AM 753/26

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 27 NOVEMBER 2026

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN REVIEW REGULATION 22 SUBMISSION

Report by: David Illsley, Head of Planning & Place

Summary:

The National Parks Circular (2010) confirms planning powers are a 'vital tool' for managing the impact of development on landscape and biodiversity; and a key part of conserving and enhancing cultural heritage (including the built heritage of National Park settlements). For these reasons the Government has made national park authorities the sole local planning authorities for their respective areas under Section 4A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. This includes the development management, enforcement and plan-making functions.

The review of the local planning policies for the New Forest National Park commenced in 2024. At the full Authority meeting on 23 July 2026 members approved the Regulation 19 Submission draft New Forest National Park Local Plan 2024 – 2043 for the purposes of public consultation. The statutory consultation period on the draft Plan ran from 17 August to 30 September 2026 and this report (and the draft Consultation Statement in Annex 3) summarises the key headlines from the consultation. This report seeks member endorsement of a schedule of proposed modifications to the draft Plan (Annex 2) prior to its submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination in December 2026. These proposed modifications are minor and it is important to emphasise that more significant matters raised in representations at the Regulation 19 stage will be considered in full through the examination process in 2027 by the Government-appointed Planning Inspector(s).

In July 2026 members also delegated authority to the Head of Planning & Place to submit the draft Local Plan, supporting evidence base and all the representations received during the Regulation 19 consultation stage to the Secretary of State for independent examination before the deadline of the end of December 2026. This report brings members up to speed with the latest Government statement on the submission of draft Local Plans for examination under what is termed the 'legacy system'. The report confirms that the required Government timescales are achievable and asks members to reiterate their previous support for the submission of the draft Local Plan and supporting evidence for independent examination.

Recommendations:

Members:

a) Reiterate their support for the submission of the Regulation 19 Submission draft New Forest National Park Local Plan 2024 – 2043 (Annex 1) and supporting information to the Secretary of State for examination; and

b) Endorse the Schedule of Proposed Modifications to the Submission draft Plan (Annex 2) for submission and consideration through the examination process.

1. Introduction

1.1 At the 23 July 2026 full Authority meeting, members endorsed the Regulation 19 Submission draft New Forest National Park Local Plan 2024 – 2043 and the accompanying updates to the Local Plan Policies Map for the purposes of public consultation. In accordance with the Authority's published Local Development Scheme (2026), Statement of Community Involvement (2023) and national plan-making regulations, the Submission draft Local Plan and supporting information was published for a 6-week period of consultation between 17 August and 30 September 2026.

1.2 During this consultation period the Authority held public drop-in sessions at six venues across the National Park, with 30 hours of public engagement in total. We revised the format of the events from the previous round in late 2025 to include a presentation and question & answer session, which worked well. In addition, an online event was held to enable people who could not make one of the drop-in sessions to engage. All statutory, general and local consultees were directly notified of the start of the consultation, as was everyone who submitted responses at the previous consultation stages in 2025.

1.3 This report summarises the main points raised in the Regulation 19 representations on the draft New Forest National Park Local Plan 2024 – 2043 and the supporting evidence base (including the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment). It also seeks member endorsement of the Schedule of Proposed Modifications set out in Annex 2 to this report for submission alongside the draft Local Plan for examination.

1.4 At the full Authority meeting on 23 July 2026 members supported the submission of the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan and supporting information to the Secretary of State for independent examination in December 2026. This report confirms that this timetable remains achievable and that none of the representations received during the recent Regulation 19 consultation prevent the formal submission of the draft Plan.

1.5 The report therefore recommends that members reiterate their stated support for the submission of the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan for examination. It is through this independent examination process – led by the Government-appointed Planning Inspector(s) – that the soundness and legal compliance of the draft Plan will be thoroughly assessed; and the representations received will be duly considered.

2. Summary of the Regulation 19 consultation responses

2.1 Under Regulation 22 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulation 2012 (as amended) the Authority is required to prepare and submit a statement setting out the following. **Annex 3** to this report (available online only due to the document size) sets out the draft 'Regulation 22 Consultation Statement', which will be finalised for submission alongside the draft Plan in December 2026.

- Which bodies and persons were invited to make representations
- How those bodies and persons were invited to make representations
- A summary of the main issues raised in representations
- How any representations made have been taken into account

2.2 The draft Consultation Statement confirms that representations were received from over 300 respondents during the Regulation 19 consultation period. Chapters 4 (Strategic Policies) and 8 (Vibrant Communities) - which focus on the proposed spatial strategy and associated site allocations – generated the most representations.

2.3 The draft Statement has been arranged in Plan order (Chapters 1 – 10). It comprises a table for each of the 66 draft policies and the section on monitoring & implementation. It should be noted that this is a summary of the key points raised and the Authority's response – it is not a verbatim breakdown of every point raised in the representations.

2.4 Section 4 of the draft Consultation Statement pulls out the key points raised following a review of the Regulation 19 representations, as summarised below:

- Concerns raised regarding the draft Local Plan's approach of not meeting the identified housing needs arising within the National Park in full and the potential impact on the socio-economic well-being of communities within the National Park.

- Representations on whether the proposed spatial strategy (draft policy SP3) is the most appropriate. This includes representations objecting to the proposed settlement hierarchy and the identification of the smaller defined villages; as well as representations promoting sites on the edge of the National Park (adjacent to larger settlements outside the National Park) in meeting identified development needs.

- Local community opposition to the proposed site allocations (for housing and travelling showpeople use) citing impacts on road infrastructure and the lack of public transport opportunities; impacts on landscape character and protected habitats; lack of infrastructure (primarily health and education); loss of local distinctiveness; and the risk from increased flood risk.

- The relevant landowners confirm that the proposed site allocations are available and deliverable within the Local Plan period.

- Concerns that the majority of the identified employment needs are proposed to be met in a single allocation, rather than being distributed on sites across the area.

- Representations seeking greater encouragement for the provision of larger renewable energy schemes, rather than focus on small-scale proposals

- Expressions of support for the proposed 'principal residency condition' for new open market housing; and the local connection criteria for new affordable housing to ensure development meets needs arising within the National Park.

- Representations from some landowners and developers regarding the proposed retention of the existing floorspace limit for net new dwellings (draft policy SP31), the proposed introduction of the 'principal residency condition' and the proposed affordable housing targets (draft policy SP42).

2.5 Representations were also received from statutory consultees including Natural England, Historic England, the Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council (covering transport, flooding and education provision in the Hampshire area of the Park), Wiltshire Council (covering the same matters for the Wiltshire area of the Park), New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Southern Water. Statements of Common Ground are being finalised with all of these statutory bodies prior to the proposed submission of the draft Local Plan in December 2026. The representations made by these bodies (and others) at the previous consultation stages help inform the preparation of the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan.

3. Representations on the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA

3.1 The Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan was accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) & Strategic Environmental Assessment (AECOM, July 2026). The Sustainability Appraisal/SEA is used to identify and assess the likely environmental, social and economic effects of a plan. Its purpose is to help decision-makers understand the implications of different choices and to ensure that sustainability considerations are integrated into plan preparation. In addition, the SA fulfils the requirements of the SEA Regulations, which require the assessment of likely significant effects, the consideration of reasonable alternatives, and the identification of measures to avoid or reduce potential adverse impacts. The Sustainability Appraisal itself does not decide which options to progress, but is an important input into Plan-preparation.

3.2 As part of the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan consultation the Authority published the supporting evidence base. This included the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA and section 4 of the draft Consultation Statement summarises the representations received on the draft Appraisal, which can be grouped into the following main areas.

Summary of representation	National Park Authority response
Landowner/developer representations stating that the draft Local Plan and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal should have given greater consideration to the role sites within the National Park and adjacent to settlements outside the National Park could play meeting identified needs. This is considered a 'reasonable alternative' to the proposed spatial strategy in the draft Plan and warrants further consideration.	The draft Local Plan is required to consider 'reasonable alternatives' and through the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA that has been done. Option HO5 considered the likely effects of an option that encompasses growth around the main towns abutting the National Park against a range of social, environmental and environmental indicators. 8 'reasonable alternatives' were considered for the spatial distribution of housing development within the National Park and this is considered appropriate.
While the objective of sustaining the vitality and viability of smaller settlements within the New Forest is acknowledged, concerns have been raised that the proposed spatial strategy and related proposed site allocations in the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan will result in development in areas with limited accessibility.	The site assessment process considered proximity to services and facilities and considered public transport options in the vicinity, recognising that these are relatively limited in many areas of the National Park. In addition, the SA framework covers accessibility, movement and car dependency.
The Sustainability Appraisal does not demonstrate how reasonable alternatives for meeting the Travelling Showpeople requirement were assessed. Potential approaches include the consideration of other parcels of land, provision across smaller sites, and expansion or intensification of existing yards.	The Authority has considered a range of reasonable alternatives to meet the identified need for travelling showpeople. Information on options considered (including alternative sites) will be published as part of the supporting evidence base when the draft Plan is submitted for examination.

3.3 Regulation 8 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004 requires representations on the environmental assessment of the draft Plan to be taken into account before a decision is made to submit the Plan for examination. The draft Regulation 22 Consultation Statement (Annex 3) sets out the representations received on the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA of the draft New Forest National Park Local Plan 2043 – 2043. In several areas it is concluded that the assessment of reasonable alternatives undertaken is sufficient. In other areas further work has been undertaken to collate information on the assessments undertaken to support the conclusions reached in drafting the Local Plan. It is therefore concluded that the requirements of the relevant Regulations have been met and the Plan can be submitted.

4. Schedule of proposed modifications (Annex 2)

4.1 The Government's recently updated 'Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations' (August 2026) confirms in paragraph 1.4 that, "…if the LPA [local planning authority] wish to make changes to the plan following the Regulation 19 consultation and before submission, and wish the changes to be considered as part of the submitted plan, they should prepare an addendum to the plan containing the proposed changes." These proposed modifications should be subject to Sustainability Appraisal/SEA, Habitats Regulations Assessment and consultation if they are significant.

4.2 In reviewing the representations received at the Regulation 19 stage, officers have identified a series of minor modifications to the draft Local Plan. These would provide greater clarity to the draft Plan and are not considered to change the overall aims and objectives of any of the draft policies. **Annex 2** contains a 'Schedule of Proposed Modifications to the Submission draft Plan' and members are asked to endorse the schedule for submission and consideration through the examination process.

4.3 The Schedule of Proposed Modifications to the Submission draft Plan has been shared with the specialist consultants the National Park Authority is working with for the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment of the draft Plan. Both consultants have advised that the proposed modifications are small-scale amendments and factual updates that do not have any implications for the findings of the assessments undertaken. As such there is no need for a further iteration of the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment prior to submission. Further assessments and appraisal are likely to be required as the draft Plan proceeds through examination and the assessments will be finalised at adoption.

5. Timetable for submission

5.1 The Authority's Local Development Scheme (LDS) was adopted in July 2026. It sets out the timetable for the preparation of the New Forest National Park Local Plan Review 2024 – 2043 and states the draft Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in Quarter 4 of 2026 – 27 (i.e. between October - December 2026). One of the legal tests of soundness for a draft Local Plan is whether it has been prepared in accordance with the timetable set out in the LDS. Consequently, it is important that the draft Plan and supporting information is submitted in December 2026.

5.2 On 23 October 2026 the Minister of State for Housing & Planning wrote to planning authorities in respect of the deadline for the 'legacy' local plan-making system and future details are available at Legacy system local plan extension: letter from the Housing Minister - GOV.UK. In this letter, the Minister stated:

- The Government places great importance on the role of local development plans. The plan-led approach is, "…the cornerstone of our planning system, but a plan-led approach will only be successful if plans are in place and kept up to date."

- Any Local Plan being prepared in the legacy system which has concluded its final Regulation 19 consultation period by 31 December 2026 will be given a three-month extension. For these plans, the deadline for submission will now be 31 March 2027.

- Of particular relevance to the National Park Authority, the Minister's letter confirms, "…authorities should make every effort to submit their plans as soon as possible. For areas who have already completed their Regulation 19 pre-submission consultation [as at 23 October 2026], progress to submission should be made as planned."

5.3 The Regulation 19 pre-submission consultation on the New Forest National Park Local Plan closed on 30 September 2026. As a result, the Minister's letter dated 23 October 2026 makes it clear that the New Forest National Park Authority should still submit its draft Plan for examination by the original deadline of 31 December 2026.

5.4 This timetable is achievable. Officers have stayed in regular contact with the Planning Inspectorate in recent months and have confirmed our intention to submit the draft Local Plan and supporting information for examination in December 2026. The required Pre-examination Checklist has been prepared ready for submission and the Authority also has appointed a Programme Officer who will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the examination before, during and after the hearing sessions.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The National Parks Circular (2010) confirms, "…the town and country planning system is a key instrument in the achievement of Park purposes." National policy recognises the importance of National Parks to the delivery of a range of policy agendas, including nature recovery; tackling the climate crisis; driving economic growth; and supporting health & well-being. The Local Plan also plays a key role in meeting the needs of the 34,500 people and 2,000+ local business within the New Forest National Park in a way that is consistent with the statutory purposes and related duty. It is important the New Forest continues to be covered by an up-to-date planning framework to guide decisions.

6.2 The consultation on the Regulation 19 Submission draft New Forest National Park Local Plan held between August and September 2026 engaged communities and stakeholders across the National Park. Representations were received from over 300 individuals, landowners, representative groups and statutory consultees. Many areas of the draft Plan were supported. The consultation also resulted in representations objecting to the soundness and legal compliance of other elements. The Local Plan-making process enables these representations to be carefully considered through the independent examination process.

6.3 The draft Consultation Statement (Annex 3) summarises the main points raised during the Regulation 19 consultation. Where representations can be addressed through a minor modification these are set out in the Schedule of Proposed Modifications to the Submission draft Plan (Annex 2) which members are invited to endorse. More significant representations on the overall soundness and legal compliance of the draft Plan are most appropriately considered through the independent examination process.

6.4 This report and the accompanying draft Consultation Statement also outlines the representations received on the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) & Strategic Environmental Assessment (AECOM, July 2026) of the draft Plan. The points raised in these representations have been considered and addressed.

6.5 In accordance with the recent letter from the Government's Minister for Housing and Planning (23 October 2026), the Authority's adopted Local Development Scheme (July 2026) and members' decision at the 23 July 2026 full Authority meeting, it is recommended that the submission of the Regulation 19 Submission draft New Forest National Park Local Plan 2024 – 2043 (Annex 1) and supporting information to the Secretary of State for examination is endorsed.

Recommendations:

Members:

a) Reiterate their support for the submission of the Regulation 19 Submission draft New Forest National Park Local Plan 2024 – 2043 (Annex 1) and supporting information to the Secretary of State for examination; and

b) Endorse the Schedule of Proposed Modifications to the Submission draft Plan (Annex 2) for submission and consideration through the examination process.

Contact: David Illsley, Head of Planning & Place
david.illsley@newforestnpa.gov.uk
01590 646672

Papers: **NFNPA 753/26** – cover paper
Annex 1 – New Forest National Park Local Plan Review – Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan (July 2026) – *online only*
Annex 2 - Schedule of Proposed Modifications to the Submission draft Plan – *online only*
Annex 3 – Draft Regulation 22 Consultation Statement, Part 3 Regulation 19 – *online only*

Equality Impact Assessment:

The review of the New Forest National Park includes an assessment of the impacts of the proposed planning policies on different groups, set out in an Equalities Impacts Assessment. The draft Plan includes planning policies aimed specifically at supported various grounds, including positive policies on housing for older people; support for local people in housing need; support for commoners, Estate workers and agricultural workers; and policies to meet the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.