

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING – 21 APRIL 2020

#### FORDINGBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA DESIGNATION

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

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Neighbourhood Plans were introduced by the Localism Act 2011 to allow local communities to prepare a plan for development and land use in their area. Neighbourhood Plans are statutory documents that, once adopted, form part of the 'development plan' for the area. As the New Forest is parished, neighbourhood plans can be undertaken by parish or town councils if they choose to prepare one. The National Park Authority has a role in supporting communities in preparing a neighbourhood plan by giving advice and assistance to the town/parish council.
- 1.2 Under the *Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012* (the '2012 Regulations'), in order to start the formal process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan a town/parish council first makes an application to the local planning authority for the designation of the area that their Neighbourhood Plan will cover.

#### 2. APPLICATION BY FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL (31 MARCH 2020)

- 2.1 In a letter dated 31 March 2020, Fordingbridge Town Council applied to New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority for the whole of the parish to be designated as a 'Neighbourhood Area'. As illustrated on the map in Annex 1 to this report, a small area of the parish lies within the National Park and is therefore under the Authority's planning remit. This comprises land adjacent to the River Avon near Burgate and an area adjacent to the B3078 south west of Godshill. The vast majority of the land area of the parish and nearly all of the 6,000 residents are located within New Forest District Council's planning area and the Council will be considering the proposed Neighbourhood Area in the district separately.
- 2.2 In accordance with Regulation 5 of the 2012 Regulations, Fordingbridge Town Council's application was accompanied by a map showing the area proposed for designation and a statement explaining: (i) why the area is considered to be appropriate; and (ii) confirming that Fordingbridge Town Council are the relevant body to make such a request.
- 2.3 Fordingbridge Town Council justified the inclusion of the whole of the parish by explaining;  
*"The parish of Fordingbridge represents the full extent of the Town Council's administrative area of responsibility. The parish supports over 6,000 residents and the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan will give the local community an opportunity to engage and influence future land use decision making."*

### 3. DESIGNATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA – REGULATIONS

- 3.1 The 2012 Regulations set out the process for designating a Neighbourhood Area. Under those Regulations, planning authorities were required to consult for a 6-week period on a proposed Neighbourhood Area and this was the process followed by the Authority for the six areas designated in the National Park between April 2013 and June 2016<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.2 In October 2016 the *Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016* came into effect (Statutory Instrument 2016 No. 873). One of the amendments to the original 2012 Regulations introduced by the Regulations made in 2016 was the insertion of a new section (5A) entitled '*Designation of the whole of the area of a Parish Council*'. As a result of this amendment:
- If the area specified in the Neighbourhood Area application consists of the whole of the parish area, there is no requirement to publicise the application or invite representations on the proposal.
  - If the area specified in the Neighbourhood Area application consists of the whole of the parish area, the local planning authority must designate the specified area as a Neighbourhood Area.
- 3.3 Fordingbridge Town Council has applied for the whole of the parish area to be designated as a 'Neighbourhood Area'. Consequently the revisions to the 2012 Regulations apply and there is legally no requirement to consult on the proposed Neighbourhood Area. This is on the basis that the administrative area of the parish is already well-established and the Neighbourhood Plan-making process is not seeking to create a new area.
- 3.4 Although there is no need to consult on the proposed Neighbourhood Area, the Authority is still required to 'designate' the area formally and that is the purpose of this report. New Forest District Council will be going through the same process for the majority of the parish of Fordingbridge that lies within their planning remit and similarly this will not be the subject of public consultation.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 As the sole planning authority for the National Park, the Authority is required to formally designate the proposed Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Area insofar as it relates to the land within the National Park. Amendments to the 2012 Regulations have the effect that where the area proposed consists of the whole parish, the local planning authority "*must*" designate the area as applied for. There is clearly a logic and consistency in the Neighbourhood Area covering the same geographic area as the parish of Fordingbridge and Authority members are therefore recommended to formally agree this designation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Milford-on-Sea, Totton & Eling, New Milton, Lyminster & Pennington, Hythe & Dibden and Wellow*

- 4.2 It should be noted that the Authority's decision only relates to the part of the parish within the National Park. This makes up a very small percentage of the parish of Fordingbridge and it is for New Forest District Council to formally designate the Neighbourhood Area outside the National Park. All of the six Neighbourhood Areas designated to date in the New Forest are 'split' parishes and the Authority will work closely with New Forest District Council to support Fordingbridge Town Council as they embark on their neighbourhood planning work.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**The proposed Neighbourhood Area applied for by Fordingbridge Town Council (Annex 1) is formally designated by the Authority as it relates to the area of the parish within the New Forest National Park.**

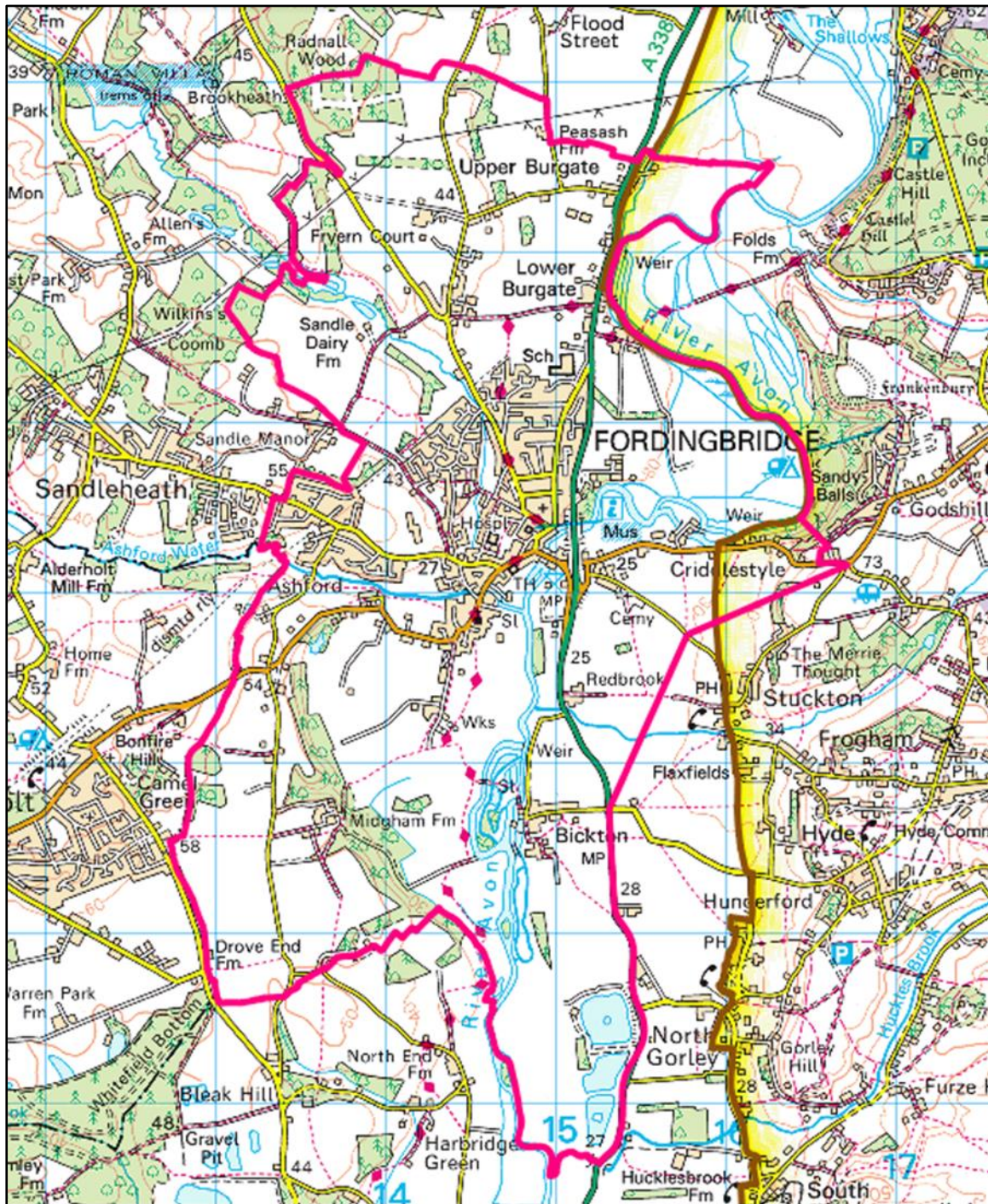
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**Annex 1: Area of the Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Area formally designated within the New Forest National Park (21 April 2020)**



Key

	Fordingbridge Parish boundary
	New Forest National Park boundary