

**NFNPA 550/18**

## **NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **AUTHORITY MEETING – 15 JUNE 2018**

#### **WESTERN ESCARPMENT CONSERVATION AREA ACTION PLAN 2018 – 2023**

**Report by:** David Illsley, Policy Manager

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Western Escarpment Conservation Area was designated by the Authority in March 2008. A Conservation Area is defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as, “...*an area of special architectural and historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.*” The focus is on the built environment and the character of the whole area, not just the individual buildings.
- 1.2 The Western Escarpment Conservation Area lies on the north western boundary of the National Park. At approximately 14 kilometres in length and 2.5 kilometres at the widest point, it is the largest of the Conservation Areas in the National Park. The Conservation Area extends from Hangersley in the south to Hatchet Green in the north and includes parts of the parishes of Hale, Woodgreen, Godshill, Hyde, Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley, Fordingbridge and Ringwood. The Conservation Area includes typical Forest landscape and a variety of buildings and settlements of architectural and historical interest. The [Western Escarpment Conservation Area Character Appraisal](#) provides a detailed assessment of the area and the features that make it worthy of additional protection.

#### **2. Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group & Action Plan 2012 – 2017**

- 2.1 A Steering Group - made up of representatives from Hale, Woodgreen, Godshill, Hyde and Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley Parish Councils and Ringwood and Fordingbridge Town Councils - has worked since the designation of the Conservation Area to preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area. The Steering Group is supported by the National Park Authority.
- 2.2 The Steering Group prepared an Action Plan covering the period 2012 – 2017. The Action Plan set out an overall vision for the Conservation Area, highlighted key issues affecting the area, before identifying a number of actions. The main function of the plan was to guide and co-ordinate the work of all those with an interest in the Conservation Area to ensure that the character of the Conservation Area is preserved or enhanced. The preparation of the Action Plan was led by the Steering Group and was formally endorsed by the National Park Authority in June 2012.
- 2.3 Since the adoption of the Action Plan 2012 - 2017, progress has been made against a number of actions, including:
  - ‘*Introduction to the Western Escarpment Conservation Area*’ leaflet published and widely distributed, with a re-print done in 2016.
  - Hyde Village Design Statement formally adopted by the National Park Authority.

- The ‘*Traditional Building Skills Project*’ – part of the Heritage Lottery Funded ‘Our Past Our Future’ project – has promoted traditional building techniques.
- ‘*Boundaries to properties in the Western Escarpment Conservation Area*’ leaflet published and widely distributed, with a re-print done in 2016. The leaflet has been cited in a number of appeal decisions.
- A significant amount of work has been done on mapping verge damage in the Conservation Area and working with the main statutory bodies in the New Forest to address the issue. The Forestry Commission has recently implemented verge protection measures in Woodgreen.
- At part of this work, the ‘*Verges within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area*’ leaflet’ has been published following endorsement from the National Park Authority, the Commoners Defence Association, Natural England, the Verderers, Hampshire County Council, the Forestry Commission and National Trust.

### **3. Western Escarpment Conservation Area Action Plan 2018 – 2023 Update**

- 3.1 The previous Action Plan included a total of 31 separate actions. In 2017 the Steering Group (i) reviewed the benefits of having an action plan; and (ii) considered whether an updated version should be prepared for the next five years. There was a strong consensus among Steering Group representatives that there is merit in continuing to have a succinct Action Plan. The Action Plan helps to communicate to external bodies and others what is special about the area and the actions proposed to preserve its character.
- 3.2 There was also a recognition that with over 30 actions, the previous Action Plan was perhaps rather ambitious. The Steering Group felt that the revised Action Plan should be more tightly focused on the actions that the Group can deliver and influence, while also noting areas where the Steering Group (and its constituent town and parish councils) would look to work with other bodies to deliver actions. The updated Action Plan 2018 – 2023 therefore identifies 11 priority actions, with a further 12 actions identified where the Steering Group will support the work of other bodies. Priority actions include:
- Reinforcing the importance of buildings of local historic interest within the Conservation Area. These are unlisted buildings of interest (sometimes known as local listing) which do not have the same protection as listed buildings but are important for the contribution they make to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
  - Considering the use of Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights for forms of development that affect the character of the area (e.g. boundary treatments, the creation of new accesses).
  - Promoting the special character of the Western Escarpment Conservation Area in relation to the design of new highway works.
  - Identifying obsolete or damaged signs and report back to the Highway Authority (Hampshire County Council) so they can be removed or replaced.
- 3.3 The draft Action Plan 2018 – 2036 has been discussed at the Steering Group meetings in 2017/18 and has also been considered at meetings of Town and Parish Councils within the Conservation Area. Where appropriate, feedback received from these meetings has been reflected in the updated Action Plan 2018 – 2023 presented in Annex 1 to this paper.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Members formally endorse the Western Escarpment Conservation Area Action Plan 2018 – 2023 (Annex 1) to guide work on preserving or enhancing the character of the Conservation Area.**

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**Papers:** **NFNPA 550/18**  
**Annex 1 – Western Escarpment Conservation Area**  
**Action Plan 2018 – 2023**

**Equality Impact Assessment:** **No issues arising**