fulfil its statutory Neighbourhood Planning responsibilities as required by the relevant [Regulations](#), which include:

- As soon as possible after receiving the Neighbourhood Area application, publicise and consult in accordance with the statutory timeframes (Regulation 6)

- Consider the consultation responses received, (where appropriate) designate the Neighbourhood Area and publicise it on the NFNPA website (Regulation 7)
- Confirm to the Town or Parish Council whether or not the Submission Neighbourhood Plan complies with the Regulations (Regulation 15)
- Publicise and consult with the public on the Submission Neighbourhood Plan and other relevant documentation (Regulation 16), including notification of the relevant consultation bodies.
- Contact the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (or equivalent) and appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced examiner in agreement with the Town or Parish Council
- Submit the draft Neighbourhood Plan, supporting documents and representations received to the Examiner (Regulation 17)
- Arrange an Examination hearing venue and date in consultation with the Town or Parish Council, wherever possible in the local area
- Following receipt and consideration of the Examiner's Report, publish a 'Decision Statement' (Regulation 18/19) as soon as practicable
- Subject to the Examiner's recommendations, make arrangements with our constituent local authorities (New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council or Wiltshire Council) for holding the local referendum
- Adopt the Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 19/20) at the first available full NFNPA meeting following confirmation of majority support at referendum. The adopted Plan will be made available on the NFNPA's website.

#### **4. Advice and assistance from the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA)**

- 4.1 For each designated Neighbourhood Area, the NFNPA will identify a planning policy officer as the first point of contact. At the request of the town or parish council, and following designation of the Neighbourhood Area, the planning policy officer will be available to attend an initial meeting.

##### Neighbourhood Plan objectives, scope and working arrangements

- 4.2 Before the NFNPA can provide advice or assistance on the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Town / Parish Council will first need to provide a concise statement setting out:
- the likely aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan - what it is seeking to influence, change, manage, protect or deliver
  - proposed working arrangements and how they may be resourced
  - an indicative timetable

### Background Data and Evidence

- 4.3 To support those preparing Neighbourhood Plans, we will make electronically available, or provide access to the following (subject as applicable to licensing, Data Protection and commercial confidentiality):
- Reports and studies forming part of the NFNPA Local Plan evidence base
  - NFNPA Annual Monitoring Report data for the last five years
  - Mapping data (fees may be applicable)
  - Meet any other proportionate requests for existing planning information for the Neighbourhood Area that is held by the NFNPA
- 4.4 Due to resources, the NFNPA will unfortunately not be in the position to:
- Commission, tender for or carry out Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessments, Environmental Impact Assessments, Flood Risk Assessments or other such assessments as may be necessary
  - Commission, tender for or carry out research for the Neighbourhood Area
  - Search for, extract or interpret third party data for the Neighbourhood Area
  - Prepare plans, maps or map-based analyses for the Neighbourhood Area

### Consultation and engagement

- 4.5 In addition to its statutory responsibilities set out in paragraph 3.1, the NFNPA will publicise the Neighbourhood Plan consultation on our website. The NFNPA will also provide advice on methods of community engagement and consultation.
- 4.6 As Neighbourhood Plans have been created to enable the local community to take a lead on planning in their area, it will be for the local Town or Parish Council to co-ordinate public consultation events, rather than the NFNPA.

### Policy and plan writing

- 4.7 Where resources allow, the NFNPA will review draft policies before they are finalised for consultation or publication and provide informal advice on their clarity, robustness and compatibility with the National Planning Framework (NPPF) and with the strategic policies in the adopted and emerging New Forest National Park Local Plan. Where resources allow this will include an input from the NFNPA Development Control team who ultimately will be using the Neighbourhood Plan policies.
- 4.8 As Neighbourhood Plans are community-led, it is for the community to draft Neighbourhood Plans rather than the NFNPA. The NFNPA will not undertake design, printing, copying or distribution of Plans or supporting documents.

### Attendance of further meetings

- 4.9 In addition to attending an initial meeting (see paragraph 4.2), subject to availability NFNPA planning officers may attend further meetings of the working group at critical decision points leading to consultation on or submission of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### Funding / Financial Support

- 4.10 As confirmed in the [Localism Act 2011](#), planning authorities are not obliged to financially support the neighbourhood planning process. Consequently the NFNPA does not have funding specifically available to support neighbourhood planning.
- 4.11 The Government does provide some financial support for communities who choose to prepare Neighbourhood Plans in the form of grants of up to £9,000. Information on how groups can apply for the funding is available at [www.mycommunity.org.uk](http://www.mycommunity.org.uk)
- 4.12 The Government also provides financial assistance to planning authorities in fulfilling their statutory neighbourhood planning duties, including holding the examination and arranging the local referendum. The NFNPA can make funding claims to support Neighbourhood Plans and will share any funding received with the relevant local authority in relation to the referendum it will undertake on behalf of the NFNPA.
- 4.13 Where a Neighbourhood Area falls partly within the National Park and partly within one of our neighbouring authorities (New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council or Wiltshire Council), we will liaise with our neighbouring authority to decide who will claim the Government funding and how the payment will be shared locally.
- 4.14 As a general rule it will be the authority with the largest proportion of the Neighbourhood Area who will be the lead authority for supporting the neighbourhood planning process and seeking Government funding. However, even where a designated Neighbourhood Area includes just a small part of the National Park, it is important that the NFNPA is involved as, once adopted, Neighbourhood Plans form part of the statutory 'development plan' for the National Park.

## **5. Town/Parish Council Responsibilities**

- 5.1 Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop. In parished areas such as the New Forest, it is the Town or Parish Council who are responsible for neighbourhood planning and this is likely to include:
- Establishing a steering group to develop the Plan with clear terms of reference
  - Arranging an initial meeting to which the NFNPA can attend
  - Undertaking work towards preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan with a defined project management approach, work programme and timetable to delivery
  - Convening as a group on a regular basis throughout the period of preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and its examination
  - Committing adequate resources to the task
  - Collecting information, evidence and commissioning reports as required by the relevant planning regulations
  - Providing regular updates on progress against the project plan to the NFNPA
  - Providing to the NFNPA the Draft Submission Plan in electronic format
  - Providing results of primary source data which would be helpful to the NFNPA