



**Draft New Forest National Park Design Guide
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
Consultation Statement – September 2021**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with Section 12 (a) of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, this 'Consultation Statement' sets out the informal consultation undertaken during the preparation of the draft New Forest National Park Design Guide SPD.
- 1.2 The draft Design Guide SPD will be the subject of a statutory 6-week period of public consultation between September and October 2021 and this statement focuses on the engagement undertaken prior to this public consultation.
- 1.3 In accordance with the relevant regulations, the Consultation Statement will be updated following the 6-week public consultation to provide details of who was consulted on the draft SPD; how they were consulted; a summary of the main issues raised during the consultation; and how those issues have been addressed in the adopted SPD.

2. Background

- 2.1 We place a strong emphasis on good design through the delivery of our statutory planning function. This is reflected in our annual Building Design Awards; the adopted Local Plan (2019) policies on protecting and enhancing the built environment; and the adoption of local design guidance.
- 2.2 Recent updates to national planning policy – including the National Design Guide, National Design Code and revised NPPF - continue to emphasise the importance of good design. Planning authorities are encouraged to produce local design guidance to support the delivery of planned new development.
- 2.3 The adopted National Park Design Guide SPD (2011) is a key document for the area, promoting high quality design while conserving and enhancing the built heritage of the New Forest. However, it is a decade old and the need for an update is recognised within the Authority's work programme.
- 2.4 In early 2020 the National Park Authority's Planning Committee approved a programme of works covering several aspects of our building design and conservation function (report PC 320-20). This included a review of the New Forest National Park Design Guide SPD and there are clear benefits to be gained from reviewing and updating the document.

3. Preparation of the draft New Forest National Park Design Guide SPD

3.1 The draft New Forest National Park Design Guide SPD has been prepared following a review of relevant national policy and guidance and aims to provide comprehensive design guidance for the whole of the National Park.

3.2 The following areas of informal consultation have informed the preparation of the draft Design Guide SPD:

- The intention to update the National Park Design Guide SPD and an outline of the high-level scope of the review has been shared with all 37 town and parish councils within the National Park through the Parish Quadrant meetings. The meetings were held in January and February 2021 and gave the town and parish councillors present an opportunity to comment on the overall direction of the Design Guide review and the areas where they felt attention should be focused.
- Early iterations of the draft Design Guide SPD were the subject of internal discussions between building design & conservation, development control, landscape and planning policy officers at the National Park Authority. This ensured that the relevant sections were drafted with the input of the appropriate specialists within the Authority's staff.
- Member workshops on the Design Guide were held in February and April 2021. These workshops were well attended and provided an opportunity for National Park Authority members to discuss with officers the format of the revised Design Guide, the consistency of wording and the approach taken to a range of design matters. The feedback given by members at the workshops (and also separately in writing) informed the preparation of the draft document that is now the subject to the 6-week public consultation.
- Government guidance also highlights the importance of engagement as part of the preparation of local design guidance. In advance of the statutory public consultation on the draft Design Guide SPD commencing in September 2021, local architects, designers and planning agents were informally engaged prior to finalising the consultation draft document. An early iteration of the draft document was shared and video meetings were held in May 2021 to elicit feedback. This feedback has fed into the document now subject to the 6-week public consultation.
- The proposed consultation draft Design Guide SPD was considered at the National Park Authority's Planning Committee meeting in July 2021. The covering report and draft Design Guide SPD were publicly available in advance of the meeting and the document was approved by members for the purposes of public consultation following debate.

4. The requirement for Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 4.1 The Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) resource on strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal confirms, 'Supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal, but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the relevant strategic policies.' (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 11-008-20140306). Given that the Design Guide SPD is providing design advice and does not allocate land for development, it is the Authority's position that neither a Sustainability Appraisal nor a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required.
- 4.2 'Competent authorities' (including National Park Authorities) must carry out an assessment under the Habitats Regulations to test if a plan or project could significantly harm the designated features of a European site. It is the Authority's view that the Design Guide SPD is not a 'plan or project' that might have an impact on a European site and therefore no assessment is required.
- 4.3 The Authority bases this position on the fact that the Design Guide SPD does not set out where future activities or developments should take place within the New Forest National Park; and does not itself consent development. The higher order New Forest National Park Local Plan (August 2019) was subject to a full Habitats Regulations Assessment.

5. Public Consultation – 10 September to 22 October 2021

- 5.1 National planning regulations require a period of public consultation of at least 4 weeks on draft supplementary planning documents. The National Park Authority is committed to a 6-week period of public consultation on draft documents, which better reflects the meeting cycles of local town and parish councils and provides greater opportunity for the public to comment. The 6-week public consultation on the draft National Park Design Guide SPD runs from 10 September to 22 October 2021.
- 5.2 All of the representations received during this period will be reviewed and changes made to the draft Design Guide document where appropriate. In accordance with the relevant regulations, this 'Consultation Statement' will be updated to summarise the main issues raised during the public consultation; and how those issues have been addressed in the final document. The formal adoption of the Design Guide SPD will be a decision for the full Authority meeting, with the meeting in December 2021 provisionally identified as a date for consideration of the final document.