



New Forest National Park Local Plan Review  
2025 - 2043

Regulation 18 (Part 1) Consultation -  
Strategic Direction of Travel

January 2025

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The New Forest National Park – see map below - was designated in March 2005 and the Authority’s primary responsibility is to deliver the two statutory purposes. In pursuing these purposes, the Authority also has a duty to, “...seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park and shall for that purpose co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of the National Park.”
- 1.2 The planning system enables the National Park Authority to influence the scale and location of new development, manage impacts on landscape and conserve the built heritage of the New Forest National Park. Through the mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the planning system can also enhance the biodiversity of the New Forest National Park.



- 1.3 All planning authorities – including national park authorities - must prepare a local plan setting out local planning policies for their area. Section 4A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 gives national park authorities the statutory responsibilities as the sole planning authority for their respective areas, including plan-making, development management, planning enforcement and minerals & waste planning functions. The first National Park-wide plan (the New Forest National Park Core Strategy and Development

Management Policies DPD) was adopted in December 2010 which was replaced by the current National Park Local Plan, adopted in August 2019.

- 1.4 The updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) sets out the national approach to plan-making and states that local plans should be reviewed every five years to assess whether they need updating. As the New Forest National Park Local Plan was formally adopted in August 2019, we have assessed the policies in the Local Plan and concluded that while many aspects of our local planning policies conform to current national policy and legislation, there are several areas where an update would be beneficial. National Park Authority members resolved at an Authority meeting in March 2024 to undertake a partial review of the New Forest National Park Local Plan.
- 1.5 This consultation document – including Appendix 1 which provides a more detailed breakdown of the review of the adopted local planning policies - sets out the key issues and areas on which the Local Plan Review will focus and sets out the policy areas which have not changed since the Plan was adopted in 2019. Where local planning policies have continued to perform well and remain aligned with current national policy, there will be no significant changes.

### **National policy context**

- 1.6 The two statutory National Park purposes – originally set out in the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 – and the related socio-economic duty remain unaltered by recent changes in national policy and primary legislation. The two purposes remain central to the planning policy approach in national parks and are the golden thread running through the policies.
- 1.7 In December 2024 the Government published updated [guidance](#) on the strengthened legal duty placed on ‘relevant bodies’ to seek to further the two statutory National Park purposes in undertaking their functions (including the preparation of development plan documents). This legal duty – introduced through Section 245 of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 – applies to national park authorities and a wide range of other bodies.
- 1.8 The NPPF has gone through several iterations since the Local Plan was adopted in 2019, together with the publication of several Written Ministerial Statements relevant to plan-making. Given the overarching statutory purposes for National Parks remain unaltered, and national policy for National Parks set out in the updated NPPF (December 2024) being consistent with previous iterations, the Authority considers the Local Plan to be in general conformity with the NPPF. However, there are benefits to reviewing and updating some of the policies in line with the new and revised elements of national policy and guidance issued since the Local Plan was adopted in August 2019.
- 1.9 Additionally, the legal protections afforded to the internationally designated habitats of the National Park remain in place. These designations – including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites – cover over 50% of the National Park. The legal test placed on competent authorities to ensure development does not impact on the integrity of these sites remains. This is a key driver behind our local planning policies.

- 1.10 The Authority’s Annual Monitoring Reports identify that the policies are broadly performing effectively and remain largely achievable. However, there are several that will need to be updated to better reflect recent changes in the updated NPPF (December 2024) and legislation, including the changes to permitted development rights and the use classes order. Our initial assessment of the existing Local Plan policies is set out at Appendix 1 to this document.
- 1.11 The Government’s wider national policy agendas highlight the importance of National Parks to the delivery of nature recovery; tackling the climate crises; driving economic growth in rural areas; and supporting health & well-being. The Environment Act 2021, the Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework and other national policy objectives are central to partnership working in National Parks. Where appropriate, the review of the local planning policies for the New Forest will reflect these wider Government agendas and set out how the planning system can contribute towards their delivery.

### Local Plan Review timetable

- 1.12 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. The current LDS was published and brought into effect in July 2024 and can be viewed at [Local Development Scheme - New Forest National Park Authority](#).
- 1.13 We are undertaking a two-stage process at the initial Regulation 18 consultation stage. This consultation document is seeking views on the main planning policy issues and the overarching proposed direction of travel before a (non-statutory) draft Local Plan is published later in the year.
- 1.14 The local plan process is set out in the diagram below.



## **Duty to cooperate**

- 1.15 The National Park Authority undertakes regular liaison with adjoining planning authorities under the duty to cooperate, as well as through formal arrangements such as the Partnership for South Hampshire. At the appropriate point the Authority will agree Statements of Common Ground with neighbouring authorities on strategic cross boundary matters. These are likely to cover matters including addressing the impacts of planned development on the New Forest's designated sites (principally recreational impacts); addressing identified housing needs (with national policy recognising that National Parks are unlikely to be appropriate locations to meet the unmet needs from surrounding areas); and transport matters.

## **Further planning reforms**

- 1.16 The Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 introduces a new category of planning policies - national development management policies (NDMPs) - to be drawn up by the Secretary of State. NDMPs will carry the same weight as policies within local plans and in the case of a conflict between the two, NDMPs will override local plans. The adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019) includes detailed development management policies on a range of local matters and NDMPs may help to simplify the Local Plan. The Government has stated that further details on the NDMPs will be published later in 2025 and we will consider the implications of the proposals on the review of the local planning policies for the National Park when further information is available.
- 1.17 The Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 also signposts the abolition of Supplementary Planning Documents. There have been no further details on this issue and it remains unclear whether relevant sections of existing SPDs will need to be incorporated into the revised local plan. Again we will consider this issues when further details are provided at the national level.

## **2. Strategic policies & development principles**

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### **Introduction**

- 2.1 The Local Plan aims to deliver sustainable development within the context of a nationally protected landscape. The two statutory national park purposes and related socio-economic duty form the golden threads running through the Local Plan. The vision for the National Park and strategic objectives are drawn from these purposes and duty, which remain unchanged since the current Local Plan was adopted in 2019.
- 2.2 However, we will need to ensure that the vision and objectives, and overarching strategic policies also reflect the latest national policy and guidance.

### **Climate change**

- 2.3 Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019 the National Park Authority has declared a climate and nature emergency. Consequently, climate change is now significantly higher up the agenda. The impact of climate change on the New Forest is likely to be wide reaching, with warmer, wetter winters, hotter, drier summers, rising sea levels and an increasing frequency of extreme weather events, the effects of which are already being seen.
- 2.4 The National Park Authority commissioned a study 'A greenhouse gas emissions assessment and target scenario for the New Forest National Park', published in November 2022. This provides a robust evidence base for climate action, mitigation and land use management considerations.
- 2.5 We consider there should be a greater focus on addressing the climate emergency than is currently set out in the adopted Local Plan. This is likely to encompass encouragement of energy efficient and low / zero-carbon buildings, sustainable construction techniques and materials and low / zero carbon transport in new developments. Revisions to the local planning policies on this matter will need to be consistent with national policy in the revised NPPF.

### **Health and well being**

- 2.6 Since the Covid-19 pandemic there has been greater recognition of the importance of access to nature and green spaces in addressing physical and mental health and wellbeing. This has also been enshrined in national policy and guidance in recent years, with the updated NPPF stating that planning policies should aim to achieve places, "...that enable and support healthy lives..." (NPPF, 2024, paragraph 96 (c)).
- 2.7 We already have policies that encourage development which supports health and wellbeing, including green infrastructure, open space, access and sustainable travel. However, we will need to include references to the new and emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and ensure that the strategic overarching policies in the Plan better reflect greater emphasis on health and wellbeing considerations.

## Vision and objectives

- 2.8 An important part of the Local Plan is the vision of what the National Park should look like in the next 20 years. The vision in the adopted Local Plan – set out below - focuses on delivering sustainable development within the context of a nationally protected landscape informed by the area's special qualities. We consider this vision is broadly still fit for purpose, albeit with some amendments to reflect any changes in the policies in the rest of the Plan. This is likely to include a greater focus on the need to respond to the nature and climate emergency, and health and wellbeing considerations, as outlined above.
- 2.9 National Parks can make a positive contribution to the delivery of the Government's wider national agendas around nature recovery, tackling the impacts of climate change, driving the rural economy and promoting inclusivity. Many of these objectives are now established in primary legislation. The revised vision and objectives for the New Forest National Park Local Plan will reflect these wider Government priorities for National Parks where appropriate.

### *Current Local Plan Vision (2019)*

In 2036 the New Forest's outstanding natural beauty has been safeguarded and enhanced. Sites of international, national and local importance for nature conservation and the National Park as a whole continue to host a variety of wildlife and habitats. The New Forest remains an area with a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place, with a mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats including lowland heath, mire, ancient woodland, the Solent coastline and farmed landscapes. Tranquillity and a feeling of naturalness pervade large parts of the National Park.

At the same time it is a place where people can enjoy the wonderful opportunities for quiet recreation, learning and discovery. Recreation and visitor pressures have been successfully managed through a shared understanding of the issues. Traditional land management practices, particularly commoning, are supported and continue to thrive and shape the Forest's landscape and cultural identity. The impacts of climate change are better understood and are being actively addressed through adaptation and change but without compromising the special qualities of the New Forest. People live and work sustainably, and everyone contributes in appropriate ways to keeping the New Forest a special place for present and future generations.

The limited development that has taken place within the National Park has been focused on catering for the socio-economic needs of local people rather than meeting external demand. Small scale housing development on allocated sites and within the Defined Villages of Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway has provided a mix of appropriate new housing to meet local needs arising within the National Park. Rural exception schemes and new dwellings focused on the needs of New Forest Commoners and Estate workers have helped deliver appropriate housing in the rest of the National Park.

The cultural heritage and historic environment is better understood and appreciated through its continued protection and enhancement. The inherent characteristics and local distinctiveness of the individual villages have been retained and enhanced through the highest standards of design that respect the natural and built heritage of the Park. The rural economy has been supported by small scale employment development that does not conflict with the special qualities of the National Park.

The communities within the National Park continue to look to adjoining areas, including the urban areas in South Hampshire, South East Dorset and South Wiltshire for a range of services. The relationship with adjoining areas has been managed to the mutual benefit of all areas, including a shared approach to mitigating the impacts of new development on the National Park.

2.10 The adopted Local Plan also sets out several strategic objectives to help achieve the vision, whilst also reflecting the Authority's remit in delivering the two statutory National Park purposes and the related socio-economic duty. We believe the objectives remain appropriate in light of the key issues and challenges facing the National Park over the next 20 years, and broadly aligned with those in the Partnership Plan for the New Forest. However, we may need to amend the wording of these objectives to reflect changes in the vision and the Plan policies, as well as the wider Government priorities for National Parks.

Strategic Objective	Link to purposes & duty
Protect & enhance the natural environment of the Park, including the natural beauty of the landscape and the range of habitats and species	First purpose
Conserve and enhance the cultural heritage and historic environment of the National Park, especially the wealth of individual characteristics that contribute to its local distinctiveness	First purpose
Plan for the likely impacts of climate change on the special qualities of the New Forest	First purpose
Strengthen the well-being, identity and sustainability of rural communities and the pride of local people in their area	Socio-economic duty
Promote appropriate housing to meet local needs and maintain the vibrant communities of the National Park	Socio-economic duty
Develop a diverse and sustainable economy that contributes to the well-being of local communities throughout the National Park	Socio-economic duty
Encourage land management that sustains the special qualities of the National Park	First, second purpose, socio-economic duty
Support development which encourages sustainable tourism and recreation, and provide opportunities for enjoying the National Park's special qualities	Second purpose
Reduce the impacts of traffic on the special qualities and support a range of sustainable transport alternatives within the National Park	Second purpose and socio-economic duty

## **Spatial strategy**

- 2.11 The spatial distribution of growth set out in the adopted Local Plan reflects the small-scale level of development appropriate to a nationally protected landscape and the locally distinct character of the New Forest.
- 2.12 We consider that the four main villages of Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway remain the most sustainable settlements in the National Park with a broad range of community facilities, local employment opportunities, public transport links and other services. This aligns with national planning policy and therefore these villages will remain the focus for most new housing and employment development over the next 20 years.
- 2.13 There are limited options for an alternative spatial strategy given the landscape and nature conservation designations in the New Forest National Park. However, we will review the settlement hierarchy to ensure that future development continues to be steered towards the most sustainable locations. The Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment process requires consideration of realistic alternatives and this will include the policy options for the Local Plan spatial strategy.
- 2.14 We will ensure that the revised Local Plan:
- Reflects greater emphasis on addressing the nature and climate emergency;
  - Reflects greater emphasis on health and wellbeing considerations;
  - Sets out a spatial strategy which respects the National Park purposes and socio-economic duty, whilst also addressing the needs of the local communities.

### **What do you think?**

Q1. Do you consider the current Local Plan Vision is still broadly appropriate?

Q2. Do the existing Strategic Objectives still represent the main considerations for development in the National Park?

Q3: Is the Spatial Strategy the most sustainable way to deliver new development over the next 20 years?

### 3 The natural environment

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#### Introduction

- 3.1 The rich and varied natural environment of the New Forest is the primary reason behind its designation as a National Park in 2005. The first statutory National Park purposes is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the New Forest. The Sandford Principle confirms that relevant bodies should make every effort to reconcile any conflict between the two National Park purposes, but that if such efforts fail then as a measure of last resort the first purpose takes precedence.
- 3.2 The New Forest Landscape Character Assessment (2015) describes 19 character areas in the National Park. The diverse landscape of the New Forest – including the ancient woodlands, heathlands, unspoilt coastline, farmed landscapes and rural villages – are special qualities integral to the designation as a National Park. National planning policy provides the New Forest with the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty (NPPF, December 2023, paragraph 181). An important aspect of national planning policy is its recognition that planning should recognise the ‘intrinsic’ character and beauty of the countryside – landscape character cannot be solely determined by what is visible from a publicly accessible location.
- 3.3 In addition to the entire National Park being designated for its landscape importance and a wealth of nationally and regionally important nature conservation features, 56% of the New Forest National Park is designated as being of international value for nature conservation – the highest proportion of any planning authority area in the country. The New Forest Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar sites cover more than 300 square kilometres in the core of the New Forest, including the most extensive area of heathland and valley mire in lowland Europe. Other international nature conservation designations cover all 26 miles of coastline within the National Park (principally for the populations of wildfowl and waders in the Solent); and the valley of the Hampshire Avon on the western side of the National Park.

#### Approach to the natural environment in the adopted Local Plan (2019)

- 3.4 In the adopted Local Plan (2019) we have a range of planning policies that help to deliver the first statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and wildlife of the New Forest National Park.
- 3.5 Our current policies cover matters including nature conservation sites of international, national and local importance; landscape character, water resources, green infrastructure, open space, climate change, flood risk, renewable energy and tranquillity. These matters go to the heart of the special qualities of the New Forest and are fundamental to the delivery of the Park purposes, as well as the Government’s national agenda for nature recovery (including the Environmental Improvement Plan and the 30 x 30 targets). Locally, the [Re:New Nature - New Forest National Park Authority](#) highlights the

urgent need for action to make sure the National Park's habitats are more resilient, better managed for wildlife, bigger and more joined up.

- 3.6 The Inspectors' Report into the current Local Plan (2019) concluded that the National Park Authority had worked very closely with other local planning authorities, Natural England and the Environment Agency in terms of habitat protection and mitigation. The planning policy approach to the hierarchy of nature conservation sites in the New Forest (policies SP5 and SP6) was found to be sound; and the Report concluded that policy SP7 provided a justified and effective basis to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park including its wildlife and cultural heritage, consistent with national policy.
- 3.7 The natural environment policies in our current Local Plan also cover water resources, flood risk, open space provision, renewable energy and tranquillity. The importance of safeguarding water supply and water efficiency; adapting to the impacts of climate change; avoiding development in areas of flood risk; and supporting small-scale renewable energy proposals that do not conflict with the statutory National Park purposes are if anything even more important now than when the current Local Plan was prepared.

### **Monitoring data**

- 3.8 Our annual monitoring reports assess a range of natural environment policies and indicators. In undertaking this monitoring, it is recognised that some impacts on the natural environment are outside the scope of the planning system to influence. Monitoring since the start of the current Local Plan period in 2016 illustrates the following key points in relation to the natural environment.
- The amount of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat in the New Forest National Park has remained relatively static at around totals 30,500 hectares. The New Forest National Park therefore supports 38% of the total area of biodiversity priority habitats within Hampshire.
  - Around 32,266 hectares of land within the New Forest National Park is covered by statutory designated nature conservation sites.
  - Our policies seeking to protect existing public open space in the National Park have been successful, with no public open space recorded as being lost between 2016 and 2023.
  - Our policies supporting appropriate renewable energy development have guided the delivery of a significant number of small-scale renewable energy projects. The majority of consented schemes comprise solar.

### **Headline conclusions of the self-assessment**

- 3.9 We have assessed our adopted planning policies against current national planning policy to identify the areas of the Local Plan that remain consistent with national policy; and those areas where a focused review would be beneficial. In relation to our natural environment policies, we conclude that:

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019, the National Park Authority has declared a climate and nature emergency. Consequently, climate change is now significantly higher up the agenda, which also reflects changes in national planning policy. A focused review of our local planning policies on sustainable construction and energy efficiency will enable us to respond to the requirements of updated national policy; and use our planning powers to contribute to the delivery of the net zero with nature programme. The provision of renewable energy schemes within the National Park must respect the statutory National Park purposes set out in primary legislation, as well as the protection afforded to the New Forest in national planning policy.

The preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Wiltshire and Hampshire has commenced and these strategies will have weight in the local plan-making process. The mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in new development came into effect in Spring 2024 and the review of the Local Plan for the National Park provides the opportunity to set out the Authority's target for BNG in new development.

Since the Local Plan was adopted in 2019, the 'zone of influence' relating to recreational pressures from new development on the New Forest's internationally designated sites (SPA, SAC and Ramsar) has been defined as 13.8 kilometres. This covers the whole of the National Park and reaffirms the Authority's approach that mitigation measures are required from all relevant developments across the National Park. This is an important issue under the Habitats Regulations and new development also needs to consider:

- Water Quality: The requirement for 'nutrient neutrality' in the Solent and Hampshire Avon catchments
- Recreational impacts on the Solent Coast: The need to address recreational impacts from development within 5.6 km of the Solent's designated sites.
- Air quality impacts on the New Forest Special Area of Conservation: The need to continue monitor the impact of emissions on the SAC to assess impacts on site integrity.

### **Evidence base studies to inform the Local Plan Review and links to other strategies**

- 3.10 Paragraph 195 of the NPPF (2024) confirms that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site. We will therefore need to undertake a **Habitats Regulations Assessment** as the review of the New Forest National Park Local Plan constitutes a 'plan or project' that could impact on internationally designated nature conservation interests, together with an appropriate assessment where necessary. This will consider potential impact pathways between the local planning policy approach and integrity of the designated sites, including recreational impacts, water quality

impacts, the physical loss of designated sites, and the loss of supporting habitat. At the appropriate assessment stage, mitigation measures can be factored into determining whether impacts will occur.

- 3.11 Both the **Hampshire and Wiltshire Local Nature Recovery Strategies** are in the process of being developed. We are required to take account of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies covering the National Park in preparing the Local Plan, including the elements of the strategies that identify specific areas as having potential to be of particular importance for biodiversity and other environmental benefits. This is in line with the Government's recognition of the role our National Parks can play in delivering landscape-scale nature recovery.
- 3.12 **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** became mandatory for many developments in 2024. The Environment Act 2021 sets out a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain in qualifying developments, with local planning authorities able to set their own figures above this statutory minimum where justified. As part of the review of the new Local Plan we will assess the appropriate figure for the National Park, taking into account potential impacts on development viability.
- 3.13 We are working jointly with our neighbouring local planning authority of New Forest District Council on an updated assessment of **formal playing pitch facilities** in the combined New Forest area (National Park and District). This will help inform the revised local planning policies of both authorities on open space provision associated with new development.
- 3.14 The National Park includes 26 miles of coastline. National planning policy supports the identification of **Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMAs)** where rates of shoreline change are expected to be significant over the next 100 years. Planning authorities – including national park authorities - may also wish to take into account the extent of existing settlements and requirements for land-use change or facilitating roll-back and relocation of land uses in deciding whether to identify any CCMAs through their Local Plans. We will consider the identification of CCMAs for sections of the New Forest National Park coastline through the Local Plan review process.
- 3.15 As a National Park Authority we are working with other planning authorities within the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) on an updated **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)** covering the whole of the New Forest National Park. This updated SFRA has been prepared in full accordance with current national policy and guidance and will inform the Local Plan review.

### **Future Policy Options**

- 3.16 With regard to the natural environment we will ensure the revised Local Plan:
- Continues to afford the nature conservation designations in the New Forest the level of protection proportionate to their status. We will work with neighbouring authorities on strategic approaches to mitigate recreational

impacts on the New Forest and Solent designations, building on the mitigation measures implemented under the current Local Plan.

- Ensures the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and scenic beauty of the New Forest continues to be given great weight in decision making, in accordance with national policy and the statutory Park purposes.
- The revised local planning policies on climate change and renewable energy reflect the declaration of a nature and climate emergency in the New Forest, pushing standards where appropriate and ensuring renewable energy schemes are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the New Forest National Park.
- Adopts an approach to flood risk based on the latest evidence, and uses the tools enabled by national policy to protect communities.
- Provides appropriate local planning policy coverage to reduce the impacts of light pollution on the 'dark skies' of the National Park, within the remit of what the planning system can achieve.

### **What do you think?**

Q1. Do you consider the current Local Plan policies on the natural environment still broadly align with national policy?

Q2. Are there any additional key issues that we have missed?

Q3: Do you have views on the planning policy approach to climate change and are there areas we should look to go further on?

Q4: How can we use local planning policies to protect the relative tranquillity of large areas of the New Forest National Park?

## **4. Protecting and enhancing the historic and built environment**

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- 4.1 The unique historic cultural and archaeological heritage of the New Forest has been formed through the richness, complexity and peculiarities of its social history, and is recognised as one of the special qualities of the National Park. Its development can be seen in archaeological sites, the domestic and agricultural buildings, historic houses and designed landscapes, settlement patterns and the character of the forest landscape itself. Less tangible are the traditional craft skills, building techniques, dialect, artistic and literary achievements, and the people and events of the past which are remembered in fact and legend.
- 4.2 A wealth of archaeological sites and evidence survive in the New Forest, ranging from prehistoric times to the present. Known sites and features are recorded on the publicly available Historic Environment Record. In the National Park we have over 200 scheduled ancient monuments, seven historic parks and gardens, 600 listed buildings with 20 conservation areas (three of which straddle the boundary with New Forest District). In addition, there are many non-designated locally important buildings
- 4.3 The New Forest's distinctive character is made up from the many listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled ancient monuments. The historic buildings of New Forest National Park vary widely in styles, from the simple, small-scale buildings made from inexpensive locally available materials, such as cob buildings and simple brick cottages to the large manor houses on the private wealthy estates.
- 4.4 There is also a need for the built environment to respond to the challenges presented by climate change. Adaptation to the impacts of climate change and the conservation of built heritage and character are not mutually exclusive and the review of the local plan provides an opportunity to set out how the built environment can adopt in a manner that conserves local distinctiveness.

### **Policy framework**

- 4.5 The NPPF (2024) considers heritage assets to be an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a way appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Our current policies continue to reflect this national guidance.
- 4.6 Current policies in the Local Plan seek to ensure that new development achieves the highest standards for new design, and responds to the local and historic context, so it makes a positive contribution to the historic environment and character of the National Park. The NPPF continues to require policies to achieve high quality and beautiful places and buildings. Our assessment of the Plan shows that these existing historic and built environment policies continue to be aligned with national policy in this respect.

- 4.7 The Local Plan policies are supported by a Design Guide SPD which we adopted in 2022. It sets out how development can sensitively respond to the Forest's character and distinctiveness whilst encouraging good design. It is further supplemented by several Village Design Statements which have also been adopted as supplementary planning documents and focus on the distinctiveness of specific local communities. In addition, the Authority has prepared detailed Conservation Area Appraisals for each of the Conservation Areas within the Park which provide a wealth of information on the Character Areas and buildings of local importance within each Conservation Area.
- 4.8 We have been expanding the list of locally important buildings as non-designated heritage assets in recent years and will continue to work with local communities on this project.
- 4.9 The Partnership Plan for the New Forest National Park 2022 - 2027 recognises the important cultural heritage of the New Forest and contains an action to protect cultural heritage assets, and support commoning and local produce to sustain the unique natural beauty of the landscape and culture of the New Forest for future generations.
- 4.10 We consider that the current local plan policies on the historic and built environment are aligned with the latest national planning policy and guidance. The Government intends to introduce national development management policies for topics such as the historic environment. If that happens then we will need to review the coverage of these policies in our Local Plan.

### **Future policy options**

- 4.11 With regard to the historic and built environment we will ensure the revised Local Plan:
- Addresses concerns regarding the impact of new development on the local distinctiveness of the New Forest's built environment;
  - Aligns with national planning policy and guidance on the appropriate protection of designated and non-designated heritage assets;
  - Considers the need to balance making efficient use of land with conserving the rural character of the National Park, including the New Forest's main villages. This includes concerns over the scale of new development;
  - Requires high quality design and sound sustainable construction principles for all new development.

**What do you think?**

Q1. Do you consider the current Local Plan policies on the historic and built environment still broadly align with national policy?

Q2. Are there any additional key issues that we have missed?

## **5. Vibrant Communities (including housing)**

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- 5.1 The defined ‘special qualities’ of the National Park include, “...its strong and distinctive local communities with a real pride in and sense of identity with their local area.”
- 5.2 The New Forest National Park is home to 34,166 residents (2021 Census data). With 61.7 people per square kilometre, the New Forest is the second most densely populated national park in the United Kingdom after the South Downs. 2021 Census data indicates there were 14,393 dwellings in the New Forest National Park in 2021, of which just over 75% are 3-bed or more (the highest proportion of any UK National Park).
- 5.3 National planning policy identifies national parks as areas where the scale and extent of development should be limited (paragraph 11, footnote 7 and paragraph 189, NPPF, December 2024). This reflects the statutory framework for National Parks originally established in primary legislation through the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 5.4 Further guidance is contained within the extant UK Government National Parks Vision & Circular – cross-referenced in the latest NPPF (2024) at footnote 66. The Circular states:
- National Parks are homes and workplaces of many thousands of people. Local communities have helped shape National Parks and continue to play a major role in securing National Park purposes.
  - The communities of National Parks are an absolutely critical ingredient to the sustainability of the Parks themselves. The National Parks have not been designated as wilderness parks; their communities are a fundamental part of their character.
  - National park authorities have an important role to play as planning authorities in the delivery of affordable housing. The Government recognises National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing and does not therefore provide general housing targets for them. The expectation is that new housing will focus on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services.

### **Approach to Vibrant Communities in the adopted Local Plan (2019)**

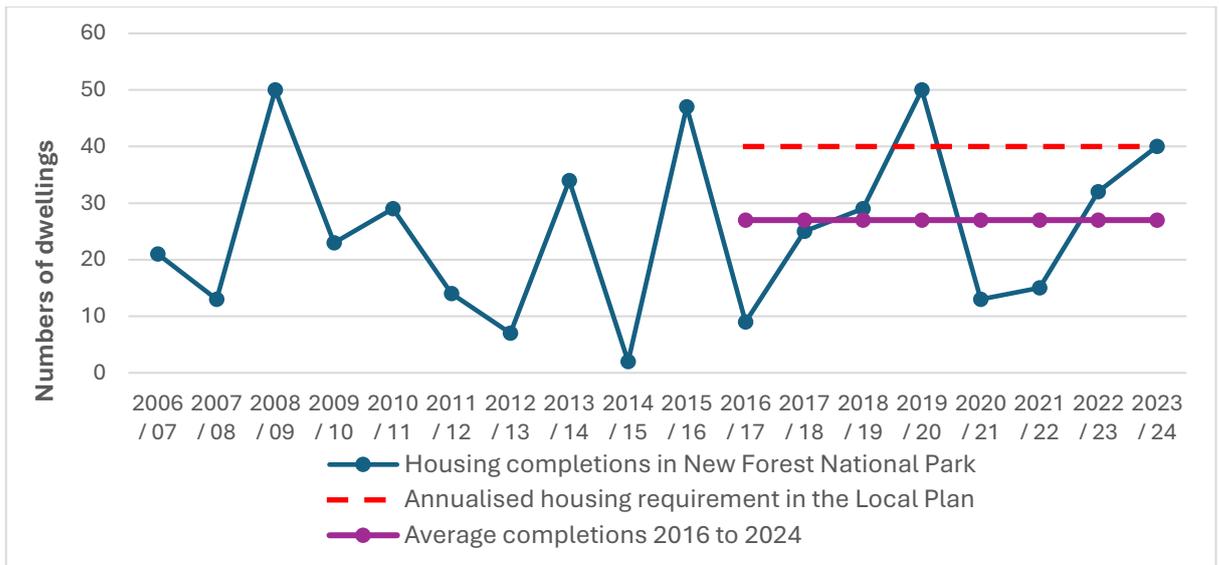
- 5.5 The adopted National Park Local Plan contains a suite of local planning policies aimed at supporting the needs of local communities within the National Park.
- 5.6 Our adopted local planning policies recognise the need for small-scale, sustainably located development within the New Forest National Park to support the well-being of local communities, linked to the Authority’s socio-economic duty. This includes the provision of new residential development in

the National Park (policy SP19) – delivered through windfall development; a limited number of housing site allocations (policies SP22 – SP26), and specialist housing (policies SP28 – DP32). The 'Vibrant Communities' chapter of the current Local Plan ensures new development is tailored to identified local need through the policies on specialist housing for older people (SP20); the size of net new dwellings (SP21); and the provision of affordable housing for local people (SP27 and SP28). The current Local Plan also includes policies to support the retention and provision of local community facilities (SP39).

- 5.7 The independent Inspectors' Report into the planning policies supporting vibrant communities in the current Local Plan (2019) concluded:
- Taking account of the Authority's duty to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities within the National Park together with the limited availability of housing sites, the approach of restricting occupancy of specialist housing for older people (Use Class C2) to local people and their dependents is justified (paragraph 74).
  - As options to address the existing housing stock are limited, restricting the size of new dwellings in policy SP21 is the best mechanism to re-balance the housing stock and meet the need for smaller dwellings (paragraph 78).
  - Given significant constraints that apply within the National Park, the approach towards Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople is justified and consistent with national policy (paragraph 102).

### **Monitoring Data**

- 5.8 Each year we publish an Annual Monitoring Report which assesses the performance of the adopted local planning policies – see [Monitoring - New Forest National Park Authority](#). The most recent Annual Monitoring Report was published in January 2025 and highlights from the monitoring of the existing Local Plan policies for 'Vibrant Communities' include:
- Between the start of the current Local Plan period (April 2016) and March 2024, a total of 213 net new dwellings have been completed within the New Forest National Park. These have all been on 'windfall' sites and equates to 27 net new windfall dwellings per annum. This is in line with the windfall allowance of 20 new windfall dwellings per annum set out in paragraph 7.10 and 7.44 of the adopted Local Plan. Monitoring therefore vindicates the allowance made by the Authority in the current plan.



- A total of 14 new affordable dwellings have been completed within the New Forest National Park between April 2016 and March 2024. These have all been on rural exceptions sites or on sites within the boundaries of the Defined Villages. The level of affordable housing completions within the National Park will increase significantly in the next couple of years as the Local Plan site allocations at Lyndhurst, Ashurst and Sway are delivered.
- Since the current Local Plan was adopted in August 2019, full planning permission has been granted for the site allocations at (a) Whartons Lane, Ashurst, policy SP22 (62 dwellings); (b) the site of the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel, policy SP24 (79 dwellings); and (c) Church Lane, Sway, policy SP25 (46 dwellings). Work has commenced on all of these sites, which are due to deliver over 90 affordable dwellings for local people in housing need.
- At March 2024 there was a stock of outstanding planning permissions for 249 net new dwellings, with roughly a fifth already under construction.
- In addition to the dwelling completions reported above, a total of 43 dwellings have been identified through the Lawful Development Certificate procedure between 2016 and March 2024. These typically arise through the removal of an agricultural occupancy condition, or buildings being used as separate dwellings.
- The National Park Authority currently has a 6.6 year supply of housing land based on unimplemented planning permissions and anticipated housing site allocations and windfalls over the next five years (including a 5% buffer). This is against the adopted Local Plan (2019) housing requirement, noting that the New Forest National Park does not have a housing need figure generated through the Government’s latest standard methodology.
- Policy SP39 (Local community facilities) has supported a range of facilities in communities across the New Forest, including new community shops, extensions to village halls and enhanced education facilities.

## Headline conclusions of the self-assessment

- 5.9 We have assessed our adopted local planning policies against current national policy to identify the areas of the Local Plan that remain consistent with national planning policy; and those areas where a focused review would be beneficial.
- 5.10 Several chapters of the latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) are relevant to assessing the local planning policies in the ‘Vibrant Communities’ section of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019). The main headline conclusions of our self-assessment of compatibility are as follows.

The New Forest National Park Authority is not subject to the Government’s Housing Delivery Test and is not given a housing need figure under the national standard ‘OAN’ methodology (which applies to local authority areas). The NPPG guidance on ‘housing and economic needs assessment’ confirms that in National Park areas authorities may continue to identify a housing need figure using a method determined locally. An updated assessment of local housing needs arising within the New Forest National Park has been commissioned to inform the review of the local planning policies.

Together with updated evidence on the level of local housing needs in the National Park, the viability assessment of local planning policies will also need to be refreshed in a partial review of the Local Plan. The NPPG resource on ‘Viability’ confirms that local planning policies should be informed by a proportionate assessment of viability.

Depending on the outcome of the updated assessment of housing, a review of land availability is likely to be undertaken to ascertain the availability of land for housing and identify any new opportunities.

The rate of windfall housing completions in the National Park between 2016 – 2024 is in line with the estimate set out in the adopted Local Plan (paragraphs 7.10 and 7.44).

Delivery of the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan’s housing site allocations is on track and planning applications have either been approved in full or have Planning Committee resolutions to grant on all of the sites. The future of the former Fawley Power Station site is currently being considered by the site promoters and the Authority will need to consider policy SP26.

Current policies do not refer to the Government’s nationally prescribed space standards. Current local planning policies do not provide minimum density standards, instead stating that ‘development densities should reflect the strong built heritage of the Defined Villages, their locally distinctive character and their location within a nationally protected landscape.’

## **Evidence base studies to inform the Local Plan Review**

- 5.11 As outlined above, an **updated assessment of housing needs** arising within the National Park has been commissioned by the National Park Authority, working jointly with New Forest District Council. This will be an important part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan, as national park authorities are not given a housing need figure generated by the Government's standard method (2024); and development in National Parks should meet local needs arising from within the Park, rather than catering for external demand.
- 5.12 We have also commissioned an **updated assessment of gypsy and traveller needs**. This assessment has been commissioned jointly with New Forest District Council and will cover the whole of the New Forest National Park and New Forest District planning administrative areas.
- 5.13 The adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019) represents the first time housing sites had been allocated within the National Park since it was designated in 2005. At this stage a decision has not been made on whether site allocations will form part of the revised Local Plan, but a **'Call for Sites'** exercise will be undertaken as part of the review. We also maintain a **Brownfield Sites Register** for the National Park area which will be relevant.
- 5.14 The NPPG resource on 'Viability' confirms the role for viability assessment is primarily at the plan making stage. Viability assessment should not compromise sustainable development but should be used to ensure that policies are realistic, and that the total cumulative cost of all relevant policies will not undermine deliverability of the plan. A **Whole-Plan viability assessment** will therefore be undertaken of the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan.
- 5.15 Infrastructure provision associated with the scale of planned development in the Local Plan review will be considered through an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). Utility providers (such as water companies) are important consultees on the Local Plan review. The review of infrastructure needs and capacity includes the work the National Park Authority is doing jointly with New Forest District Council, Southampton City Council and Test Valley Borough Council on a **Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)**.

## **Future Policy Options**

- 5.16 With regard to the vibrant communities policies of the New Forest National Park we will ensure the revised Local Plan:
- Sets out how small-scale, sustainably located development can be accommodated to meet the needs of local communities within the National Park (rather than catering for external demands).
  - Delivers housing (including affordable housing and C2 housing for older people) that meets identified local needs in a way that is consistent with the two statutory National Park purposes. This will be achieved through small-scale schemes, rather than major development.

- Includes local planning policies to guide decisions on small-scale residential developments that can cumulatively erode the local distinctiveness of the New Forest National Park through creeping suburbanisation. There is increasing acceptance that retaining buildings is more sustainable than demolition and we will consider this in the review of the relevant policies.
- Supports the retention and provision of essential community facilities and services, linked to the National Park Authority's socio-economic duty.

### **What do you think?**

Q1. Pending the conclusions of the current evidence base work on local housing needs, what do you consider to be the best approach to meeting needs in a way that is compatible with the statutory National Park purposes? Options include site allocations, revisions to the Defined Village boundaries and other alternatives that will be tested through the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA process.

Q2. Should the revised Local Plan identify specific settlements where rural exception sites would be supported in principle?

Q3. Do you agree with our intention to retain policies focusing on commoners' dwellings and Estate workers' dwellings?

Q4. What is the best policy approach to protecting the character of the National Park from incremental change from proposals for replacement dwellings, extensions to dwellings and outbuildings?

Q5. Are there any additional key issues that we have missed?

## 6 Local economy

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### Introduction

- 6.1 The local planning policies for the National Park play an important role in the delivery of the Authority’s legal duty to foster the socio-economic well-being of local communities within the National Park.
- 6.2 The English National Parks & the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular (2010) – cross-referenced at footnote 66 of the updated NPPF (December 2024) - confirms that national park authorities should continue to focus on the delivery of their statutory purposes, while seeking to maximise the socio-economic benefits available from such activity. Experience has shown that by harnessing the economy to environmental ends, tangible economic benefits can be delivered through the statutory purposes while at the same time achieving those purposes.
- 6.3 The New Forest is a living working area, home to around 2,500 local businesses and nearly 35,000 residents. Residents of the National Park are employed in a range of businesses and services. Only a small proportion of employment is now found in traditional rural land-based activities such as farming, forestry and commoning, but these activities remain vital in maintaining the land management practices that help to conserve the landscape character of the New Forest National Park.
- 6.4 Work undertaken by the Partnership for South Hampshire – which the New Forest National Park Authority is a full member of – has concluded that the New Forest National Park area does not form part of the South Hampshire Economic Market Area.
- 6.5 The Partnership for South Hampshire Spatial Position Statement (December 2023) was informed by a range of evidence base studies, including the Economic, Employment and Commercial Needs (including logistics) Study (Stantec & Vail Williams, 2021). The final report concluded,
- “...the FEMA [Functional Economic Market Area] is very unlikely to include the National Park and the western part of the [New Forest] district. The economy of those areas is materially different to that in the rest of South Hampshire, whereas the eastern flank (Totton to Fawley) has port and industrial related activity more akin to activity found in South Hampshire... Returning to the underlying principle that within a FEMA land should be substitutable across administrative boundaries, it is clear that land within the National Park is not substitutable for land in the cities and their hinterland...even were we to consider the National Park part of the FEMA, pragmatically, land would not be identified in the Park to meet needs arising from the cities and their hinterland.” – paragraphs 3.30, 3.31 and 3.36.

## **Approach to the local economy in the adopted Local Plan (2019)**

- 6.6 Our adopted Local Plan help to deliver our socio-economic duty and the planning policies aim to support a sustainable local economy which provides business and employment opportunities without compromising the special qualities and rural character of the area. The adopted Local Plan does not allocate employment land but instead relies upon windfall development and the change of use of existing buildings guided by a set of criteria-based policies to ensure that new employment development is of an appropriate nature and in the right locations.
- 6.7 Our current Local Plan policies support the re-use and extension of existing buildings; the redevelopment of existing employment sites for a wider range of employment uses; the retention of existing employment sites; farm diversification and home-working. In addition, in the four Defined Villages of Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway existing policies also support small-scale employment development, visitor facilities and accommodation using new buildings. The evidence base for the existing Local Plan employment policies included a Business Needs and Commercial Property Market Assessment; the Enterprise M3 Commercial Property Market Study; and a New Forest Business Needs Survey. The evidence concluded that there was a realistic future demand for 600 – 900m<sup>2</sup> of new B Use Class employment floorspace per annum equating to a total requirement of 12,000 to 18,000m<sup>2</sup> over the Local Plan period 2016-2036.
- 6.8 The independent Inspectors' Report into the employment policies in the current Local Plan (2019) concluded in paragraphs 166 – 168 that,
- “Historically, records show that since 1988 employment floorspace has been delivered at a rate of just under 900m<sup>2</sup> per annum...there is no evidence before us to suggest that the rate of employment development would slow down in the future or that the approach would stifle economic growth...we consider the approach of relying on windfall development in order to meet the employment land requirement to be a reasonable and justified one within the context of the National Park.”
- 6.9 The Report also supported the planning policies on sustainable tourism and camping, concluding policy SP46 (Sustainable Tourism Development), “...strikes an appropriate balance between the need to protect the special qualities of the National Park whilst also supporting sustainable tourism.” In terms of policy DP47 (Holiday parks and campsites), the Report concluded, “...given that this small geographical area is already well supplied by camping and caravan bed spaces, we consider that the approach strikes an appropriate balance between the National Park purposes whilst recognising the important role of tourism in the local economy.”

### **Monitoring data**

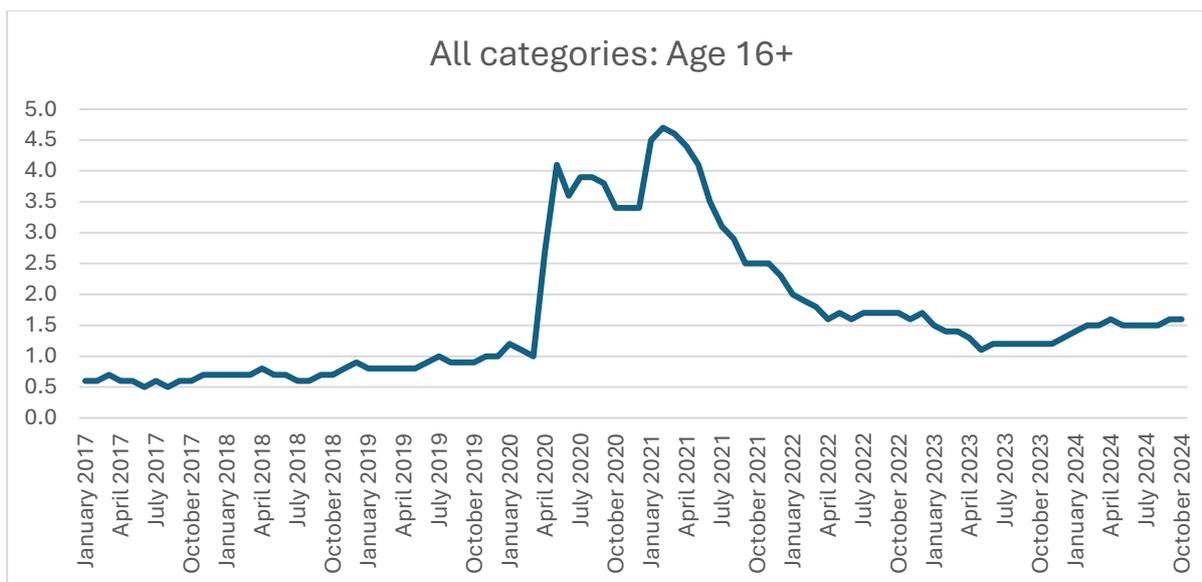
- 6.10 Each year we publish an Annual Monitoring Report which assesses the performance of the adopted local planning policies – see [Monitoring - New Forest National Park Authority](#).

6.11 The most recent Annual Monitoring Report was published in January 2025 and highlighted there is a stock of sites with planning permission for industrial and office uses totalling 1,135 m<sup>2</sup> floorspace. Whilst there was no increase in employment floorspace in the 2023 / 2024 monitoring period, there remains a stock of sites with planning permission for a range of business and industrial uses throughout the National Park.

6.12 Monitoring since the start of the current Local Plan period in 2016 indicates the following trends relevant to the review of the local planning policies:

- Over the reporting period April 2016 – March 2024 (the most recent period for which data is available), there has been an overall net gain of just under +4,000m<sup>2</sup> of industrial and office floorspace completed within the New Forest National Park. This equates to an annualised average net gain of just under +550m<sup>2</sup>. This is slightly under the estimated annual future demand figure of 600 – 900m<sup>2</sup> per annum made at the Local Plan Examination in 2018 – 2019. This is in part due to the impact of national permitted development rights – see below.
- There remains a stock of sites with planning permission for industrial and office uses within the National Park. Over the Local Plan period since 2016 this has fluctuated between 3,532m<sup>2</sup> and 1,135m<sup>2</sup>.
- The Government introduced changes to the system of national permitted development rights in May 2013, including the change of use from office buildings to dwellings which was made permanent in October 2015. Over the monitoring period April 2016 – March 2024 there have been more than 11 office to residential conversions resulting in some 39 dwellings completed within the New Forest National Park which did not require full planning permission from the Authority (and therefore the provisions of the development plan were not engaged).

6.13 Unemployment within the National Park has remained at lower levels than the South East and the UK as a whole over the last decade and currently stands at 1.6%.



Unemployment trends in New Forest National Park – Jan 2017 to Oct 2024

### Headline conclusions of the self-assessment

- 6.14 We have undertaken an assessment of our adopted local planning policies in the Local Plan against current national planning policy to identify the areas of the Local Plan that remain consistent with national planning policy; and those areas where a focused review would be beneficial.
- 6.15 Chapter 6 of the NPPF (December 2024) covers ‘Building a strong and competitive economy, setting out national planning policy to positive support sustainable economic growth. In relation to economic policies in the current Local Plan, the main headline conclusions of our self-assessment of compatibility are as follows.

The evidence base that informed the adopted Local Plan supported the decision not to allocate employment land; and to rely on windfall development guided by criteria-based policies to ensure new employment development is of an appropriate nature. Monitoring indicates that employment land has continued to come forward in the National Park through windfall development. However, national permitted development rights allowing conversion from offices to residential uses remain a concern. The evidence base on employment land provision in the National Park will be updated to inform the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan.

The National Park’s four defined villages continue to support a mix of uses, with vacancy rates in the village centres largely unchanged since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019.

The Solent Freeport includes several tax and customs site adjacent to the National Park (including the Fawley Waterside site that is partly within the Park). At the time of the independent examination into the adopted Local Plan (2018/19), the Inspectors concluded that the National Park’s location

between the urban areas of Bournemouth and Southampton (and the strong economic reliance on these areas) meant the Authority's position of not factoring in job growth forecasts into the housing requirement for the National Park was justified given the statutory framework for National Parks. The Government has stated that the Freeport designation does not undermine the protections afforded to National Parks.

### **Evidence base studies to inform the Local Plan Review**

- 6.16 We are in the process of undertaking a **qualitative assessment** of the existing employment sites within the National Park. This is based on established criteria to assess the quality of existing employment sites.
- 6.17 We are also working with our neighbouring local planning authority of New Forest District Council on a comprehensive **economic needs assessment**. The work is due to report later in 2025 and will form an integral part of the evidence base to inform the economy and employment policies in the Authority's Local Plan review. The assessment will include evidence-based recommendations on the likely future need for employment land and premises to inform the local plan, potential site allocations, and planning policies that support the local economy.

### **Future policy options**

- 6.18 With regard to the local economy we will ensure the revised Local Plan:
- Meets the local employment needs arising within the National Park. The approach will be informed by the updated evidence base on economic needs. At this stage it is envisaged that employment land will continue to be brought forward through criteria-based policies, rather than allocations.
  - Sets out policies that sustain the vitality and viability of the village centres in the four Defined Villages. With the national Use Classes Order having been amended since the current Local Plan was adopted in 2019, we will need to review the relevant local planning policies.
  - Supports the visitor economy of the National Park through a review of the existing criteria-based policies (including those on visitor accommodation and campsites/holiday parks). At this stage it is envisaged that the provision of additional holiday parks and campsites will continue to be guided by criteria-based policies and the use of Article 4 Directions. The revised policies will consider the relationship between planning policies and other relevant legislation for campsites and holiday parks.
  - Sets out the Authority's commitment to working with neighbouring planning authorities and partners on the major employment development proposals associated with the Solent Freeport. National policy is clear that major development should only be supported in exceptional circumstances and this will be reflected in the Local Plan review.

### **What do you think?**

Q1. Do you consider the current Local Plan policies on the local economy still broadly align with national policy?

Q2. Are there any additional key issues that we have missed?

Q3: Do you have views on the planning policy approach to the range of uses within the defined shopping areas of the National Park?

Q4: Do you support our proposed approach to campsite development and continued use of Article 4 Directions?

Q5: What should be the local planning policy approach to the impacts of national permitted development rights on the local economy (e.g. office to residential)?

## 7 Sustainable transport and access

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### Introduction

- 7.1 Transport infrastructure through the National Park is broadly good with strategic roads comprising the M27, A31 and A36 linking the urban areas of south Hampshire, Bournemouth and Poole and Wiltshire, and four mainline passenger railway stations. There are a number of regular scheduled public bus services through and across the National Park, together with community transport schemes and seasonal recreational open top buses serving the large visitor market during the summer.
- 7.2 As the Highways Authorities responsible for the general maintenance of the rest of the road network Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council both have adopted Local Transport Plans (LTP) setting out a long term vision for how the transport network will be developed. Hampshire County Council's LTP4 covers the period up to 2050 and represents a shift away from planning for vehicles, towards planning for people and places. Wiltshire Council is currently drafting their LTP4 which will cover the period 2025 to 2039.
- 7.3 The LTPs will be reflecting national policy set out in the Government's [Decarbonising Transport Strategy](#) (2020) which seeks to fully decarbonise transport by 2050, with greater promotion of cycling and walking, through the publication of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). The LCWIPs will propose a network of cycling corridors and core walking zones, with a draft LCWIP currently being prepared for the New Forest area and one adopted for the Waterside area of New Forest District.
- 7.4 One of the key objectives of the Partnership Plan for the New Forest National Park 2022 – 2027 is achieving net zero with nature. This is based on seeking significant cuts in land-based carbon emissions, secured through restoring natural habitats and enabling carbon capture.

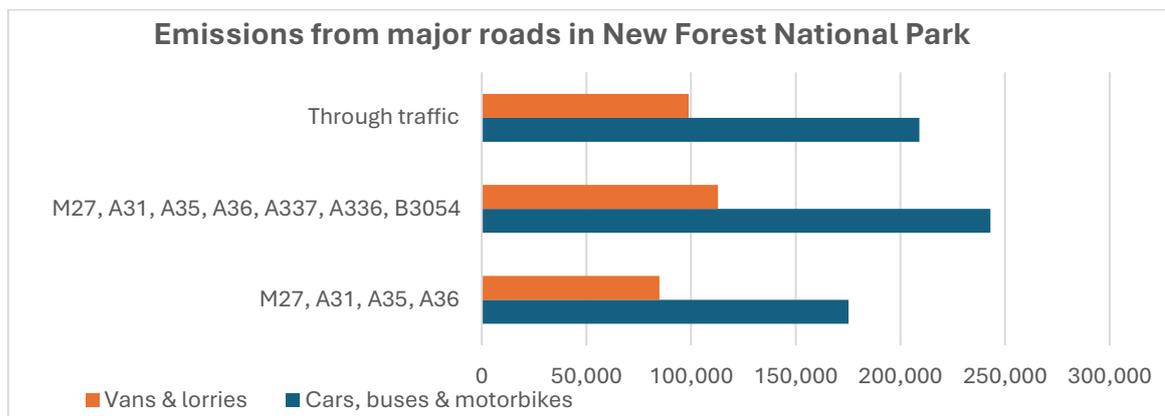
### Approach to transport in the adopted Local Plan (2019)

- 7.5 The strategic objective of the transport policies in the adopted Local Plan is to reduce the impacts of traffic on the special qualities of the National Park and provide a range of sustainable transport alternatives within the Park.
- 7.6 Our transport and access policies reflect the limited scope and remit that we have in influencing transport issues within the National Park. However, in preparing the Plan we liaised with National Highways, and Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council as the relevant Highways Authorities in ensuring that our policies broadly aligned with national and local transport policy and any proposed schemes. We will continue to work with these partners in reviewing our transport and access policies.

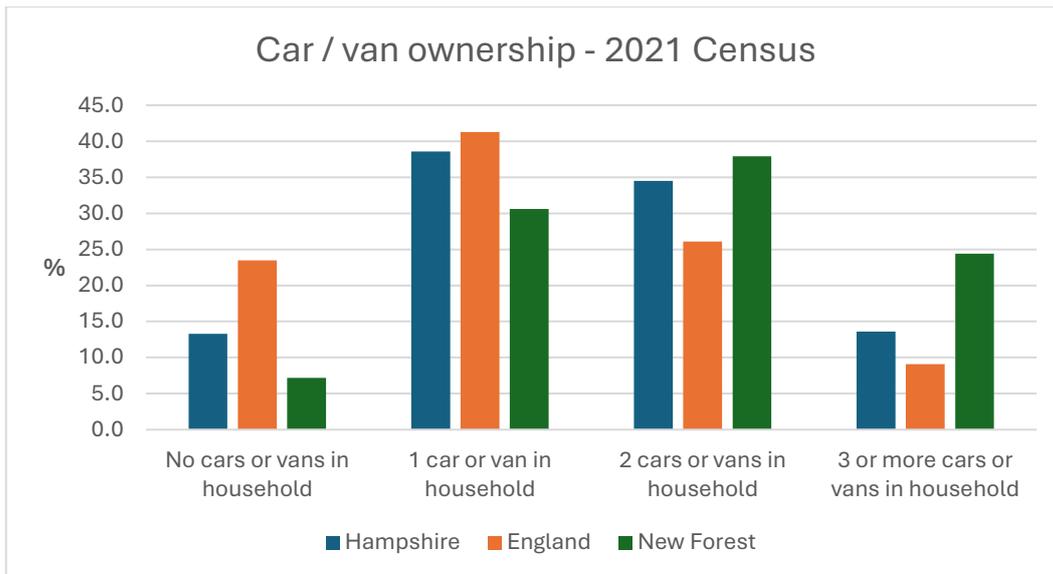
7.7 Our current local plan policies support development that promotes safer access and more sustainable forms of transport within the National Park, such as safeguarding disused railway lines and roads from development that would compromise their future re-use as sustainable transport routes.

**What the evidence tells us**

7.8 The New Forest is one of the most visited national parks in England and traffic within the National Park is a major issue for many residents and visitors, especially seasonal traffic congestion. The total carbon footprint in the National Park was 522 kilo tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, with the largest emissions coming from road transport. Only 7% of visitors to the National Park are car-free.



7.9 The New Forest also has some of the highest car ownership in the country and most visitors travel to the area by car. With a limited range of alternative sustainable transport options, an ageing population and lack of connectivity, the opportunities for active travel for some journey types are more limited. The Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4 shows that whilst there was a reduction in traffic in Hampshire during the pandemic lockdowns, traffic levels quickly bounced back to more typical ‘pre-Covid’ levels.



7.10 There are over 100km of off-road cycle paths within the National Park, although they are not always well connected to enable round trips between destinations. New Forest organisations are currently reviewing walking and cycling opportunities within the National Park through initiatives including the New Forest Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan. Many of the country lanes in the National Park are also well used by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. However, these also potentially have free-roaming livestock, with 92 commoners’ animals either injured or killed on the New Forest’s roads in 2023.

7.11 Whilst the scale of development in the National Park is limited and will not require significant infrastructure upgrades, development occurring outside the Park’s boundary may have implications for transport infrastructure in and around the National Park. In particular, proposed development in the Waterside area of New Forest District, such as the former power station site at Fawley, will have implications for road and rail transport infrastructure, including potential improvements to the A326 and the waterside railway line. A planning application for the widening of sections of the A326 – which falls partially within the New Forest National Park – is expected to be received by the Authority later in 2025. Although there currently remains uncertainty regarding the redevelopment of sites in the Waterside area, we will ensure the Plan sets out the appropriate considerations for any necessary transport infrastructure to serve any proposed major development in and around this area during the lifetime of the Plan.

**Headline conclusions of the self-assessment**

7.12 In the adopted Local Plan we have focused new development on the four most sustainable settlements in the National Park, which have the broadest range of community facilities, employment opportunities and transport links. National policy continues to ensure that this remains a fundamental principle in setting out where new development should take place.

7.13 National and local transport policy places greater emphasis on sustainable transport modes, particularly active travel by cycling and walking. This not only

reflects the benefits for the climate emergency in reducing the need to travel by car, but also the benefits for the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals. The existing policies currently support improvements to access such as improving connectivity, but we will review them to ensure that they reflect this greater emphasis in national and local policy.

7.14 The relatively limited level of small-scale development anticipated within the National Park over the next 20 years is unlikely to require major infrastructure changes. However, there may be implications for transport infrastructure in the National Park arising from redevelopment of major sites outside the National Park boundary or on strategic road networks through the Park. We will need to consider whether the current policies set out sufficient criteria to assess the impact of such developments on the National Park.

### **Future policy options**

7.15 In terms of sustainable transport and access in the National Park we will ensure that the revised Local Plan:

- Continues to encourage sustainable transport modes, particularly active travel by cycling and walking, in line with the emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) covering the National Park; and
- Sets out appropriate criteria to assess any major infrastructure changes within the National Park.

### **What do you think?**

Q1. Do you consider the current Local Plan transport policies still broadly align with local and national policy?

Q2. Are there any additional key issues that we have missed?

Q3: Do you have views on whether the current transport policies adequately respond to the climate emergency?

Q4: Do you support the current cycle and car parking standards, or consider that they should be reviewed to support sustainable transport?

## 8 How to respond to this consultation

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- 8.1 The consultation period runs from early February to mid-March 2025 and full details can be found on our website at [Consultations - New Forest National Park Authority](#), including an online consultation survey
- 8.2 This consultation document is also available for inspection at our office at Lymington Town Hall.
- 8.3 Alternatively you can complete a response form and submit by post to: Policy Team, New Forest National Park Authority, Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington SO41 9ZG or by email to [policy@newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:policy@newforestnpa.gov.uk).
- 8.4 All the representations made during the six-week consultation period will be considered as we prepare the next stage in the partial review process – the timetable for which is set out below. As is outlined in this ‘Strategic Direction of Travel’ document, there are a series of important evidence base studies underway (covering matters such as local housing needs, open space provision, gypsy and traveller needs) that will also inform the preparation of the draft revised Local Plan and these will be concluding in the first half of 2025.

## 9 Next steps

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9.1 The key milestones in the Local Plan review process are set out in our [Local Development Scheme](#) (July 2024) , and summarised below:

Stage	Timetable
Consultation on Regulation 18 'Direction of Travel' – this consultation	February – March 2025
Consultation on initial draft Plan (Regulation 18)	November – December 2025
Consultation on proposed Submission draft Local Plan (Regulation 19)	July – September 2026
Submission to Secretary of State for examination	January 2027
Independent examination	April – June 2027
Consultation on proposed modifications	July – September 2027
Adoption	December 2027

9.2 There is a degree of uncertainty at a national level in the plan-making process due to the recent implementation of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (including the proposed introduction of National Development Management Policies, NDMPs), and further proposed changes to national planning policy set out by the Government. This strategic 'Direction of Travel' consultation document has been informed by the latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024). Any formal changes to the timetable for the review of the New Forest National Park Local Plan will be set out in updates to the Local Development Scheme.

**Effectiveness of adopted Local Plan policies**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) requires that Local Plans should be reviewed every five years to assess whether they require updating. We undertook a review in 2024 using a template produced by the Planning Advisory Service, to assess whether the policies in our adopted Local Plan still align with national planning policy. This forms the basis of the following assessment of the individual plan policies, but also incorporates consideration of the effectiveness of the policies based on evidence from the Authority’s Annual Monitoring Reports and implementation of the policies through the development management process.

It should also be noted that there may also be additional new policies required, particularly in light of emerging evidence base studies and further engagement with key organisations and local communities.

Review shows the policy remains largely consistent with national planning policies and reflects local priorities.	<b>Green</b>
Review shows the policy may benefit from an update to reflect evolving national policies and local priorities.	<b>Amber</b>
Review shows that the policy may require more significant updates to reflect current national policy and local priorities.	<b>Red</b>

Policy	Title	RAG status	Justification
SP1	Supporting sustainable development		National policy continues to recognise the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies differently in National Parks. Policy SP1 supports sustainable development within the context of the statutory Park purposes and related duty. It is consistent with paragraph 11 and footnote 7 of the revised NPPF (December 2024).
DP2	General development principles		These key development principles remain appropriate for a nationally protected landscape, where small-scale incremental changes can affect landscape character, and continue to align with the NPPF (December 2024).
SP3	Major development in the National Park		Policy SP3 is consistent with national policy which reiterates that major development should only be supported in National Parks in ‘exceptional circumstances’, with the three tests in policy SP3 reflecting the NPPF (December 2024).
SP4	Spatial strategy		Policy SP4 sets out the overall spatial strategy for the Plan area in accordance with the principles of the NPPF. Alternative spatial options will be considered through the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA process.

SP5	Nature conservation sites of international importance		The national planning policy and legal protections for nature conservation sites of international importance remain. The Local Plan review will be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment and appropriate assessment.
SP6	The natural environment		The declaration of a nature and climate emergency, the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain for certain developments and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Hampshire & Wiltshire provide an opportunity to review the policy approach.
SP7	Landscape character		The statutory National Park purposes remain in place and the recent revisions to the NPPF (2024) sections on National Parks are unaltered.
DP8	Safeguarding and improving water resources		The climate change emergency and need to ensure new development is 'nutrient neutral' support the overall direction of policy DP8.
SP9	Green infrastructure		Green infrastructure continues to form part of the package of measures required to mitigate the impacts of planned development on the internationally designated habitat of the New Forest and Solent coast.
DP10	Open space		Open space is part of the infrastructure required to support local communities. Revised policy to be informed by updated evidence on need.
SP11	Climate Change		The declaration of a nature and climate emergency in the New Forest National Park since the adoption of the current Local Plan in 2019 means policy SP11 is 'in scope' for the review of the local planning policies.
DP12	Flood risk		The evidence base for the Local Plan review includes an updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) which will inform any revisions to policy DP12.
DP13	Coastal development		The review of the Local Plan will consider the designation of Coastal Change Management Areas and the latest Shoreline Management Plan.
SP14	Renewable energy		The review of the adopted Local Plan will consider the policy position in SP14 and the continued need to support appropriate renewable energy proposals that do not conflict with the statutory National Park purposes. The emphasis in national policy for National Parks is on small-scale schemes that support local communities.

SP15	Tranquillity		The policy remains aligned with the NPPF (2024). However, the relative tranquillity of the National Park is one of its defined 'special qualities' and a revised Policy SP15 will play a role in enabling the public to understand and enjoy it – linked to the second statutory Park purpose. This includes the impact of light pollution on the National Park.
SP16	The historic and built environment		The NPPF (2024) requires local planning policies to protect designated and non-designated heritage assets. Policy SP16 is consistent with this overall national policy approach.
SP17	Local distinctiveness		The local distinctiveness of the New Forest National Park is a key part of its character and this policy remains effective and aligned with national policy.
DP18	Design principles		The NPPF (2024) continues to require policies to achieve high quality design and beautiful places and buildings. Policy D18 continues to be aligned with national policy in this respect.
SP19	New residential development in the National Park		The review of this policy will be informed by the latest evidence on housing need and the monitoring of completions in the National Park.
SP20	Specialist housing for older people (Use Class C2)		The principles of policy SP20 – which relate to the Authority's socio-economic duty to local communities in the National Park – remain valid.
SP21	The size of new dwellings		The review of this policy will be informed by the latest evidence on housing need. The policy has been successful since it was introduced in 2019.
SP22	Land at Whartons Lane, Ashurst		Full planning permission has been granted for this site and development has commenced. The Defined Village boundary of Ashurst will be amended to reflect the consented scheme.
SP23	Land at Ashurst Hospital		Full planning permission has yet to be issued and so policy SP23 will be retained to guide the development of the site. The Defined Village boundary of Ashurst will be reviewed once development is complete.
SP24	Land at the Lyndhurst Park Hotel, Lyndhurst		Full planning permission has been granted for this site and development has commenced. The Defined Village boundary of Lyndhurst will be amended to reflect the consented scheme.

SP25	Land south of Church Lane, Sway		Full planning permission has been granted for this site and development has commenced. The Defined Village boundary of Sway will be amended to reflect the consented scheme.
SP26	Land adjacent to the former Fawley Power Station		Policy SP26 will be reviewed, with the applicant formally withdrawing an outline planning application for a residentially-led scheme in Summer 2024. The site forms part of the Solent Freeport sites on the Waterside.
SP27	Affordable housing provision within the Defined Villages and on allocated sites		The review of this policy will be informed by the latest evidence on housing need. Updated national policy for development in National Parks continues to emphasise the delivery of affordable housing to meet local needs (typically through local connection criteria).
SP28	Rural exceptions sites		The light touch review of this policy will be informed by the latest evidence on housing need and the latest national planning policy position.
SP29	New Forest commoners' dwellings		The importance of commoning to the New Forest National Park justifies a bespoke policy, which will be reviewed based on the experiences of applying the current policy since 2019.
SP30	New Forest estate workers' dwellings		The contribution the larger Estates in the New Forest make to the delivery of the statutory National Park purposes (and related duty) justifies the retention of the policy.
DP31	Agricultural and forestry workers' dwellings		The light touch review of this policy will consider whether any elements of the previous PPS guidance should be incorporated within the policy. The review is an opportunity to clarify how policy DP31 relates to other policies (e.g. SP31 on the size of new dwellings).
DP32	Removal of agricultural occupancy conditions		With around 100 dwellings subject to agricultural occupancy conditions it is appropriate to retain this policy on their removal, which remains fit for purpose.
SP33	Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople		The review of policy SP33 will be informed by updated evidence on the need for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople provision arising from within the New Forest National Park.
DP34	Residential character of the Defined Villages		The Defined Villages are important parts of the designated National Park and this policy recognising their character and local distinctiveness remains appropriate and effective.

DP35	Replacement dwellings		The importance of a local planning policy on replacement dwellings was recognised by the Inspectors in 2019. The objectives of the policy remain valid and the review will consider the detailed policy wording and the sustainability of supporting the replacement of habitable dwellings.
DP36	Extensions to dwellings		The importance of a local planning policy on extensions to dwellings was recognised by the Inspectors in 2019. The objectives of the policy remain valid and the review will consider the detailed policy wording and the best way to deliver the aims of the policy.
DP37	Outbuildings		In a nationally protected landscape it remains appropriate to have a local planning policy on outbuildings. The review will consider the inter-relationship between DP37 on Outbuildings and policy DP36 on Extensions to dwellings; as well as the siting, design and scale of outbuildings.
SP38	Infrastructure provision and developer contributions		The National Park Authority does not intend to implement the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the revised Local Plan will be subject to a Whole Plan viability assessment in due course.
SP39	Local community facilities		This policy plays an important role in fostering the socio-economic well-being of local communities within the National Park, and remains aligned with national policy.
DP40	Change of use from retail in the Defined Villages		Changes in the national Use Classes Order mean the objectives of policy DP40 will need to be reviewed. Some authorities are using local planning policies to address the increase in fast food takeaways, particularly near schools.
DP41	Retail development outside the Defined Villages		Policy DP41 guides decisions on proposals outside the Defined Villages, linked to the Authority's socio-economic duty.
SP42	Business and employment development		This policy will be reviewed in light of the updated evidence base on local economic and employment needs in the National Park.
SP43	Existing employment sites		This policy retains existing employment sites to provide local employment opportunities and remains effective.
SP44	Redevelopment of existing employment sites		Policy SP44 remains effective in ensuring the landscape impact of redeveloping existing employment sites is considered, in accordance with the first statutory National Park purpose.

DP45	Extensions to non-residential buildings and uses		Policy DP45 seeks to avoid potential adverse impacts on the National Park and is appropriate within a nationally protected landscape.
SP46	Sustainable tourism development		The approach to visitor accommodation will be considered as part of the Local Plan review. The viability of smaller tourism business is material and such uses remain under pressure from higher value uses.
DP47	Extensions to holiday parks and camp sites		Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019 the Authority has issued two Park-wide Article 4 Directions relating to temporary campsites. The policy approach to campsites and holiday parks will be considered through the review.
SP48	The land-based economy		This policy supports the land-based economy – key to the socio-economic well-being of local communities – and is considered fit-for-purpose. The policy also seeks to protect back-up grazing land, an important issue in the New Forest.
DP49	Re-use of buildings outside the Defined Villages		The policy supports the re-use of redundant buildings for employment purposes, where the re-use is appropriate to the setting. This is considered justified within a nationally protected landscape.
DP50	Agricultural and forestry buildings		The policy supports the agricultural and forestry sector that help to sustain the New Forest's landscape and local economy.
DP51	Recreational horse keeping		The policy approach of recognising the contribution of horse-keeping to the history and economy of the New Forest, while also factoring in landscape impacts, remains relevant.
DP52	Field shelters and stables		This policy ensures applications for field shelters and stables consider landscape impacts and remains relevant.
DP53	Maneges		This policy ensures applications for maneges consider landscape impacts and remains relevant.
SP54	Transport Infrastructure		The Local Plan Review provides an opportunity to consider the new Local Transport Plans prepared by Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council; and any links with the New Forest Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan.

SP55	Access		The Local Plan Review provides an opportunity to consider any links with the New Forest Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan.
Annex 1	New Forest National Park Special Qualities		The 'special qualities' of the New Forest National Park were defined following public consultation and are central to the delivery of the second statutory National Park purpose.
Annex 2	Car parking & cycle standards		The NPPF supports the inclusion of car parking standards, the details of which will be assessed as part of the Local Plan review in liaison with the two highway authorities for the National Park area. The provision standards may play a role in supporting modal shift.
Annex 3	Local connections criteria		Local connection criteria for affordable housing and C2 development ensures new development meets the needs of local communities within the National Park – in accordance with the Authority's socio-economic duty.