

**PC 320-20**

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING – 18 FEBRUARY 2020**

**BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSERVATION BUSINESS PLAN TARGETS – PROGRAM OF WORKS REPORT**

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**Summary:**

The Business Plan for 2018-21 identifies the priorities and work objectives of the National Park Authority, structured by our overall aims of PROTECT, ENJOY, PROSPER. Under the PROTECT priorities, three projects directly relate to the work and skills of the Building Design and Conservation Officers. These are:

- Under objective 1.2.1: to review and update the Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
- Under objective 1.3.3: to undertake reviews of three Conservation Area Appraisals
- Under objective 1.3.3: to publish a list of non-designated heritage assets in the National Park

The Building Design and Conservation Officers have carried out some: statistical analysis; researched how other local authorities have approached similar tasks; and consulted Historic England's best practice guidance, to consider the scope of works required for each of the three projects. This report summarises the context for each project, the findings of the scoping activities, and presents a proposed program of works to meet each of the Business Plan's work objectives.

**Recommendation:**

**Members endorse the proposed programme of works for each project presented in this report.**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The work of the Building Design and Conservation Officers falls under two PROTECT priorities, and their associated objectives set out in The Business Plan:

PROTECT 2: To ensure new development is sympathetic and in keeping with the National Park, promoting high quality design and environmental net gain.

Objective 1.2.1: Provide a long-term planning vision for the National Park informed by the special qualities

PROTECT 3: To conserve the historic and built heritage; supporting local culture with a focus on communing.

Objective 1.3.3: Foster greater knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage of the National Park

1.2 The Building Design and Conservation Officers will be leading three projects which are some of the measurable indicators of success for these priorities and objectives. They

will be reviewing and updating the Design Guide (2011), reviewing and updating three Conservation Area Character Appraisals, and publishing a list of the non-designated heritage assets in the National Park. Their work on these projects so far has largely been of a preliminary nature, scoping out the priorities, the extent of work required and considering the best approaches for each project.

- 1.3 We are now in a more informed position to prepare detailed programmes of work for each project. Therefore, the broad vision and general programme of works for each project are being presented to Planning Committee for endorsement, prior to more in depth project development.

## **2. Reviewing and updating the Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document**

- 2.1 The Design Guide (2011) is a key document for the National Park, reinforcing Strategic Objective PROTECT: 2. in the Business Plan. This ensures that new development is sympathetic and in keeping with the National Park, promoting high quality design and environmental net gain, whilst conserving and enhancing the wealth of characteristics that contribute towards the local distinctiveness of the New Forest. The Design Guide was produced in Dec 2011 (Addendum in 2019) as an SPD, and has been highlighted in need of reviewing and updating as an objective in the Business Plan 2018 - 21.
- 2.2 Since it was published, the Design Guide has provided a valuable reference tool for Authority officers, members of the Planning Committee, architects, surveyors, residents and parish councils to use when preparing or considering planning applications. However, it is not always referred to as frequently as it should be, and many references including those to the recently adopted Local Plan, and the NPPF are now out of date.

### NFNPA proposed scope of work – Design Guide SPD review

We have already identified several tasks that will form part of the Design Guide review and update. This list will be developed and added too through a consultation process.

- Update all references to the newly adopted Local Plan (August 2019) policies
  - Policy DP2: General development principles
  - Policy SP14: Renewable energy
  - Policy SP16: The historic and built environment
  - Policy SP17: Local distinctiveness
  - Policy DP18: Design principles
  - Policy DP34: Residential character of the defined villages
  - Policy DP35: Replacement dwellings
  - Policy DP36: Extensions to dwellings
  - Policy DP37: Outbuildings
- Update references to the NPPF (2019) and PD
- Update with reference to climate change and sustainability
- Consider areas of greatest pressure e.g. larger dwellings and greater space requirements; boundary changes and creeping urbanisation of gateways and frontages etc
- Consider the order and length of the document and how this can be improved for use
- Consider producing a shorter summary document for easy reference

- 2.3 The Design Guide will undergo a period of public and internal discussion and consultation with the community and stakeholders, in order to provide a collaborative approach in updating the Design Guide.

NFNPA proposed consultation scheme – Design Guide SPD review

The consultation process will provide feedback on the existing Design Guide (2011), discuss design issues faced in the National Park and inform the updating process.

Proposed scheme:

- Run a Member Training Workshop on Design Principles (Jan 2020)
- Run an Officer Training Workshop on Design Principles (Jan 2020)
- Attend each Quadrant Meeting to introduce the work and invite discussion and feedback from parish councillors during the review period (work has already been introduced at the December 2019 North Western Quadrant Meeting)
- Run a Design Workshop for Parish Councils to attend, to disseminate information to their communities and then feedback (Spring 2020)
- Invite discussion and feedback through the website
- Invite discussion and feedback through direct contacts with agents and local architects/surveyors

### **3. Reviewing and updating three Conservation Area Character Appraisals**

- 3.1 The 20 Conservation Area Character Appraisals are important documents for the National Park Authority to use to reinforce and deliver PROTECT 2 and 3 in the Business Plan. The existing appraisals were put together by historic building consultant Kevin Stubbs between 2008-2009. They are valuable reference tools when preparing or responding to planning applications. Nevertheless, ten years have now passed and inevitably things have changed and evolved. If Character Appraisals are to continue to be useful and hold weight in the planning process, they will need to be refreshed to reflect the changes that have taken place; the new, different or more pronounced challenges faced in these areas now.
- 3.2 Reappraising all 20 Conservation Area Character Appraisals will be a long-running scheme of work, which need to be sensibly prioritised. Under the Business Plan we hope to have reviewed three Character Appraisals by 2021. We have run some statistical analysis reports to identify where there is the greatest pressure of change, and the greatest resistance to our design and conservation policies, so that we can prioritise which Conservation Area Character Appraisals to review first.
- 3.3 Since 2009 the Conservation Areas with the highest number of full applications, are the Western Escarpment (616), Burley (460), Forest South East (451), Forest North East (298), Lyndhurst (282), Brockenhurst (231), and Forest Central South (224).
- 3.4 Since 2010, the Conservation Areas with the greatest number of appeals that quoted our design and conservation policies (CP7, CP8 and DP6 of the previous Core Strategy), are the Western Escarpment (36), Burley (18), Forest South East (17) and Forest North East (18). This unsurprisingly correlates with the areas with the greater number of applications. The data is somewhat skewed by certain properties appealing several schemes. Nevertheless, these areas are where design and conservation matters are being raised most frequently at appeal.

- 3.5 Most of these appeals were dismissed. However, of those appeals that were allowed a high percentage of them (Burley (100%), Forest South East (100%), Forest North East (60%), and (Western Escarpment (55%)) successfully challenged the Authority's decision on design and conservation grounds and were allowed. Therefore, updating these Conservation Area Character Appraisals could help strengthen our position when defending our case at appeal.

#### NFNPA proposed scheme of work – Conservation Area Character Appraisal reviews

We propose focusing on reappraising the Burley, Forest South East and Forest North East Conservation Areas, because they are facing the greatest pressure of change and are areas where design and conservation matters are frequently raised at appeal. The Western Escarpment Conservation Area is in a similar position, but as it already has an active steering group working to conserve and enhance that area, we believe it is a less urgent priority.

Proposed scheme:

- Attend each Quadrant Meeting to communicate to, and enthuse parishes with Conservation Areas about, the aims and outcomes of the reappraisal process
- Run training session with parishes to upskill communities in landscape surveying
- Support community led surveys of Conservation Areas
  - Make a photographic record of changes over time to individual properties, views and overall character since 2008/09 using the appraisals detailed DVD maps
  - While surveying, consider other factors affecting character (traffic pressure, pollution, street furniture and signage, land use, settlement plan est)
- From the survey results consider:
  - Boundary reviews
  - What changes have improved the area? Are there opportunities for further enhancement?
  - What changes have degraded the area? What pressures and challenges are the Conservation Areas facing?
  - Whether applying Article 4 directions may be appropriate
  - Identify Buildings At Risk
- Produce an addendum to the existing appraisal including a summary of what has changed; identifying new features of merit; confirming and redefining the Conservation Areas' special interest that warrants its designation; refresh the pressures and challenges the area faces; and propose appropriate management recommendations
- Readopt the Appraisal Addendum
- Work with the local community, possibly setting up local advisory panels, to produce individual Conservation Area Management Plans

#### **4. Publishing a list of non-designated heritage assets in the National Park**

- 4.1 Non-designated heritage assets, or locally listed buildings, are buildings or structures of architectural or historic interest which contribute to the character and appearance of the National Park. Under the NPPF (2019) the conservation of buildings and structures of local interest is a material consideration when planning proposals are submitted to the National Park Authority. Compiling and publishing a list of the non-designated heritage assets in the National Park will help to reinforce and deliver PROTECT 2 and 3 in the Business Plan.

- 4.2 Currently we do not have a definitive local list, rather our non-designated heritage assets are identified on our mapping systems. Only recently have our planning maps plotting non-designated heritage assets been made public, via the ‘search my property map’ on our website. This communication gap has caused confusion and tension about what a non-designated heritage asset is and how they are treated in the planning process.
- 4.3 At present the non-designated heritage assets we have plotted on our mapping systems were identified by the 2008-09 Conservation Area Character Appraisals, as having met at least one of Historic England's generic criteria (age; rarity; aesthetic interest; group value; archaeological interest; evidential value, historic association; designed landscape interest; landmark status; and social and communal value). Any properties that meet the criteria which are situated outside of a Conservation Area are identified reactively in response to a planning application and are not publicly identified on our mapping system. Village Design Statements also identify potential non-designated heritage assets, but these have not been assessed against Historic England’s criteria and again are not publicly identified.
- 4.4 Consequently, there are about 22,500 hectares of the Forest where non-designated heritage assets remain unidentified. Moreover, the properties we have identified as non-designated heritage assets may not fully represent the unique character and appearance of the New Forest because we have used the generic Historic England Criteria, and restricted our list to only buildings.
- 4.5 Consequently, as we seek to publish a list of the non-designated heritage assets in the New Forest, we consider it expedient to review the identification criteria and our existing records, before working to extend the existing list beyond the boundaries of Conservation Areas.

### NFNPA proposed scheme of work – non-designated heritage assets

- Publish the existing list
  - Run a report to create a list of non-designated heritage assets identified on our mapping system
  - Publicise the ‘Search my property map’ and the non-designated heritage asset layer
  - Publish and publicise non-designated heritage asset layer on the New Forest Knowledge website
- Review criteria for inclusion and asset types to be included on the local list through public consultation
- Review processes for inclusion and appealing prior to commencing adding to/enhancing the list
- Create a guidance document for non-designated heritage asset identification, and a survey record form for use by community groups
- Publicise the enhancing the list project
- Run survey training sessions for parishes keen to collaborate. Parishes within Conservation Areas can help to review the non-designated heritage assets already identified against the revised criteria and enhance the list with photos and reason for inclusion.

#### Ongoing Work:

- Checking the accuracy of the Authority’s existing mapping
- Corroborating community survey findings and updating the Authority’s mapping and listing accordingly
- Enhancing the public map with linked images and reason for inclusion

## 5. Conclusion and the next stages

5.1 The Building Design and Conservation Officers have undertaken some preliminary work on the three projects identified in the Business Plan 2018-2021. For each project the priorities and extent of work required have been identified through research, and approaches for project delivery have been suggested. This report has summarised this progress and recommends the proposed programmes of work for endorsement.

5.2 Once the overall programmes of work have been agreed, the projects will be progressed to a more detailed stage of development through consultation and task scheduling, so that the team are in a strong position to move forward with the project delivery.

### RECOMMENDATION

**Members endorse the proposed programme of works for each project presented in this report.**

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**Papers:** PC 320-20 – cover paper

**Equality Impact Assessment:** No impacts have been identified.