Temporary ‘pop-up’ campsites

Guidance for complying with the Habitats Regulations – April 2026

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (the ‘GPDO’) provides an exemption for temporary ‘pop-up’ campsites[1] which allows the use of land as a camping site for up to 28 days a year without the need for planning permission.

However, as with all permitted development rights, the exemption for ‘pop-up’ campsites is subject to the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the ‘Habitats Regulations’). The Habitats Regulations protect rare wildlife and habitats in designated nature conservation sites[2]. Over half of all the land in the New Forest National Park is designated for this protection. Given the range and scale of internationally protected nature conservation sites in the New Forest and on its coastline along the Solent, these legal considerations are particularly important in the National Park. Details of how development can impact these protected sites, the evidence of assessments of these impacts, the need for mitigation, and how applicants can comply with the Habitats Regulations is outlined on the following website pages:

- Mitigating Impacts on Protected Areas - New Forest National Park Authority
- Mitigating recreational and nutrient impacts - New Forest National Park Authority

The Habitats Regulations (Paragraphs 75 to 78) set out the process that any development coming forward under the GPDO needs to follow to ensure compliance with the Regulations. **It is a condition of any permitted development right that development which is likely to have a significant effect on a designated site cannot commence without the approval of the local planning authority under the Habitats Regulations, and this approval must be given before the development is carried out.** This approval can only be given where the local planning authority is certain that development will not adversely affect the integrity of a protected site.

The first stage of the process is to determine whether new temporary campsites will have a likely significant effect on the designated sites. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)[3] prepared for the National Park Local Plan has already tested

[1] Permitted by Schedule 2, Part 4, Class B of the GPDO

[2] The designated sites that could be affected by the proposed development are New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC); New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA); New Forest Ramsar Site; the Avon Valley SPA; Avon Valley Ramsar site; River Avon SAC; the Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC; Solent Maritime SAC; Solent and Southampton Water SPA; Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site.

[3] See https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/document/habitats-regulations-assessment-of-new-forest-npa-local-plan-reg-19/ and https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/document/review-of-habitats-regulations-assessment-of-local-plan-people-over-wind/

whether development would have a likely significant effect on the internationally designated sites in the National Park. It details the key aspects and features of the designated sites and the types of impacts that could have a likely significant impact on them, including the impacts from new visitor accommodation. The Local Plan HRA concluded that it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects from either recreational pressures or from changes to water quality on the designated sites from new housing or any form of overnight visitor accommodation.

The Authority has also carried out a HRA screening for temporary campsites, which draws the same conclusion for temporary campsites relying on permitted development rights. It is not possible to rule out likely significant effects on the internationally protected sites of the New Forest from additional overnight visitor accommodation in relation to both increased recreational impacts and impacts on water quality.

These conclusions mean that approval from the Authority is required under Regulations 75-77 of the Habitats Regulations before any new temporary campsite pitches can be used.

The Authority will make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the new campsite development for the protected sites in view of their conservation objectives. This process covers both the recreational impacts of development on the New Forest and Solent designations; and the need to achieve 'nutrient neutrality' for development in the Solent and Avon catchments, covered in more detail below.

To allow the Authority to complete this assessment, the applicant should fill in the HRA Information Form, which can be downloaded from the Authority's website at Mitigating Impacts on Protected Areas - New Forest National Park Authority **and submit it to the Authority at planning@newforestnpa.gov.uk**

In most cases, once the form has been submitted and assessed by the Authority, mitigation will be required prior to any issue of approval. Subject to demonstrating that satisfactory mitigation of the impacts of the development on protected sites will be put in place, a decision for approval under the Habitats Regulations will be made within 4 weeks.

Recreational Impacts on the New Forest and Solent coast designated sites

The HRA of the Local Plan concludes that, prior to consideration of mitigation, adverse recreation effects on the integrity of the designated sites cannot be ruled out. Therefore, mitigation is required to enable compliance with the Habitats Regulations.

The Authority has devised a package of appropriate mitigation measures in a Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD[4] that will allow most visitor accommodation proposals to mitigate their recreational impacts on the New Forest SPA, SAC and

[4] see https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/document/revised-habitat-mitigation-scheme-spd/

Ramsar designations. Financial contributions to this Scheme will be used to implement a range of measures that will mitigate the recreational impacts on the designated sites. This approach is supported by Natural England.

However, due to the scale, type, or proximity of the proposed campsite in relation to the designated sites, avoidance or mitigation by the use of a financial contribution to the Mitigation Scheme may not be possible in all cases.

With regard to financial contributions to the Authority's Scheme, applicants will need to calculate the amount payable in accordance with the formula, using the number of pitches and number of days open during the year, as set out in Appendix 1. The contribution for a 28 day period is shown in Section 5(a) of the HRA Information Form.

If the applicant wishes to secure appropriate mitigation from the Authority's Habitat Mitigation Scheme to addressing recreational impacts on the New Forest's designated sites, **please indicate on the HRA Information Form if a contribution to the Scheme is proposed and the amount to be made**.

Applicants, however, are not precluded from proposing their own mitigation measures. When considering these measures, the evidence presented will need to allow the Authority to be certain that there will be no likely significant adverse effects from the proposed development on the designated sites. Applicants will need to provide sufficiently detailed information about the potential impacts of their proposed development and mitigation measures on the designated features, species and habitats of all the internationally protected sites to demonstrate conclusively to the Authority that it will comply with the Habitat Regulations and there will be no likely significant adverse effects on the designated sites. This will need to take into consideration the impacts and conclusions outlined in the HRA for the Local Plan and the proposal's potential impacts in combination with all other planned development that may have recreational impacts in the National Park and its surrounding areas. Under a precautionary principle, if the applicant does not demonstrate certainty that the development (with any proposed mitigation) will not impact the integrity of the designated sites, approval will not be granted.

Evidence indicates the new development, including temporary campsites, can also result in increased recreational pressures on the internationally designated sites of the Solent coast. These impacts were originally limited to overwintering birds and therefore temporary campsites – which typically operate between April and September – did not need to consider impacts. However, following a review of the adopted recreation mitigation strategy for the Solent and the evidence that underpins it, it has been concluded that in-combination impacts from recreational pressures on summer breeding birds cannot be rule out. Under the precautionary principle, temporary campsites operating within the 5.6km 'zone of influence' of the Solent designated sites must therefore address their impacts. This can be achieved through a proportionate contribution to the updated Bird Aware Solent recreation mitigation strategy - see Our strategy - Bird Aware Solent

Water Quality impacts

Natural England has advised there is a likely significant effect on the Solent's designated sites due to the increase in wastewater from new housing and any other development providing overnight accommodation which would discharge into the Solent. Therefore, prior to mitigation, there is considered to be a potential likely significant effect on the Solent's designated sites alone and in-combination through increased levels of nitrates. These designations cover most of the coastline of the New Forest National Park and the majority of the land area of the National Park falls within the wider Solent catchment area. Therefore, mitigation is required to enable compliance with the Regulations.

The internationally-designated habitats of the River Avon to the west of the New Forest are also affected by elevated levels of nutrients – in this case phosphates. Any proposals for net new dwellings and other forms of overnight accommodation (including campsites) in this catchment must demonstrate it is phosphate neutral. In the absence of mitigation, it is considered that there would be a potential likely significant effect on the River Avon designated site due to phosphates arising from new residential and visitor accommodation development. Therefore, mitigation is required to enable compliance with the Habitat Regulations.

Like applicants for new residential development or other forms of visitor accommodation, landowners of campsites need to demonstrate effective mitigation for either nitrates entering the Solent designated sites; or phosphates in the River Avon catchment to the west of the National Park. The requirement for nutrient neutrality in new development applies across the whole of the National Park and landowners should prepare a site-specific 'nutrient budget' setting out how the nutrients arising from the planned development will be managed. **Please use the latest nutrient budget calculator for either the Solent or River Avon at Using the nutrient neutrality calculators - GOV.UK to determine the amount of mitigation required and to read Natural England's advice on achieving nutrient neutrality.**

If, having undertaken the nutrient budget, the conclusion is that campsite development will result in a net increase in nitrates (Solent catchment), or phosphates (River Avon catchment), mitigation will be required to satisfy the legal requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

Potential mitigation options include:

- Retirement of intensively managed agricultural land elsewhere within the landholding, which would serve to reduce nutrient pollution at catchment-level as a result of the discontinuation of fertilisation and cultivation.
- Wetland creation to intercept run-off into watercourses.
- The purchasing of nutrient off-setting credits for sites elsewhere within the relevant catchment.
- Having the foulwater 'tankered' off site by a licenced operator (on the understanding that this would not have water quality impacts elsewhere in a catchment similarly affected by the requirement for nutrient neutrality).

Mitigation measures should be proportionate to the scale of the development (and associated impacts) proposed. In order to demonstrate compliance with the Habitats Regulations, temporary campsite operators could demonstrate that all waste is effectively removed from the site and will not eventually (through waste-water treatment works) make its way into either the Solent or the River Avon, or other catchments affected by nutrients. Alternatively, some landowners may have the ability to manage nutrients on-site through effective land management; or off-site through off-setting schemes (as outlined above). The Authority will consider any of these mitigation proposals on their ability to satisfy the Habitats Regulations. In the absence of being able to satisfy these requirements, the campsite use would no longer benefit from permitted development rights and the Authority would not be able to grant approval for the proposal.

Appendix 1: Contribution levels to the Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme to address in-combination recreational impacts on the New Forest's designated sites

The Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD[5] provides a set of measures that are designed to mitigate the recreational impacts on the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar designated sites. The full contribution level is reduced for visitor accommodation based on the maximum occupancy during the year, and this principle will apply to temporary campsites. Therefore, if a temporary campsite was open for x days a year, the contribution should only reflect the duration that the campsite is open and therefore only x /365 of the full contribution to the Habitat Mitigation Scheme will be payable.

Furthermore, the £4,540 'full' contribution in the Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD is a one-off contribution that secures mitigation 'in-perpetuity' – this in-perpetuity element of the contribution would not be required as the temporary campsite is only looking for mitigation for the one-year period that equates to its permission to operate that year. The developer contribution for the in-perpetuity element (ie funding the long term 20-100 year mitigation) equates to £2,924 with the remaining £1,616 contribution being the element to fund current mitigation during the Local Plan period. It is logical, therefore, that a contribution from a 'temporary' campsite would not include the in-perpetuity element but would only need to mitigate for the year of its operation.

Consequently, to calculate a contribution for just the one year that the campsite has permission to operate would be:

The contribution of £1,616 for 2026. This then needs to be divided by 20, being the number of years in the Local Plan period (from 2016-2036) to give the contribution for just one year.

Hence £1,616 / 20 = £80.80 per year, per pitch. Then this £80.80 would be 'discounted' by the proportion of the year that the camp site will be open.

Therefore, the contribution for the campsite for 2026 will be:

£80.80 x (number of days open)/365 = £ per pitch for each year of operation

For Example:

- a campsite open for 28 days, the contribution is £80.80 x 28/365 = £6.20 per pitch per year.

All contributions are subject to an inflation increase each year.

[5] See https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/document/revised-habitat-mitigation-scheme-spd/

Contribution levels to the Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme to address in-combination recreational impacts on the Solent's designated sites

The Revised Bird Aware Solent Revised Strategy September 2024 - Bird Aware Solent – sets out an agreed package of mitigation measures to address recreational impacts arising from new development. This includes a contribution figure for temporary camping uses which only operate between 1 April and 30 September each year, with a worked example set out below:

- £201 contribution to fund recreational mitigation measures for the Solent coast sites from campsites operating between 1 April and 30 September.
- This contribution is for an 80-year period, equating to £2.51 per pitch per annum (i.e. £201 divided by 80 to give the figure for one pitch for one year).