

AM 684/24

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING - 25 JULY 2024

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

Report by: David Illsley, Policy & Conservation Manager

Summary:

Following the decision at the March 2024 full Authority meeting to commence a partial review of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016 – 2036, the Authority is required to publish a publicly available timetable for the review in the form of an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Local Development Scheme presented in Annex 1 to this report for endorsement reflects discussions at the Local Plan Review members' workshop held in June 2024. Should there be future significant changes to the Local Plan review process and timetable (e.g. due to changes in national policy or legislation), a revised Local Development Scheme will be presented to members for consideration.

Recommendation:

Members: (a) endorse the revised New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme (Annex 1), to be brought into immediate effect; and (b) delegate authority to the Executive Director (Strategy & Planning) to undertake the work necessary to publish the revised Local Development Scheme on the Authority's website.

1. Introduction

1.1 At the March 2024 Authority meeting members resolved that work should commence on a partial review of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (see report AM 675/24). The current Local Plan was adopted in August 2019 following extensive consultation and independent examination and forms a key part of the statutory 'development plan' for the National Park. Throughout recent reforms to the planning system the Government has continued to reaffirm the primacy of the development plan in decision-making and the benefits of having an up-to-date plan in place.

1.2 All local planning authorities are required to publish a Local Development Scheme (LDS) setting out a publicly available timetable for the key stages in their plan review process. Further detail is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) resource on '[Plan-Making](#)' which confirms,

'A Local Development Scheme is required under Section 15 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). This must specify (among other matters) the development plan documents (i.e. local plans) which, when prepared, will comprise part of the development plan for the area... The Local Development Scheme must be made available publicly and kept up-to-date. It is important that local communities and interested parties can keep track of progress. Local planning authorities should publish their Local Development Scheme on their website.'

- paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 61-003-20190315

2. New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme (July 2024)

2.1 Annex 1 sets out the revised New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme which is presented for endorsement and publication. Key points to highlight include:

- It is proposed to undertake the first formal step in the Plan review process in early 2025. This enables necessary evidence base studies to be advanced and careful consideration to be given to how the review of the local planning policies for the New Forest can further the two statutory National Park purposes, as required by Section 245 of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023. It also enables any immediate changes at the national level following the General Election in July 2024 to have been made and the consequences considered.
- It is proposed to undertake a two-stage process at the Regulation 18 consultation stage. This would enable the Authority to seek views on the main planning policy options to address the themes identified before a (non-statutory) draft Local Plan is published. This is the process undertaken for the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019), which it is considered worked well.
- Once the draft Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination the detailed timetable is not in the hands of the National Park Authority. The timetable from submission to adoption is therefore to some extent indicative.

2.2 The New Forest National Park Authority is also the statutory minerals and waste planning authority for the whole of the New Forest National Park. This responsibility covers the determination of minerals & waste applications within the National Park, monitoring & enforcement, and Plan-making. The Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan is currently under review and is due to be submitted for independent examination imminently. The timetable for the review of the Minerals & Waste Plan is set out in the separate [Hampshire Local Development Scheme](#) and therefore there is no need to duplicate that timetable within the New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme being considered by members for approval at Annex 1 to this report.

2.3 Neighbourhood Plans – once ‘made’ – also form part of the statutory development plan for the National Park. The NPPG guidance on ‘Plan-making’ encourages planning authorities to include details of other documents which form (or will form) part of the development plan for the area, such as Neighbourhood Plans. However, the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan is entirely a decision for the relevant town or parish council and they lead on the preparation of the Plan. Given that the decision to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan - and the timetable for production - is outside the Authority’s direct remit, a decision has been made not to include any emerging Neighbourhood Plans in the Local Development Scheme presented for adoption in Annex 1 to this report.

3. Links with the plan-preparation timetables of neighbouring planning authorities

3.1 Local Development Schemes necessarily focus on the timetable for the preparation of planning policy documents by the individual local planning authority. However, in preparing the New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme (Annex 1) officers have had regard to the published timetables for neighbouring planning authorities. Report AM 675/24 and the discussions at the Local Plan Review members’ workshop in June 2024 both highlighted the benefits of joint work with partners where appropriate, reflecting the Authority’s legal duty to cooperate with neighbouring planning authorities in Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire on cross-boundary planning matters.

- 3.2 The separate New Forest District (outside the National Park) Local Plan is due to be reviewed to a broadly similar timetable to the National Park Local Plan. Given the cross-boundary planning matters between the two authorities, there is a logic to aligning the early stages in the respective Plan-review processes where possible. For example, there are benefits from jointly commissioning evidence base studies to inform the respective Local Plan reviews; as well as the potential for joint consultations on 'issues and options' at the early stages of the Plan-review process. The timetable set out in the Authority's proposed Local Development Scheme (Annex 1) enables this.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Following the decision in March 2024 to commence work on the partial review of the New Forest National Park Local Plan, it is necessary for the Authority to publish an updated Local Development Scheme setting out the timetable for the review.
- 4.2 The proposed Local Development Scheme (Annex 1) sets out the key milestones in the review process. It should be acknowledged that there remains uncertainty at a national level in the plan-making process. For example, the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 seeks to streamline the plan-making system by making Local Plans subject to a 30-month timeframe, with the examination of plans to take no longer than 6 months. In addition, the Act aims to focus the content of Local Plans onto locally-specific matters, with more general development management policies to be included in a suite of National Development Management Policies which would take precedent over local planning policy. These changes require further legislation and illustrate the evolving national framework for the review of Local Plans. It is therefore likely that further iterations of the Authority's Local Development Scheme will be required in due course.

Recommendation:

Members: (a) endorse the revised New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme (Annex 1), to be brought into immediate effect; and (b) delegate authority to the Executive Director (Strategy & Planning) to undertake the work necessary to publish the revised Local Development Scheme on the Authority's website.

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Papers: **NFNPA 684/24** – cover paper

Annex 1 – Revised New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme
(July 2024)

Equality Impact Assessment:

No impacts have been identified. The review of the New Forest National Park Local Plan will involve extensive public consultation, evidence gathering, assessment and ultimately independent examination. This will include an assessment of the impacts of the proposed planning policies on different groups, typically set out in an Equalities Impacts Assessment. The revised New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme (LDS) presented at Annex 1 to this report focuses on the timetable for the review, rather than the content and planning policy decisions made within the Plan.

Annex 1 – Revised New Forest National Park Local Development Scheme (July 2024)

Financial Year	2024-5				2025-6				2026-7				2027-8			
Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
New Forest National Park Local Plan Review				18A			18B			19		S	E	M	A	
Hampshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan Review	See separate Hampshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan Review LDS at Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)															

Key

Symbol	Stage in Plan-making process	Symbol	Stage in Plan-making process
18A	Consultation on 'issues & options' (Regulation 18)	E	Independent Examination
18B	Non-statutory consultation on draft Plan	M	Consultation on proposed modifications
19	Consultation on Regulation 19 Plan	A	Adoption
S	Submission to Secretary of State for examination		