Sustainability Appraisal for the New Forest National Park Local Plan Review

SA Report to accompany the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review

New Forest National Park Authority

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Quality Information

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Table of Contents

Non-technical summary ..... NTS 1
1. Introduction 1
2. What is the scope of the SA? 8
3. Vision and strategic objectives for the Local Plan Review 14
4. Consideration of reasonable alternatives through the SA 17
5. Appraisal of reasonable alternatives 34
6. Appraisal of the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review 87
7. Next steps 121

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Non-technical summary

The New Forest Local Plan Review

The New Forest National Park is a nationally protected landscape designated for its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. While the primary statutory purposes of the National Park Authority are to conserve and enhance these special qualities and to promote opportunities for their understanding and enjoyment, the Authority also has a duty to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.

The Local Plan Review will replace the current adopted Local Plan (2016 - 2036) and provides the planning framework to guide development up to 2043. It covers a range of topics including housing, the local economy, climate change, biodiversity, landscape, transport and the historic environment. Given the high level of environmental protection within the National Park, the scale and nature of development must be carefully controlled.

What is sustainability appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a process 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.

This SA report

The scope of the SA was established through a Scoping Report prepared in 2025 and consulted on with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England. The assessment is structured around nine SA themes:

- Air, soil and water resources
- Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Climate change (including flood risk)
- Communities, health and wellbeing
- Economy and employment
- Historic environment
- Housing
- Landscape
- Transport

Both the reasonable alternatives and the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review have been assessed against these themes.

The SA themes and SA objectives are presented below. The main body of the SA Report (Chapter 2) includes the full SA framework including the assessment questions.

Table NTS1: SA themes and SA objectives

SA theme	SA objective
Air, Soil and Water Resources	To protect and improve air quality, soil condition, and water resources by minimising pollution, managing sustainable use of natural resources, and reducing risks from contamination and coastal erosion.
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Maintain and enhance the extent and quality of designated sites for biodiversity conservation, habitats, geology, and biodiversity networks within and surrounding the National Park.
Climate Change	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience by supporting a low-carbon economy, promoting energy efficiency and renewables, and adapting land use and infrastructure to future climate risks.
Communities, Health and Wellbeing	Support healthy, inclusive, and safe communities by improving access to services, promoting wellbeing for all ages, and reducing inequalities related to age, disability, deprivation, and rural isolation.
Economy and Employment	Support a productive, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all.
Historic Environment	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the National Park.
Housing	Provide for the full range of housing needs and maximise delivery of affordable housing.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape of the National Park and surrounding National Landscapes.
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

Appraisal of reasonable alternatives

A central requirement of the SA process is the identification and appraisal of reasonable alternatives. These represent different ways in which the Plan could have been prepared. For the Local Plan Review, alternatives have been considered in relation to the overall spatial strategy for housing growth and to different approaches to employment development within the National Park.

Assessing these alternatives helps explain the reasons for selecting the preferred approaches.

Housing growth alternatives

The SA assessed eight housing growth alternatives (HO1 - HO8). These options test different levels of growth and locations of development, spanning from tightly focused approaches within existing villages to more dispersed and higher-growth scenarios. The alternative options assessed have to be 'reasonable' within the context of a nationally protected landscape and the proportion of the New Forest designated as being of international importance for nature conservation:

- **HO1** – Growth focused on the four existing defined villages only;
- **HO2** – Growth focused on the defined villages and a limited number of additional villages with services;
- **HO3** – As HO2, with additional growth in other settlements, including smaller villages and hamlets;
- **HO4** – A fully dispersed approach with no settlement hierarchy;
- **HO5** – As HO2, with additional growth directed to locations on the edge of the National Park adjoining settlements outside the National Park;
- **HO6** – As HO3, with additional growth on the edge of the National Park;
- **HO7** – Growth focused primarily on the edge of the National Park, with limited development within the National Park itself; and
- **HO8** – A higher-growth option including a new or expanded settlement.

These options tested different approaches to the scale and distribution of housing growth within the National Park. These included options that focused growth in the four main defined villages, extended growth to additional villages with services, allowed development in smaller settlements and hamlets, directed growth to the edge of the National Park, and explored higher growth options, including a new or expanded settlement.

In broad terms, options involving lower levels of growth perform more favourably for environmental themes such as landscape, biodiversity, tranquillity and the historic environment. Options delivering higher levels of growth perform better in terms of meeting housing needs, but increase the risk of adverse effects due to greater land take, higher infrastructure demands and additional pressure on sensitive environments.

Overall, the appraisal identifies that an approach focused on the defined villages, with limited extension to additional service-based villages (**Option HO2**), provides the most balanced performance across environmental, social and economic themes. This approach helps deliver housing to meet local needs while limiting impacts on the National Park's special qualities, in line with the statutory framework for National Parks.

Employment development alternatives

The SA assessed three clearly defined employment development alternatives (**Options E1, E2, and E3**). These options test different levels of spatial focus and approaches to managing employment growth, ranging from a dispersed, criteria-based approach to more spatially directed and strategic options:

- **E1** - **Retention of the adopted Local Plan approach (no employment allocations):** employment development would continue to be managed through criteria-based policies, with no new employment sites allocated;
- **E2** - **Retention of the adopted Local Plan approach plus distributed employment allocations**: a number of small employment sites would be allocated across the National Park alongside the existing criteria-based policy approach; and
- **E3** - **Retention of the adopted Local Plan approach plus a strategic employment allocation at Fawley**: the existing criteria-based approach would be retained alongside the allocation of a strategic employment site at Fawley.

The SA then compared how these alternatives perform across the environmental, social and economic themes. In broad terms, options that limit the scale and concentration of employment development perform more favourably for environmental themes such as landscape, biodiversity, water resources and climate change. Alternatives that provided additional employment land performed more positively in relation to economic objectives by supporting job creation and investment.

Overall, the appraisal highlights that each option had different strengths. **Option E1** performs most favourably in relation to environmental protection, reflecting the absence of employment allocations and the lower potential for effects on environmental assets and the National Park's special qualities. By avoiding the allocation of additional land for employment uses, it also reduces potential competition with housing development within the National Park's constrained land supply. **Option E2** performs strongly in relation to communities, climate change and transport by aligning employment opportunities with the revised spatial strategy and communities across the National Park. **Option E3** performs most favourably in relation to economy and employment, providing the greatest opportunity to meet identified employment needs and support strategic economic growth. The concentration of development at a single strategic location also provides opportunities for coordinated planning, infrastructure provision and mitigation measures. Each option presents different challenges and potential trade-offs, particularly between environmental protection, supporting local communities, and meeting identified employment needs.

The preferred approach

Taking account of the SA findings, and having considered the reasonable alternatives appraised, the National Park Authority has identified preferred approaches for both housing and employment that best reflect the statutory purposes of the National Park while addressing local needs as much as is reasonable within the context of a nationally protected landscape.

For housing, the preferred approach is a spatial strategy focused on the defined villages, with development also directed to a small number of additional villages with services. As set out in the main SA assessment, this broadly aligns with Option HO2, which performs well across environmental, social and economic themes. This approach supports the delivery of housing to help meet identified local needs, including affordable housing, while avoiding the more significant adverse effects associated with either highly dispersed growth or higher-growth options such as new or expanded settlements within a National Park context. By concentrating development in the most sustainable settlements, the strategy makes best use of existing services and infrastructure and helps to limit impacts on landscape character, biodiversity and tranquillity.

For employment, the preferred approach broadly aligns with Option E3. The National Park Authority considered a range of alternatives for meeting employment needs. The preferred approach keeps the policies that support small-scale employment opportunities across the National Park and also allocates land at Fawley for employment development. This would help provide additional jobs and meet identified employment needs, while limiting the need for employment sites to be allocated across a wider area of the National Park. The allocation at Fawley also provides opportunities to manage and reduce potential environmental effects through specific policy requirements and mitigation measures. The National Park Authority considers that this approach provides an appropriate balance between supporting the local economy and protecting the National Park's special qualities.

Appraisal of the current version of the Local Plan Review

The Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review has been fully assessed through the SA. Overall, the appraisal identifies a range of positive effects, alongside some limited and localised adverse effects that are capable of mitigation.

Significant long-term positive effects are expected for housing and communities through the delivery of housing focused on local needs, including affordable and specialist provision, helping to support the vitality and sustainability of local settlements. Major positive effects are anticipated for the economy and employment as a result of continued support for small-scale, locally appropriate economic activity, supplemented by the site allocation at Fawley on Solent Freeport land, and the retention of existing employment uses and reduced reliance on long-distance commuting.

Major long-term benefits are also expected in relation to climate change through policies promoting sustainable construction, renewable energy, flood risk management and more sustainable travel patterns. Strong policy safeguards are in place for biodiversity, landscape and water resources. While some localised adverse effects may arise, particularly during construction, these are generally avoided, reduced or effectively managed through careful site selection, design and mitigation measures. Significant positive effects are anticipated for the historic environment through strong heritage protection and design policies.

Potential adverse effects arising from the Local Plan Review are addressed through its policies. These include directing development to the most appropriate and least sensitive locations, limiting the scale and intensity of development, requiring high standards of design that respond to landscape and settlement character, and protecting and enhancing habitats, landscapes and heritage assets.

In addition, policies require sustainable approaches to transport, drainage, water use and energy. Where impacts cannot be fully avoided, further mitigation will be secured through planning conditions, legal agreements and detailed assessment at the planning application stage.

Cumulative and in-combination effects

The SA has considered cumulative effects and interactions with other plans and programmes, including neighbouring Local Plans. Some cross-boundary pressures may arise, particularly in relation to water resources, biodiversity and transport. These issues are addressed through strategic mitigation measures, alignment with regional strategies and ongoing cooperation with neighbouring authorities.

No significant adverse cumulative or in-combination effects have been identified that cannot be appropriately managed.

Next steps

This SA Report accompanies the Regulation 19 consultation on the Local Plan Review. Following consultation, representations will be considered by the National Park Authority before the Plan and SA are submitted for independent Examination. During the Examination, the appointed Inspector(s) will consider the Plan, supporting evidence and representations received. If the Local Plan Review is found sound, it will be adopted and an SA Adoption Statement will be published, explaining how sustainability considerations and consultation responses have been taken into account and how the significant effects of the Plan will be monitored.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of New Forest National Park Authority's Local Plan Review (henceforth known as the 'Local Plan Review'). This SA Report accompanies the Regulation 19 (proposed submission) version of the Local Plan Review.

1.1.2. The Local Plan Review is being prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, and the Environment Act 1995. These acts and regulations provide the legal framework for local planning authorities covering National Parks in England to develop and implement their local plans.

1.1.3. New Forest National Park Authority is the planning authority for the National Park. This is a separate planning authority to New Forest District Council, who are the planning authority for the parts of New Forest district that fall outside of the National Park.

1.2. New Forest National Park

1.2.1. New Forest National Park (henceforth known as 'the National Park'), located in south-west Hampshire and a small part of Wiltshire, is one of 15 National Parks in the UK. The National Park boundary is depicted in **Figure 1-1**.

1.2.2. National Parks are designated to protect and celebrate areas of outstanding natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage. Their 'special qualities' are the unique features and characteristics that make each National Park distinctive and valuable.

1.2.3. The New Forest's special qualities include:

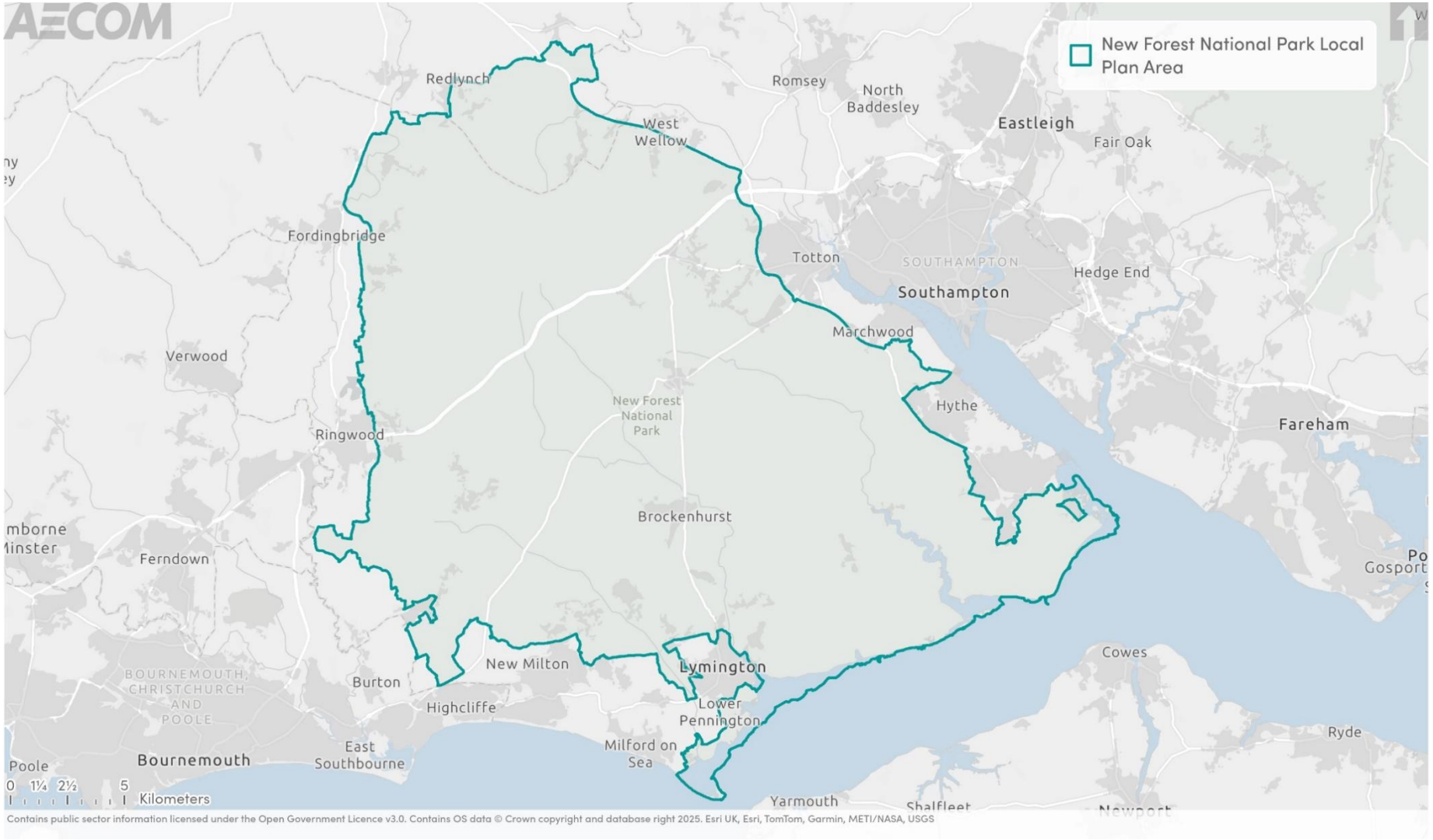
- Its outstanding natural beauty;
- The extraordinary diversity of plants and animals;
- A unique historic, cultural and archaeological heritage;
- An historic commoning system;
- The iconic New Forest pony;
- Tranquillity;
- Strong and distinctive local communities;
- Opportunities for quiet recreation, learning and discovery; and
- A healthy environment.

1.2.4. The National Park's population is distributed across four larger villages (Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst, Sway, and Ashurst) as well as numerous smaller settlements and large areas of countryside.

1.2.5. In close proximity to the National Park are several larger towns and cities (including Southampton, Salisbury, Bournemouth, Poole, Lymington, Ringwood, Totton, and Christchurch) which have significant social, economic, and environmental influences on the National Park.

1.2.6. The National Park and the surrounding areas of New Forest District are covered by separate planning authorities, each with their own Local Plan. The New Forest National Park Authority is responsible for planning within the National Park boundary, while New Forest District Council covers the adjoining areas outside the National Park. Although each authority prepares its own Local Plan, there is ongoing collaboration to ensure that policies on cross-boundary issues are coordinated.

Figure 1-1: New Forest National Park



1.3. The Local Plan Review

1.3.1. The Local Plan Review will replace the existing and adopted policies set out in the current adopted Local Plan (2016-2036) (adopted August 2019).

1.3.2. The Local Plan Review will include policies that address the strategic priorities for the area, covering a diverse range of topics including climate change, housing (to reflect the 2024 update to the National Planning Policy Framework), economy, infrastructure, biodiversity, and transport.

1.3.3. The Local Plan Review will be prepared to complement and reinforce the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan. The Partnership Plan provides the overarching strategic framework for the long-term care, conservation, and enjoyment of the National Park; however, unlike the Local Plan Review, it is not a statutory planning document forming part of the 'development plan'. It is prepared jointly with a range of partners and sets out shared priorities for the National Park beyond land use planning, including cultural heritage, biodiversity, climate action, and community engagement. The Local Plan Review supports the delivery of many of the objectives within the Partnership Plan, but the two documents have distinct roles.

1.4. Planning policy context for the Local Plan Review

1.4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides an overarching framework for development in England. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is supported by planning practice guidance, which is a suite of policy papers covering a broad range of topics, including SEA.

1.4.2. The revised NPPF that the New Forest National Park Local Plan is due to be examined against was published in December 2024. The framework includes significant reforms aimed at boosting housing supply and supporting sustainable growth. One of the key changes is the reintroduction of the Government's standard methodology for calculating housing need for local authorities in England.

1.4.3. The Local Plan Review should though be seen in the context of the statutory purposes and duty as applied to National Park Authorities. As specified by the Environment Act 1995, the New Forest National Park Authority has two statutory purposes:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

1.4.4. Where it appears that there is a conflict between the National Park purposes, greater weight will be attached to the first of those purposes.

1.4.5. In pursuit of these purposes, the National Park Authority will pay due regard to its duty to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park. This was further reinforced by Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, which amended the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Parks, National Landscapes, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (collectively referred to as Protected Landscapes) in England. This requires relevant authorities to 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes, replacing the previous duty on relevant authorities to 'have regard to' their statutory purposes. The New Forest National Park Authority is a 'relevant authority' for the purposes of the strengthened duty to seek to further the purposes.

1.4.6. In this context, the Local Plan Review is being prepared within a distinct planning policy framework which is shaped by the purposes and duty of the National Park Authority and its special qualities.

1.5. SA explained

1.5.1. SA is a mechanism for assessing and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives, with a view to achieving sustainable development, fulfilling the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

1.5.2. The aim of the SA will be to inform plan-making both directly (i.e. through structured, systematic and evidence-based analysis), and indirectly (through providing stakeholders with information on potential plan impacts and so facilitating effective consultation).

1.5.3. The use of an SA approach will help ensure consistency in the development and evaluation of the Local Plan Review, and is considered best practice.

Requirements associated with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations

1.5.4. Sustainability Appraisal for Local Plans is undertaken to address the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA Regulations'). The SEA Regulations only formally apply to plans and programmes for which there is a statutory requirement; this includes Local Plans.

1.5.5. Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:

- When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
- A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the draft plan for consultation that presents an assessment of the draft plan (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives. In SA, the Environmental Report is referred to the SA Report.

1.6. Structure of this SA report

1.6.1. This SA Report incorporates the information required for Environmental Reports by the SEA Regulations. The information presented in this SA Report is outlined in **Table 1-1**.

Table 1-1: Questions that must be answered by the SA report to meet the SEA Regulations' requirements

SA report question		In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include…
	What is the plan seeking to achieve?	An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
	What is the sustainability 'context'?	Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. The relevant environmental protection **objectives**, established at international or national level. Any existing environmental **problems** which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What is the scope of the SA?	What is the sustainability 'baseline'?	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Any existing environmental **problems** which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.

	What are the key issues and objectives?	Key **problems**/**issues** and **objectives** that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making/SA involved up to this point?		Outline reasons for selecting the **alternatives** dealt with. The likely significant effects associated with **alternatives**. Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of **alternatives** appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.
What are the assessment findings at this stage?		The likely significant effects associated with **the Regulation 19 version of the plan**. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing **the Regulation 19 version of the plan**.
What happens next?		The next steps for the plan making / SA process.

2. What is the scope of the SA?

2.1. Summary of SA scoping

2.1.1. A Scoping Report was initially prepared for the SA in August 2025. The purpose of this report was to outline the 'scope' of the SA through setting out the following information:

- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the Local Plan Review;
- Baseline data against which the Local Plan Review can be assessed;
- The key sustainability issues for the Local Plan Review; and
- An 'SA Framework' of objectives against which the Local Plan Review can be assessed.

2.1.2. The SEA Regulations require that: 'When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies'. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England. These authorities were consulted on the scope of the SA in August 2025.

2.1.3. Comments received from the consultation bodies were reviewed and taken into account in updating the SA Scoping Report. The Scoping Report was subsequently amended to reflect the consultation responses and was finalised in October 2025.

2.1.4. Baseline information (including the context review and baseline data) is available to view in the SA Scoping Report, which is available on the National Park Local Plan Review webpage.

SA framework

2.1.5. The SA framework provides a way in which environmental effects can be defined and subsequently analysed based on standard 'tests'. The reasonable alternatives and each proposal within the current version (i.e., the Regulation 19 version) of the Local Plan Review will be assessed consistently using the framework.

2.1.6. The updated SA framework (including amendments following statutory consultation) is presented in **Table 2-1**.

Table 2-1: SA framework for the Local Plan Review

SA theme		SA objective	Supporting questions (will the option help to…)
	Air, Soil and Water Resources	To protect and improve air quality, soil condition, and water resources by minimising pollution, managing sustainable use of natural resources, and reducing risks from contamination and coastal erosion.	• Limit emissions of NO_2 and particulates, particularly near major roads such as the A31 and A35? • Support improvements in the ecological condition of rivers and other water bodies? • Ensure adequate wastewater treatment to maintain water quality? • Promote sustainable water use and improve water efficiency? • Assess and manage risks to groundwater resources to protect their quality? • Manage and adapt to coastal erosion and flood risk in line with SMPs? • Identify, assess and remediate contamination risks from historic landfills and previously developed land? • Avoid inappropriate development near hazardous installations? • Increase recycling rates?
	Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Maintain and enhance the extent and quality of designated sites for biodiversity conservation, habitats, geology, and biodiversity networks within and surrounding the National Park.	• Deliver biodiversity net gain in accordance with statutory requirements? • Avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on internationally and nationally designated biodiversity sites within and around the National Park? • Ensure appropriate consultation with Natural England where development falls within SSSI Impact Risk Zones? • Protect locally designated nature conservation sites (such as LNRs and SINCs)? • Safeguard and improve BAP Priority Habitats and the species they support? • Maintain and strengthen ecological networks, avoiding fragmentation of important wildlife corridors?

SA theme		SA objective	Supporting questions (will the option help to…)
			• Protect geodiversity features and manage geological constraints? •
	Climate Change	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience by supporting a low-carbon economy, promoting energy efficiency and renewables, and adapting land use and infrastructure to future climate risks.	• Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport, including private vehicle use? • Support low-carbon tourism and encourage sustainable travel choices within and to the National Park? • Promote energy efficiency in buildings and reduce emissions from industrial and commercial energy use? • Encourage the uptake of renewable energy and low-emission technologies? • Improve the energy performance of homes and reduce fuel poverty across the National Park? • Reduce the risk of flooding through appropriate land use and infrastructure planning? • Protect and enhance natural carbon sinks such as valley mires, grasslands, and ancient woodland? • Support climate adaptation through resilient land management, habitat restoration, and nature-based solutions?
	Communities, Health and Wellbeing	Support healthy, inclusive, and safe communities by improving access to services, promoting wellbeing for all ages, and reducing inequalities related to	• Meet the needs of an ageing population by improving access to healthcare, social care, housing, and community facilities? • Avoid pressure from future development on existing services such as healthcare, education, and public transport? • Reduce health inequalities and address local challenges such as obesity, self-harm, and alcohol-related conditions? • Promote inclusion and ensure equitable access to services for under-represented groups?

SA theme		SA objective	Supporting questions (will the option help to…)
		age, disability, deprivation, and rural isolation.	• Reduce the risk of social isolation, particularly for older people and those with disabilities or limited mobility? • Protect and enhance access to green infrastructure to support physical and mental wellbeing? • Ensure sufficient and accessible school places in areas where development may increase demand? • Improve infrastructure for walking and cycling to encourage active travel? • Improve access to indoor recreational and community facilities?
€ $ £ ¥	Economy and Employment	Support a productive, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all.	• Improve access to education and training, particularly deprived areas? • Increase the availability of a skilled local workforce to meet the needs of key sectors? • Support employment opportunities for economically inactive residents and those reliant on benefits? • Strengthen the tourism sector while managing associated environmental and infrastructure pressures? • Support micro and small businesses, and promote opportunities for career progression within the local area? • Reduce out-commuting by supporting the creation of quality local employment opportunities? • Improve digital infrastructure to support business flexibility, remote working, and enterprise growth? • Retain and enhance existing employment land and support the delivery of suitable new employment sites and premises?

SA theme		SA objective	Supporting questions (will the option help to…)
	Historic Environment	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the National Park.	• Protect the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets from inappropriate development (including within their setting)? • Ensure that new development respects the historic context of conservation areas? • Support the preparation or updating of conservation area appraisals to strengthen the evidence base for heritage protection? • Preserve historic settlement patterns and protect important views? • Support the preservation and enhancement of heritage assets identified as at risk? • Incorporate climate-resilient design and practices to reduce the impact of extreme weather on heritage sites? • Encourage public realm and accessibility improvements that enhance understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment? • Promote sustainable conservation approaches, including the use of local materials to maintain historic assets?
	Housing	Provide for the full range of housing needs and maximise delivery of affordable housing.	• Deliver an appropriate mix of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of all household types, including older residents and smaller or younger households? • Increase the supply of affordable housing? • Reduce homelessness by addressing issues related to affordability, access to support services, and the availability of suitable housing? • Meet identified accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople within the National Park? • Promote energy-efficient housing design and support measures to reduce fuel poverty, particularly in rural and isolated areas?

SA theme		SA objective	Supporting questions (will the option help to…)
			• Ensure housing growth is coordinated with provision of essential infrastructure such as schools, healthcare, and public transport? • Make better use of the existing housing stock and reduce pressures associated with high numbers of second homes? • Support inclusive, accessible, and age-appropriate housing that enables older people and those with support needs to live independently?
	Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape of the National Park and surrounding National Landscapes.	• Safeguard the special qualities, scenic value, and setting of the National Park and nearby National Landscapes? • Protect and enhance the distinctive characteristics of the National Character Area covering the National Park? • Avoid or minimise harm to rural character, visual integrity, and panoramic views, particularly at settlement edges and in open countryside? • Reduce light pollution to protect dark skies and maintain the area's tranquillity and sense of remoteness? • Prevent adverse visual and landscape impacts from infrastructure, industrial, or coastal development?
	Transport	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	• Reduce car dependency by improving public transport coverage and frequency, especially in rural and isolated areas? • Make use of existing rail infrastructure to support sustainable travel options? • Reduce road congestion on key routes such as the A326, A31, and A35? • Improve the resilience of transport infrastructure to extreme weather and climate change impacts? • Encourage active travel modes such as walking and cycling?

3. Vision and strategic objectives for the Local Plan Review

3.1. Purpose of the vision and strategic objectives

3.1.1. The vision and strategic objectives for the Local Plan Review capture the New Forest National Park Authority's aspirations for the New Forest National Park as expressed through the Local Plan Review.

3.2. Vision for the New Forest National Park for 2043

3.2.1. The vision for the Local Plan Review is as follows:

In 2043 the New Forest's outstanding natural beauty has been safeguarded and enhanced. Nature recovery has enabled sites of international, national and local importance for nature conservation – and the National Park as a whole – to continue to host an extraordinary diversity of plants and animals. 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, to support their health and wellbeing. 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 strong cultural identity. The impacts of climate change are being actively addressed through adaptation and change through nature-based solutions, high quality design and increased energy efficiency, and the use of renewable technologies consistent with the special qualities of the New Forest. People live, work and visit 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, to create strong and distinctive communities…

…Small-scale housing development on allocated sites within the Larger Villages of Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst, Sway, and Defined Smaller Villages of Cadnam-Bartley, Landford-Nomansland and Redlynch 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 (and climate change adaptations) that respect the natural and built heritage of the National 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 these 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.

3.3. Strategic objectives

3.3.1. With a view to implementing the vision, the strategic objectives for the Local Plan Review are as follows:

1. *Protect and enhance the natural capital and environment of the National Park, including the natural beauty of the landscape and the diverse range of habitats and species.*
2. *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.*
3. *Plan for and adapt to the likely impacts of climate change on the landscape, species, character, cultural heritage, special qualities and communities of the New Forest, including energy-efficient development.*
4. *Strengthen the health and wellbeing, identity and sustainability of rural communities and the pride of local people in their area.*
5. *Promote appropriate housing to meet local needs, including the delivery of affordable housing for local people, to maintain the vibrant communities of the National Park.*

6. *Develop a diverse and sustainable low carbon economy, enabling suitable rural diversification, that contributes to the wellbeing of local communities and supports a 'working forest', throughout the National Park.*
7. *Encourage land management that both promotes and sustains traditional commoning practices to protect and enhance the special qualities of the National Park.*
8. *Support proportionate development which encourages sustainable tourism and recreation, providing opportunities for enjoying the National Park without harming its special qualities or the welfare of its local communities.*
9. *Reduce the impacts of traffic and enhance access to the National Park by supporting sustainable transport and active travel within the National Park.*

4. Consideration of reasonable alternatives through the SA

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. A key element of the SA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the Local Plan Review.

4.1.2. In accordance with the SEA Regulations the SA Report must include:

- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
- The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.

4.1.3. The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative, stating only that the Environmental Report (or SA Report) should present an appraisal of the "*plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan*".

4.2. Defining reasonable alternatives

4.2.1. In line with regulatory requirements, there is a need to explain how work has been undertaken to develop and then appraise reasonable alternatives.

4.2.2. A key component of the Local Plan Review will be to present an overall spatial strategy for the National Park during the plan period to 2043.

4.2.3. To support the development of the preferred approach for the Local Plan Review (i.e., the spatial strategy), the SA process has considered a number of options which evaluate different scales and distributions of growth in the National Park. This is with a view to understanding the relative sustainability merits of different potential spatial strategies for the Local Plan Review.

4.2.4. These growth strategy options must be seen within the legal and national planning policy framework for National Parks and have been developed based on strategic variables associated with the following two components:

- different scales of growth; and
- different locations of growth.

4.2.5. A discussion of these strategic variables is set out below.

4.3. Part 1: different scales of development to consider through the growth strategy options for housing

4.3.1. In terms of housing numbers, a number of variables can be considered for the purposes of establishing growth strategy options. The two key variables are as follows.

Standard method figure for housing need

4.3.2. The Government's standard method for calculating housing needs generates figures for 'local authority' areas, rather than 'local planning authority' areas. The New Forest National Park Authority does not therefore receive a housing need figure generated through the Government's standard methodology.

4.3.3. However, the current national standard method figure for housing needs sets a figure of circa 1,511 dwellings per annum (dpa) for New Forest District (which includes circa 94% of the New Forest National Park). The Strategic Housing Needs Assessment (Iceni, 2025) output indicates that based on a stock-based approach the housing need for the District Council's plan area is circa 1,254 dpa, which is 83% of the overall New Forest-wide figure. The difference between the overall New Forest District need and the District Plan area indicates an unconstrained need of about 250 - 300 dpa in the National Park, or a total 4,750 - 5,700 dwellings over the Local Plan Review period.

Current delivery

4.3.4. The adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019) makes provision for 40 net new dwellings per annum. This figure, if projected forward, equates to 760 over the new plan period from 2024 - 2043.

Delivery of housing in the context of the National Park's purposes and duty

4.3.5. As specified by the Environment Act 1995, the NFNPA has two statutory purposes:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

4.3.6. This is framed by the National Park Authority's duty to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in pursuit of the National Park's purposes. This duty is linked to the delivery of the statutory purposes and is not a stand-alone duty (or third Park purpose).

4.3.7. This was further reinforced by Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, which amended the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Parks, National Landscapes, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (collectively referred to as Protected Landscapes) in England. This requires relevant authorities to 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes, replacing the previous duty on relevant authorities to 'have regard to' their statutory purposes.

4.3.8. In relation to housing delivery through the Local Plan Review, Defra's National Parks Vision and Circular states that National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing development and the Government does not provide general housing targets for them (paragraph 78). The Circular confirms that national park authorities have an important role to play as planning authorities in the delivery of affordable housing. This was reinforced by the latest NPPF (December 2024, paragraph 11, footnote 7 and paragraph 189) which identifies national parks as areas where the scale and extent of development should be limited. As such, the expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements in the National Park and that the NFNPA should work with local housing authorities and others to ensure that the needs of local communities are met.

4.3.9. The scales of growth addressed through the SA's growth strategy options should therefore be framed in the context of these legal and national planning policy considerations. In this respect the consideration of an option which meets full unrestricted housing needs is not appropriate or reasonable in the context of a National Park Local Plan. For the purposes of the Local Plan Review, it is instead appropriate to consider options which range from a level of housing delivery which broadly mirrors existing growth rates, to higher growth options which double the existing rate of delivery. This has been discussed in more detail below.

Different locations of growth to consider through the growth strategy options

4.3.10. The following broad locations have been considered through the growth strategy options.

Existing Four defined villages

4.3.11. Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway are identified in the current Local Plan (2019) as 'Defined Villages'. This is due to their character, population and the range of facilities and services they provide. These settlements have the broadest range of community facilities, local employment opportunities and transport links in the National Park and offer a good range of other services for residents and visitors.

Additional villages

4.3.12. There are a number of additional settlements, which whilst not currently villages with defined settlement boundaries in the adopted Local Plan (2019), have the potential to be considered for some limited growth. They are accessible locations with some basic local services and facilities.

4.3.13. They include:

- Landford/Nomansland;
- Redlynch; and
- Bartley/Cadnam.

4.3.14. The identification of these settlements is informed by the Settlement Hierarchy Review Topic Paper, which assesses settlements against a consistent set of criteria including services and facilities, population, access to employment and public transport connections.

Other smaller villages and hamlets across the National Park

4.3.15. These comprise other locations outside of the four defined villages and additional villages set out above.

Land adjoining settlements outside of the National Park

4.3.16. This comprises land adjacent to the larger settlements that adjoin the National Park boundary, including, for example, in the vicinities of Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood, Totton and Hythe. This recognises that these locations may be considered accessible in terms of access to services and facilities and public transport nodes such as railway stations and bus routes.

New or expanded settlement

4.3.17. There may be potential to deliver a new or extended settlement in the National Park, which would be of sufficient size to support and deliver new services and amenities. Potential locations could include the village of Calshot in the south east of the National Park.

Establishing growth strategy options for the SA

4.3.18. In relation to the strategic variables set out above, there are a number of key components that can provide the building blocks for developing the growth strategy options. These comprise:

- **Growth scenario components which are 'constants':** These are the components which would be similar across all the growth strategy options.
- **Growth scenario components which are 'variables':** These comprise the components which can vary across the growth strategy options.

4.3.19. The following components can therefore be considered constants and variables in the context of the growth strategy options.

Constants

4.3.20. The following components can be considered 'constants' for the purposes of the assessment of the growth strategy options.

Commitments and completions

4.3.21. These comprise extant planning permissions and completions in the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. This amounts to a total of 298 net new dwellings with either extant consent or completed within this period.

Windfall sites in the National Park

4.3.22. Paragraph 75 of the NPPF allows local authorities to make an allowance for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply in their Local Plan. An allowance therefore has been made of the delivery of c 20 dpa over the 19-year time period. This allowance also includes rural exception sites and housing for New Forest Commoners, Estate Workers and tied agricultural and forestry worker dwellings. It also includes net new dwellings delivered through redevelopment, in-filling and intensification within the defined villages.

Variables

4.3.23. The key variables relate to the following components, as discussed under **section 4.3.1** above:

- Existing defined villages with settlement boundaries:
  - Ashurst
  - Brockenhurst
  - Lyndhurst
  - Sway
- Additional potential smaller defined villages, comprising:
  - Landford/Nomansland
  - Redlynch
  - Bartley/Cadnam
- Other smaller villages and hamlets
- Land adjoining settlements outside of the National Park
- New or expanded settlement

Growth strategy options

4.3.24. Utilising these ‘constants’ and ‘variables’, a number of options have been developed for the purpose of exploring alternative spatial strategies for growth in the National Park.

4.3.25. An overview of the growth strategy options considered through the SA process is presented in **Table 4-1**. These are in addition to the completions, extant consents and windfall allowance, which are applied across each of the options. A more detailed breakdown of the spatial distribution of housing represented by each option, including in relation to key locations in the National Park, is presented in **Table 4-2**. Options HO1 and HO2 have been mapped (see **Figure 4-1** and **Figure 4-2**). Options HO3 to HO8 have not been mapped due to their lack of defined spatial extents.

4.3.26. It should be noted that the appraisal represents a high-level review of strategic growth options rather than an assessment of individual site proposals.

Table 4-1: Growth strategy options considered as reasonable alternatives

Growth strategy option	Indicative housing delivery and rationale
Option HO1: Focus development on four existing defined villages with settlement boundaries	This option would deliver circa **780 dwellings** over the plan period. It comprises the current Local Plan approach, with site allocations taking place adjacent to settlement boundaries in the four existing defined villages.
Option HO2: Existing defined villages and newly defined villages based on service provision	This option would deliver circa **900 dwellings** over the plan period. It would expand the settlement hierarchy through including Landford/Nomansland, Redlynch and Bartley/Cadnam within the defined villages. Allocations would take place adjacent to settlement boundaries.
Option HO3: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets	This option would deliver circa **940 dwellings** over the plan period. As Option HO2, but with the inclusion of other settlements for potential allocations, including smaller hamlets.
Option HO4: Full dispersal with no settlement hierarchy	This option would deliver circa **980 dwellings** over the plan period. It would disperse growth across the National Park without the application of a settlement hierarchy. This would enable development in villages and hamlets across the National Park, potentially guided by criteria-based policies, but with no settlement hierarchy to guide/focus development spatially.

Growth strategy option	Indicative housing delivery and rationale
Option HO5: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park	This option would deliver circa **1,100 dwellings** over the plan period. As Option HO2, plus the allocation of some land around the periphery of the National Park on sites that relate to settlements outside of the National Park (e.g. the Waterside, Lymington, New Milton).
Option HO6: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park	This option would deliver circa **1,140 dwellings** over the plan period. As Option HO3, plus the allocation of some land around the periphery of the National Park on sites that relate to settlements outside of the National Park (e.g. the Waterside, Lymington, New Milton).
Option HO7: Focus development solely around the periphery of the National Park, adjacent to settlements outside the National Park boundary	This option would deliver circa **860 dwellings** over the plan period. It would focus growth on sites that relate to settlements outside of the National Park and not involve any site allocations (or a defined settlement hierarchy) within the main villages of the National Park.
Option HO8: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park, with new or expanded settlement	This option would deliver circa **1,540 dwellings** over the plan period. It would include the scenarios presented under Options HO1-HO7, plus a major development focused on a new or expanded settlement. This would engage the NPPF's 'major development test' currently set out in paragraph 190 of the Framework

Table 4-2: Growth strategy options considered as reasonable alternatives (indicative figures)

	Option HO1: Focus development on four existing defined villages with settlement boundaries	Option HO2: Existing defined villages and new defined villages based on service provision	Option HO3: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets	Option HO4: Full dispersal with no settlement hierarchy	Option HO5: Existing defined villages and new defined villages based on service provision and settlements outside the National Park boundary	Option HO6: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park	Option HO7: Focus development solely around the periphery of the National Park, adjacent to settlements outside the National Park boundary	Option HO8: Option HO6 plus new or expanded settlement
Constants								
Commitments & delivery to date	298	298	298	298	298	298	298	298

Windfall site delivery	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380
Choices								
Site allocations adjacent to existing four defined villages								
Ashurst	30	30	30	30	30	30	0	30
Brockenhurst	30	30	30	30	30	30	0	30
Lyndhurst	30	30	30	30	30	30	0	30
Sway	30	30	30	30	30	30	0	30
Extension of the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages								
Landford/Nomansland	0	40	40	40	40	40	0	40
Redlynch	0	40	40	40	40	40	0	40
Bartley/Cadnam	0	40	40	40	40	40	0	40
Other smaller villages and hamlets (not in those listed above)	0	0	40	80	0	40	0	40

Land adjoining settlements outside of the National Park								
Land adjoining settlements outside of the National Park	0	0	0	0	200	200	200	200
New or expanded settlement								
New or expanded settlement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	400
Total	798	918	958	998	1118	1158	878	1558
Local Housing Need	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250
Percent of LHN met through option	15.20%	17.49%	18.25%	19.01%	21.30%	22.06%	16.72%	29.68%
Delivery at current rates	760	760	760	760	760	760	760	760
Percent of scenario met through option	105.00%	120.79%	126.05%	131.32%	147.11%	152.37%	115.53%	205.00%
50% of Local Housing Need	2625	2625	2625	2625	2625	2625	2625	2625
Percent of scenario met through option	30.40%	34.97%	36.50%	38.02%	42.59%	44.11%	33.45%	59.35%

Figure 4-1: Option HO1

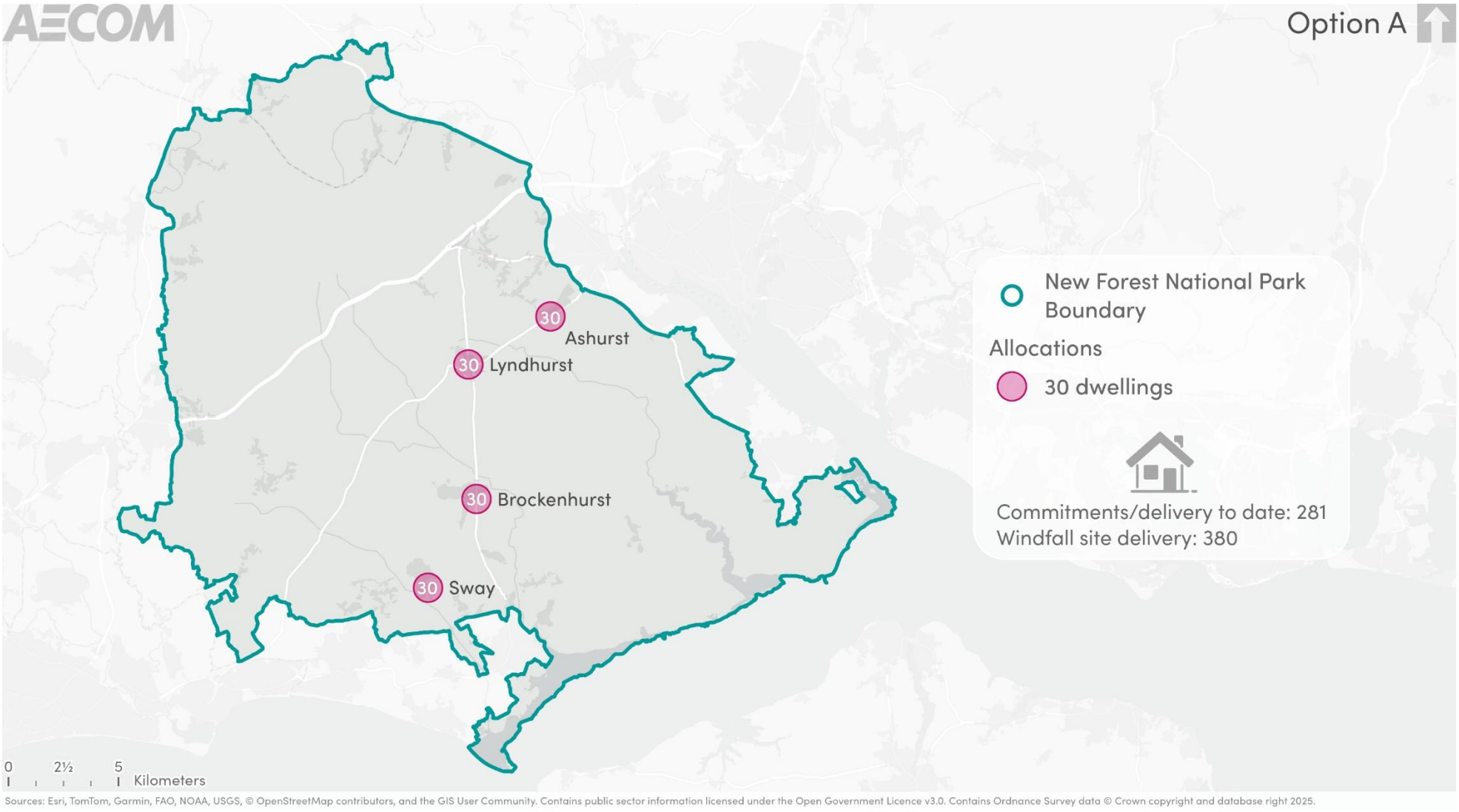
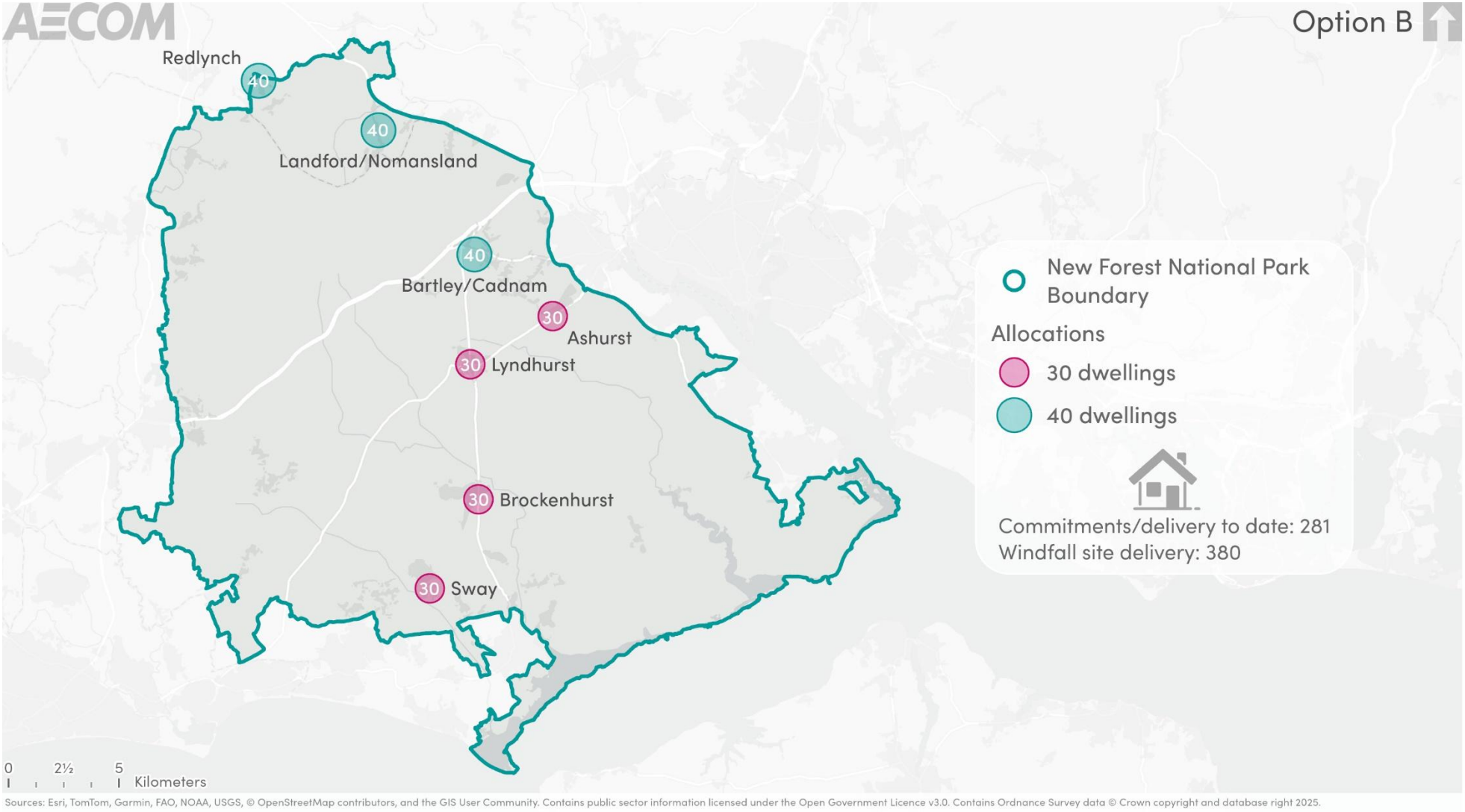


Figure 4-2: Option HO2



4.4. Part 2: different scales of growth to consider for employment land delivery

Introduction

4.4.1. Alongside housing provision, the SA has also considered reasonable alternative approaches for employment land delivery within the National Park. Employment plays an important role in supporting the social and economic wellbeing of local communities, reducing the need for out-commuting, supporting local services, and contributing to more resilient and balanced communities. However, as with housing, the scale, nature and distribution of employment development must be carefully managed to ensure consistency with the statutory purposes of the National Park and national planning policy.

Policy and local context for employment development

4.4.2. The adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019) does not allocate land for new employment development. Instead, it applies a criteria-based policy framework focused on:

- Retaining existing employment sites;
- Supporting the appropriate intensification or regeneration of existing employment uses; and
- Allowing small-scale and compatible employment development, including home working, rural enterprise and tourism-related uses, where these accord with the purposes of the National Park.

4.4.3. This approach reflects the characteristics of the National Park economy, which is dominated by small and micro-businesses, home-based working, rural and land-based industries, and visitor-related activities, rather than large-scale industrial or logistics uses. Employment activity is therefore already relatively dispersed and often closely related to settlements, existing buildings, or rural enterprises.

4.4.4. At the same time, the National Park Authority is required to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in pursuing its statutory purposes. It is therefore appropriate for the SA to consider whether alternative approaches to the spatial distribution of employment development could better support local employment needs while remaining consistent with landscape and environmental constraints.

Establishing reasonable alternatives for employment development

4.4.5. For the purposes of the SA, the following reasonable alternatives for employment development have been identified.

Option E1: Retention of the adopted Local Plan approach only (no employment allocations)

4.4.6. This option retains the approach of the adopted Local Plan, with no specific employment land allocations. Employment development would continue to be managed through criteria-based policies aimed at:

- Retaining and safeguarding existing employment sites across the National Park;
- Supporting the appropriate intensification or expansion of existing employment uses;
- Supporting the principle of new employment development within the defined village boundaries; and
- Enabling small scale, dispersed employment development in or near settlements, including villages and hamlets, where proposals meet environmental, landscape and access criteria.

4.4.7. This option reflects current employment patterns within the National Park and allows flexibility to respond to changing economic circumstances. It also enables employment opportunities to be provided in a dispersed manner, supporting local communities and reducing the need for long-distance commuting, while avoiding the need for new strategic allocations. As no site allocations would be part of this option, it relies on criteria-based policies and is more sensitive to changes in national planning policy and permitted development rights. However, evidence prepared to support the Local Plan Review indicates that this option is unlikely to meet the identified employment land needs arising over the plan period.

Option E2: Retention of the adopted Local Plan approach plus distributed employment allocations across National Park communities

4.4.8. This option retains the criteria-based approach outlined under Option E1 but supplements it through the allocation of a number of small-scale employment sites across communities within the National Park, broadly aligned with the revised spatial strategy.

4.4.9. The option seeks to distribute employment opportunities more widely across the National Park, helping to support local access to jobs and align employment provision with housing growth. This approach could contribute positively to the socio-economic wellbeing of communities throughout the National Park by providing opportunities for local employment and reducing the need to travel outside the area for work.

4.4.10. This option relies on suitable employment sites being identified and delivered across the National Park; however, the Call for Sites process identified limited opportunities for employment development of this nature.

4.4.11. This option would meet the identified employment land need through a dispersed pattern of development that would likely require a number of allocations across the National Park.

Option E3: Retention of the adopted approach plus a strategic employment allocation at Fawley

4.4.12. This option combines the criteria-based approach set out in Option E1 with the allocation of land north of the former Fawley Power Station within the Solent Freeport area of the National Park for employment development.

4.4.13. The option would meet the identified need for additional employment land whilst retaining the adopted Local Plan approach of supporting employment development within defined villages and the extension and redevelopment of existing employment sites elsewhere within the National Park.

4.4.14. The allocation at Fawley provides an opportunity to meet a substantial proportion of the identified employment land requirement at a single strategic location associated with an existing developed area. The site also benefits from regeneration opportunities, including the redevelopment of previously developed land and its location within the Solent Freeport.

4.5. Other potential reasonable alternatives

4.5.1. It should be noted that there are, in theory, numerous other growth strategy alternatives comprising different combinations of location and site options that could be considered through the SA process. However, it is important that the alternatives considered are (a) reasonable; and (b) suitably distinct in order to allow a meaningful appraisal to be carried out. In this respect the appraisal of the identified options above has enabled the relative sustainability merits of key variables with regards to the Local Plan Review's spatial strategy to be effectively explored.

4.5.2. A further element to note is that the SA Report is a vehicle for consultation. Its central purpose is to provide stakeholders (including the general public) with an understanding of the relative merits of different approaches. As such, whilst there is an almost limitless number of combinations of location and site options which could be appraised, there is a need to ensure that the assessment of reasonable alternatives remains accessible, coherent and understandable.

4.5.3. This is particularly important given the need to simplify the plan making process to ensure it is accessible to all.

4.5.4. Taking these considerations into account, the options identified above for the SA are viewed to provide an appropriate vehicle for robustly appraising the key variables that can be considered with regards to the Local Plan Review's spatial strategy, including within the context of the NFNPA's statutory purposes and duty.

Regulation 18 Part 2 representations (November – December 2025)

4.5.5. The Regulation 18 consultation raised a number of discussion points relating to other policy areas, including tourism accommodation and renewable and low carbon energy development, and whether these should give rise to additional reasonable alternatives to be assessed through the SA process.

4.5.6. In relation to tourism accommodation, representations highlighted the role of tourism in supporting the local economy and employment. The Local Economy Topic Paper identifies tourism as a key employment sector in the National Park, but also confirms that there is no robust quantitative evidence to define future tourism accommodation needs from a planning perspective, and that recent growth has been concentrated in non-serviced accommodation and camping uses which can generate significant environmental and community pressures. In this context and given the absence of an evidence base to support distinct scale or spatial growth scenarios, the Local Plan's criteria-based policy approach has been taken forward and no separate tourism accommodation alternatives have been defined for SA appraisal. The Local Plan continues to set out a positive strategy for additional tourism development in a way that is compatible with the statutory Park purposes and related duty.

4.5.7. The Regulation 18 consultation also included comments suggesting that the Local Plan should identify or allocate land for renewable and low carbon energy development. While national policy encourages consideration of suitable areas for such development, the entire plan area is a nationally protected landscape subject to a high degree of landscape sensitivity and ecological constraints. Given these factors, and the limited additional value that would be gained from appraising alternative allocation-based approaches at this stage, it has not been considered proportionate or necessary to assess separate renewable energy alternatives through the SA process, with the Local Plan continuing to apply a high-level, criteria-based policy approach.

5. Appraisal of reasonable alternatives

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. Utilising the SA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SA, the appraisal has been presented through nine SA Themes, as follows:

- Air, Soil and Water Resources;
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Climatic Change;
- Communities, Health and Wellbeing;
- Economy and Employment;
- Historic Environment;
- Housing;
- Landscape; and
- Transport.

5.1.2. The appraisal considers the relative sustainability merits of each of the eight growth strategy options (part 1) and three employment site options (part 2), respectively. Findings are presented as a commentary on effects. To support the appraisal findings, the options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SA Theme. It is anticipated that this will provide the reader with a likely indication of the relative performance of the eight growth strategy options, and three employment land delivery options, in relation to each theme considered.

5.2. Part 1: spatial strategy appraisal

5.2.1. **Table 5-1** to **Table 5-9** below present the findings of the appraisal of the eight growth strategy options (see **Table 4-1**) for each of the SA themes.

5.2.2. **Table 5-10** summarises the rankings of the options with regards to their relative performance in relation to each SA Theme.

Table 5-1: Appraisal findings (Air, Soil and Water Resources)

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
	1	3	5	7	4	6	2	8

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1, which proposes the most restrained level of growth, focuses development around four existing defined villages and would essentially roll forward the existing planning policy approach in the National Park. A more limited and focused approach helps to minimise land take and soil disturbance, as new housing would be located around existing settlement boundaries where some infrastructure is already in place. The limited scale of growth also reduces risks of water pollution (by avoiding more remote locations which may lack necessary infrastructure) and helps maintain air quality by limiting traffic.

Options HO2 and HO3 introduce a broader spatial footprint by including newly defined villages and smaller hamlets, respectively, while Option HO4 proposes full dispersal without a settlement hierarchy. While housing increases are relatively moderate and would contribute towards meeting some additional local needs, the wider distribution raises risks to soil and water resources. Development in sensitive or poorly connected areas will likely require additional infrastructure (such as roads and drainage systems) to deliver new housing. The delivery of this infrastructure and housing could disrupt soil profiles, increase sedimentation in watercourses, and reduce air quality through construction emissions and car use. Air quality could be affected by greater reliance on private vehicles, although directing growth to service-based settlements (for Options HO2 and HO3) offers some mitigation.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2, incorporating housing adjacent to settlements around the periphery of the National Park. The additional dwellings will place more pressure on the environment; however, the settlements are generally more accessible and benefit from existing transport links, helping limit air quality impacts from car dependency leading to increased traffic flows when compared to other locations within the National Park.

Option HO6 directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. The higher housing delivery amplifies risks compared to Options HO2, HO3, and HO5.

Option HO7 focuses sites on the National Park's boundary, offering notable advantages. As noted in relation to Option HO5, these locations are generally more accessible and benefit from existing transport links, helping limit air quality impacts from car dependency leading to increased traffic flows. Housing delivery is relatively low, reducing cumulative pressures. Most importantly, this approach avoids development within the National Park's most sensitive areas, reducing risks to soils and water systems. The combination of lower scale, better infrastructure, and avoidance of centrally located sensitive areas (including watercourses running through the New Forest Special Area of Conservation [SAC] and Special Protection Area [SPA]) makes this option one of the better-performing scenarios.

Option HO8, which proposes the highest level of housing growth, includes a major new or expanded settlement. This scale of development poses the greatest risk to air, soil, and water resources. Dispersed development throughout the National Park, and the creation of a new settlement would involve significant land clearance, increased impermeable surfaces, and substantial infrastructure development, all of which could disrupt hydrology and soil integrity. Air quality impacts would be pronounced due to construction emissions, long-term traffic generation, and concentration of development in one location.

Table 5-2: Appraisal findings (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
	2	3	5	7	4	6	1	8

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1 concentrates development around four existing defined villages. While these settlements are adjacent to internationally designated sites such as New Forest SAC and SPA, the overall low level of growth proposed under this option helps to minimise ecological disturbance compared to other options (all of which, except Option HO7, also involve development near these designations). Focusing development in the main settlements also reduces the need to allocate housing in smaller settlements that are more sensitive to change. The modest scale of growth helps limit land take and reduces risks of cumulative disturbance, including light and noise pollution and recreational pressure.

Options HO2 and HO3 expand the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages and smaller hamlets, respectively, increasing the spatial footprint and raising risks of edge effects and habitat fragmentation at the additional locations where growth would be delivered. The additional settlements are also close to sensitive habitats (including the SAC and SPA), and increased development could lead to greater recreational access and disturbance, which would require careful planning and mitigation.

Option HO4 disperses development across the National Park without a guiding settlement hierarchy, presenting significant risks to biodiversity and geodiversity. Scattered development could occur near designated sites or ecologically valuable landscapes, undermining ecological networks and increasing pressure on habitats already under stress. The dispersed nature of growth may also make it more challenging to deliver coordinated avoidance and mitigation measures, increasing the risk of cumulative impacts on sensitive environments.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2, incorporating housing adjacent to settlements around the periphery of the National Park. The additional dwellings will place more pressure on the natural environment; however, direct pressure on the National Park's most sensitive habitats and designated sites (including the Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area) are generally fairly limited due to their location, though impacts on buffer zones and migratory routes remain possible.

Option HO6 directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This option has the second highest rate of growth, increasing the potential for cumulative impacts on habitats and designated sites within and adjacent to the National Park.

Option HO7 focuses sites on the National Park's boundary and delivers relatively low housing numbers, reducing direct pressure on the National Park's most sensitive habitats and designated sites (including the Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area), though impacts on buffer zones and migratory routes remain possible.

Option HO8, which includes a major new or expanded settlement, poses the greatest risk. The scale of development could result in significant land clearance, habitat loss, and disruption of ecological networks. For example, Calshot (one potential location which may have some potential) is situated close to the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site, increasing the likelihood of impacts on internationally important habitats and species and functionally linked land. Even if development avoids designated sites, the abundance of sensitive ecological designations and habitats across the New Forest mean that indirect impacts (such as increased traffic, recreational pressure, and pollution) could still be significant.

Table 5-3: Appraisal Findings (Climate Change [Including Flood Risk])

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
	1	3	5	8	4	6	2	7

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1 performs well in terms of climate mitigation. Concentrating development around a limited number of existing villages supports compact growth, reduces the need for new infrastructure, and enables better access to public transport and active travel routes. The modest scale of development also limits the overall carbon footprint. Adaptation is more feasible in these locations due to existing flood risk mapping and infrastructure capacity.

Options HO2 and HO3 introduce a wider spatial spread, which may increase car dependency and reduce opportunities for low-carbon travel. Smaller settlements may lack the infrastructure needed to support climate-resilient development, and the cumulative impact of dispersed growth could increase emissions. However, if allocations are focused on service-based settlements and incorporate sustainable design, these options could still support climate objectives.

Option HO4, with no settlement hierarchy, performs least favourably. Dispersed development across the National Park increases reliance on private vehicles, complicates infrastructure delivery, and makes coordinated climate adaptation difficult. Development may occur in areas with limited resilience to flooding or heat stress, increasing long-term vulnerability.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2, incorporating housing adjacent to settlements around the periphery of the National Park. The additional dwellings will place more pressure on the environment; however, the additional dwellings may support additional strategic infrastructure planning associated with areas of higher growth. They also align with existing commuting patterns and benefits from good transport links, helping to limit emissions compared to dispersed growth. While commuting distances remain a concern, placing additional housing in these locations could reduce the overall need to travel for many residents.

Option HO6 directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This increases the carbon footprint and complicates adaptation

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

efforts, as infrastructure and energy planning would need to cover a larger area. Higher housing numbers amplify these risks, and strong mitigation measures would be essential.

Option HO7 focuses on sites close to the National Park's boundary and delivers relatively low housing numbers. As noted for Option HO5, this approach may allow for more strategic infrastructure planning. It also aligns with existing commuting patterns and benefits from good transport links, helping to limit emissions compared to dispersed growth. While commuting distances remain a concern, placing housing in these locations could reduce the overall need to travel for many residents.

Option HO8, which delivers the highest housing figures, presents both risks and opportunities. A new or expanded settlement could be designed to high environmental standards, incorporating renewable energy, sustainable drainage, and low-carbon transport. However, the overall scale of development, both with the new settlement area, and elsewhere across the National Park, carries a significant carbon cost, and poor siting could exacerbate climate vulnerabilities.

Table 5-4: Appraisal findings (Communities, Health and Wellbeing)

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
	7	2	4	8	3	1	6	5

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1 focuses growth around existing defined villages, supporting community cohesion by reinforcing well-established settlement patterns. The modest scale of development is less likely to overwhelm local services and may be sufficient to help sustain village facilities such as shops, schools, and health centres. Concentrated growth also supports walkability and access to green space, contributing positively to physical and mental wellbeing. However, limited housing delivery may constrain opportunities for younger residents or those in housing need, potentially affecting long-term community sustainability and services.

Options HO2 and HO3 expand the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages and hamlets. This broader distribution may help address additional housing need across a wider area, supporting smaller communities and potentially revitalising underused services. However, increased development in smaller settlements could place strains on limited infrastructure, particularly if not accompanied by investment in community facilities. The spread of development may also reduce opportunities for active travel and increase car dependency, with implications for health and social inclusion. Whilst both options have the potential to support a wider range of communities, the inclusion of smaller hamlets under Option HO3 may increase pressure on locations with more limited services and facilities and reduce opportunities to concentrate growth where it can most effectively support community infrastructure. Consequently, Option HO2 is likely to perform more strongly in supporting sustainable communities and access to services.

Option HO4 disperses development across the National Park without a guiding hierarchy. While this may offer flexibility and address housing need in smaller settlements, it risks undermining community cohesion and placing pressure on settlements with limited services. The lack of spatial focus may lead to inefficient infrastructure provision and reduced access to health, education, and social facilities. This could exacerbate inequalities and reduce overall wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2 by incorporating housing on land within the National Park at its periphery, adjacent to settlements outside the boundary (such as the Waterside, Lymington and New Milton). Compared to providing additional dwellings solely

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

within the National Park's villages, development in these edge-of-Park locations may relieve pressure on more sensitive National Park communities while offering good access to services and facilities in nearby settlements. Improved accessibility and connectivity can, in turn, support health and wellbeing by reducing isolation. However, the additional growth at the National Park's edge may make a more limited contribution to sustaining the vitality of services and facilities within National Park communities, such as local schools, shops and community facilities. Consequently, whilst the option performs positively in terms of housing delivery and access to services, it may be less effective than some alternatives in supporting the socio-economic wellbeing of communities located within the National Park itself.

Option HO6 directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary, with the second-highest delivery figure. This has the potential to support both National Park and adjacent communities, helping to address housing need and improve access to services. However, the wider spread of development may dilute benefits, reducing opportunities for enhancing social inclusion. Whilst a proportion of growth on the National Park's periphery may provide more limited support for services and facilities within National Park settlements, this is balanced by the inclusion of higher growth across a wider range of communities within the National Park itself.

Option HO7 focuses sites close to the National Park's boundary, which may reduce pressure on National Park communities while offering better access to transport and facilities outside the National Park. These advantages can support health and wellbeing by improving connectivity and reducing isolation. Housing delivery is relatively modest, limiting infrastructure strain, but careful planning is needed to ensure new development integrates with existing social networks. However, because growth is focused on locations that relate closely to settlements outside the National Park, the option may make only a limited contribution to sustaining the services, facilities and communities within the National Park itself. As a result, it may be less effective than alternatives which direct development to National Park villages in supporting the socio-economic wellbeing of local communities and maintaining the vitality of settlements within the National Park.

Option HO8 includes a major new or expanded settlement, offering potential to deliver significant new infrastructure such as schools, health centres, and community spaces. If well-designed, this could support high levels of wellbeing and social inclusion. However, concentrating higher levels of growth in these locations may also risk placing pressure on existing communities and infrastructure, for example, from increased traffic and pollution. A further consideration relates to the impact of significant growth

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

on the special qualities of the National Park, and the associated impact on health and wellbeing and opportunities for recreation and enjoyment. This may undermine the National Park's role relating to the second statutory purpose of the National Park, including associated with the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

Table 5-5: Appraisal findings (Economy and Employment)

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
€ $ £ ¥	7	4	3	8	2	1	6	5

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1 supports the local economy by reinforcing existing settlements, helping sustain village centres, local services, and small businesses. Modest growth may help retain working-age residents and support employment in sectors such as retail, hospitality, and care. However, the limited scale of development may constrain opportunities for economic expansion or diversification, particularly if housing affordability remains a barrier for younger workers and families.

Options HO2 and HO3 extend development to additional villages and hamlets, potentially supporting a wider range of local economies. In addition to the benefits within the main settlements, these options may help revitalise the National Park's smaller communities, enabling home-based businesses and supporting rural services. Employment benefits may still vary by location, depending on the capacity of smaller settlements to absorb and support growth.

Option HO4, with its fully dispersed approach, may offer flexibility for economic activity across the National Park, including in smaller settlements. However, the lack of spatial focus risks diluting investment and making it harder to support infrastructure improvements that underpin employment, such as broadband, transport, and workspace provision. This option may also increase commuting distances and reduce the viability of local services, undermining economic resilience.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2, incorporating housing adjacent to settlements around the periphery of the National Park. This option strikes a balance between linking housing to regional employment hubs and improving access to jobs for residents, while also supporting the National Park's rural economy. Development on the periphery of the National Park is unlikely to offer as greater support for the National Park's land-based economy, as it will typically look outside the National Park.

Option HO6 directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This approach could strengthen links to regional employment hubs

while continuing to support economies within the National Park. By combining growth in main settlements and additional villages with sites near the boundary, Option HO6 offers greater potential for infrastructure investment and economic diversification.

Option HO7 focuses on the National Park's boundary, which may strengthen links to regional employment hubs and improve access to jobs for residents. However, this approach risks disconnecting housing from the National Park's rural economy, limiting benefits for local businesses and services.

Option HO8 includes a major new or expanded settlement, offering the greatest potential for economic growth and diversification. A new settlement could support significant employment opportunities, attract investment, and enable infrastructure provision at scale. If well-designed, it could include mixed-use development, workspace, and transport links. However, the scale of development also carries risks of overdevelopment, impacts on the National Park's special qualities, and disruption to the National Park's rural and visitor economy.

Table 5-6: Appraisal findings (Historic Environment)

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
	1	3	5	8	4	6	2	7

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1 performs well in relation to the historic environment. The main settlements are generally well understood in terms of heritage constraints, and development can be guided by existing conservation policies. The modest scale of growth also limits cumulative impacts and allows for better integration with existing built form.

Option HO2 expands development to additional villages, which are located near heritage assets. While the overall number of designated heritage features in the additional settlements is relatively low, there are specific sensitivities to consider (for example, Landford contains scheduled monuments, and Bartley lies adjacent to a conservation area). This increases the potential for adverse impacts on the setting of listed buildings, conservation areas, and archaeological sites.

Option HO3 introduces smaller hamlets alongside defined villages, further increasing the spatial footprint and the risk of impacts on historic landscapes and undesignated heritage assets. Managing heritage sensitivities in these locations may be more challenging due to limited capacity for change.

Option HO4 disperses development across the National Park without a guiding hierarchy, presenting the greatest risk to the historic environment. Scattered development increases the likelihood of affecting undesignated heritage assets and historic landscapes, particularly in areas not previously subject to detailed heritage assessment. The lack of spatial management makes it difficult to avoid sensitive locations and undermines the ability to manage cumulative impacts on historic character.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2, incorporating housing adjacent to settlements around the periphery of the National Park. The additional dwellings will place more pressure on the historic environment; however many areas on the National Park's boundary benefit from conservation designations (including areas by Ringwood, Fordingbridge Lymington, and Totton), which provide strong safeguards against inappropriate development.

Option HO6 directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This option has the second highest rate of growth, which, along with the dispersed nature of the option, increases the overall development footprint and adds complexity to heritage management.

Like Option HO1, Option HO7 performs well in relation to the historic environment due to the low housing delivery number. Many areas on the National Park's boundary also benefit from conservation designations (including areas by Ringwood, Fordingbridge Lymington, and Totton), which provide strong safeguards against inappropriate development. While these areas may still contain historic features, the ability to plan strategically and apply robust heritage protections makes this option the least disruptive overall.

Option HO8 includes a major new or expanded settlement, carrying significant risk to the historic environment. The scale of development could result in substantial change to the landscape setting of heritage assets, particularly if located near historic villages or within areas of archaeological interest. If located at Calshot, one potential location, development could affect the setting of Calshot Castle (a scheduled monument) and other heritage assets linked to the area's military history. While the area currently has a poor-quality public realm, there may be opportunities for heritage-led regeneration. Although heritage-sensitive design principles could be incorporated, the potential for harm (whether at Calshot or another location) remains considerable and would require detailed assessment and mitigation.

Table 5-7: Appraisal findings (Housing)

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
	7	6	4	8	3	2	5	1

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1 delivers the lowest level of housing and focuses growth around existing defined villages. The limited scale of development may constrain opportunities for younger residents and those in housing need, potentially exacerbating demographic challenges and affordability pressures.

Option HO2 increases housing delivery and expands the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages. This offers a more balanced approach, improving housing availability across a wider area and supporting demographic sustainability. However, the broader spatial footprint introduces risks of infrastructure strain, which must be managed to ensure delivery is effective and sustainable.

Option HO3 builds on Option HO2 by including smaller hamlets, further increasing housing delivery and spreading provision more widely. This could help meet local needs in smaller communities but may also introduce challenges for infrastructure and service access, particularly for specialist housing linked to health facilities.

Option HO4 disperses development across the National Park without a guiding hierarchy, delivering a relatively high level of housing but lacking strategic focus. Homes may be located in areas poorly served by infrastructure or services, reducing the effectiveness of housing provision and risking unsustainable patterns of growth.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2, incorporating housing adjacent to settlements around the periphery of the National Park. These locations benefit from strong connectivity to services, transport links, and employment hubs outside the National Park. Overall, this option performs well, delivering one of the highest levels of housing while directing development to appropriate and sustainable locations.

Option HO6 directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary, delivering a higher level of housing and helping meet local demand.

This approach could support affordable housing delivery at scale and improve access to services in adjacent urban areas, though careful integration is needed to ensure local needs are met.

Option HO7 focuses sites on the National Park's boundary, offering good connectivity to external services and employment hubs. While housing delivery is moderate compared to other options, this approach may reduce pressure on the National Park's main settlements and provide opportunities for affordable housing near accessible locations. Despite the relatively low overall delivery figures, this option has good potential to deliver larger allocations, which can unlock affordable housing and specialist provision near accessible services (which a dispersed approached may lack). Consideration would need to be given to how the housing delivered on the periphery of the nationally protected landscape would meet needs arising within the National Park (in line with the Authority's socio-economic duty), rather than catering for wider needs arising outside the National Park.

Option HO8 includes a major new or expanded settlement, delivering the highest level of housing. This option has the greatest potential to meet housing need comprehensively, including affordable and family housing, and could support infrastructure provision at scale.

Table 5-8: Appraisal findings (Landscape)

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
	1	3	5	7	4	6	2	8

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1 performs most favourably. Focusing growth around existing defined villages avoids intrusion into open countryside and protects the National Park's special qualities. The modest scale of growth helps preserve tranquillity and maintain the National Park's rural character.

Option HO2 expands the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages. This broader distribution increases the development footprint and introduces risks of visual intrusion, particularly in settlements with looser built form and stronger landscape integration. While careful siting and design could mitigate some impacts, these areas are more sensitive to change and may affect the special qualities of the National Park. This option still offers planning control and the spatial focus of development to manage impacts.

Option HO3 adds smaller hamlets, further increasing visibility and fragmentation of landscape character. Hamlets typically lack containment and have strong connections to open countryside, making integration challenging and eroding the sense of openness and remoteness that contributes to the National Park's special qualities.

Option HO4 disperses development without a guiding hierarchy, introducing built form into previously undeveloped areas. This risks significant harm to the special qualities of the National Park and makes it difficult to avoid sensitive views and cultural landscape features.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2, incorporating housing in settlements around the periphery of the National Park. The additional dwellings will place more pressure on the landscape; however, by avoiding direct impacts on landscapes in the centre of the National Park the potential for adverse impacts is reduced (while also recognising that the whole of the New Forest National Park benefits from the highest level of landscape protection under primary legislation and the NPPF). However, development at these

locations may still heavily influence the National Park's setting and transitional views, requiring careful design and screening to maintain landscape integrity and protect its special qualities.

Option HO6 directs higher levels of growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary, creating cumulative effects on both the National Park's character and its setting. Areas on the National Park's boundary often contribute to gateway views, so impacts may extend beyond the boundary and affect the experience of entering the National Park.

Option HO7 focuses new housing on the National Park's boundary, avoiding direct impacts on landscapes in the centre of the National Park. However, as with Option HO5, development at these locations may still heavily influence the National Park's setting and transitional views, requiring careful design and screening to maintain landscape integrity and protect its special qualities. The periphery of the National Park has the same level of landscape protection as the core of the New Forest.

Option HO8 performs least favourably. A major new or expanded settlement has the potential to cause significant visual change and loss of tranquillity, with indirect effects such as traffic, lighting, and urbanisation altering the National Park's character. In addition to the new settlement, Option HO8 proposes the highest overall level of housing delivery, with potential sites distributed across the National Park. This wider pattern of growth extends the potential for landscape and visual impacts, including cumulative effects. It should be noted though that a well-designed new settlement in an appropriate location has the potential to enhance existing areas of poor public realm, if done in a way that respects and reinforces the National Park's special qualities.

Table 5-9: Appraisal findings (Transport)

Rank of preference	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
	1	3	5	8	4	6	2	7

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option HO1 performs well in transport terms. Concentrating development around existing defined villages supports compact growth patterns that encourage walking, cycling, and public transport use. These settlements are generally served by existing transport infrastructure (three have railway stations), reducing the need for new roads and limiting traffic growth. The modest scale of development also helps avoid significant congestion or pressure on sensitive routes.

Option HO2 expands the hierarchy to include additional villages, some of which have reasonable service provision. This broader distribution may still allow for sustainable travel in certain locations, but smaller settlements often have weaker transport links, increasing reliance on private vehicles. While impacts can be mitigated where growth is directed to better-connected villages, overall car dependency is likely to rise. There are basic public transport links to the 3 settlements being considered as additional 'defined villages'.

Option HO3 adds smaller hamlets, many of which lack public transport and active travel opportunities. This increases the spatial footprint and risk of traffic growth across the National Park, affecting tranquillity and contributing to emissions. The dispersed nature of these locations makes sustainable transport provision challenging.

Option HO4 performs least favourably. Dispersing development without a guiding hierarchy undermines opportunities for public transport and active travel, creating reliance on private vehicles. This could lead to widespread traffic growth across sensitive areas.

Option HO5 adds to Option HO2, incorporating housing adjacent to settlements around the periphery of the National Park. While the additional dwellings would place increased pressure on the transport network, this risk is mitigated by the generally better transport connectivity of these locations. Many of these locations benefit from access to regional networks, including nearby rail stations (such as New Milton, Hinton Admiral, Lymington and Totton), which may reduce car dependency compared to more

dispersed patterns of growth. Nevertheless, the relatively high level of housing delivery associated with this option would still give rise to pressures both within and on the edges of the National Park.

Option HO6 directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This option has the second highest rate of growth, which increases overall traffic movements both within and around the National Park. Without strong sustainable transport measures, this option risks cumulative impacts on congestion and air quality.

Option HO7 focuses new housing provision around the National Park's boundary. These locations generally have decent transport links and access to regional networks (including via rail stations such as New Milton, Hinton Admiral, Lymington or Totton), reducing car dependency compared to dispersed growth. While the roads close to the National Park's boundaries may experience some congestion, the potential for sustainable travel is higher than most other options, although development on the periphery of the National Park is likely to result in additional cross-Park traffic) often on unfenced Forest roads).

Option HO8 includes a major new or expanded settlement, presenting both risks and opportunities. If well-designed, it could incorporate sustainable transport infrastructure such as bus services and cycle routes, reducing car dependency. However, the scale of development carries a high risk of traffic growth if not appropriately located (for example, near to existing major road networks or public transport links), particularly during construction and early occupation phases.

Table 5-10: Appraisal rankings (compiled)

SA theme	Option:	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
Air, Soil and Water Resources	Rank	1	3	5	7	4	6	2	8
	Significant?				-				-
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Rank	2	3	5	7	4	6	1	8
	Significant?				-				-
Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)	Rank	1	3	5	8	4	6	2	7
	Significant?				-				-
Communities, Health and Wellbeing	Rank	7	2	4	8	3	1	6	5
	Significant?		+	+	-	+	+	+	+/-

SA theme	Option:	HO1	HO2	HO3	HO4	HO5	HO6	HO7	HO8
Economy and Employment	Rank	7	4	3	8	2	1	6	5
	Significant?				-	+	+		
Historic Environment	Rank	1	3	5	8	4	6	2	7
	Significant?				-				
Housing	Rank	7	6	4	8	3	2	5	1
	Significant?		+	+	-	+	+	+	+
Landscape	Rank	1	3	5	7	4	6	2	8
	Significant?				-				-
Transport	Rank	1	3	5	8	4	6	2	7
	Significant?	+			-			+	

*Significant beneficial effects are denoted by a '+', while significant adverse effects are denoted by a '-'

Summary of part 1 appraisal findings

Air, Soil and Water Resources

5.2.3. Option HO1 performs most favourably, as its low level of growth focused on established settlements minimises land take, soil disturbance, risks to water quality and air pollution. Option HO7 also performs well by directing limited development to accessible locations along the National Park boundary, avoiding the most sensitive internal areas and benefiting from existing infrastructure. Options HO2 and HO5 perform moderately, as increased growth and spatial spread raise environmental pressures, although impacts are partly mitigated where development is focused in better connected settlements. Options HO3 and HO6 perform less favourably due to a wider development footprint, while Option HO4 and Option HO8 perform worst as dispersed growth and large-scale development generate the greatest cumulative pressures on air, soil and water resources.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

5.2.4. Option HO7 performs most favourably by focusing limited growth on the National Park boundary, thereby reducing direct pressure on the most sensitive habitats and designated sites (although it should be noted that development will still impact on a range of designated sites in the New Forest and require consideration through the HRA/appropriate assessment process). Option HO1 also performs well due to its low scale of development and concentration in main settlements, which helps limit land take and recreational pressure. Options HO2 and HO5 perform moderately, introducing increased development near sensitive habitats and ecological networks, but in a managed and planned manner, with Option HO5 reducing impacts on core areas but still affecting buffer zones and connectivity. Options HO3 and HO6 perform less favourably due to wider spatial spread and higher housing numbers, while Option HO4 and especially Option HO8 pose the greatest risks through habitat fragmentation, cumulative effects and large-scale land clearance.

Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)

5.2.5. Option HO1 performs most favourably by supporting a more concentrated pattern of development within existing settlements, reducing car dependency and enabling effective alignment with existing infrastructure and flood risk management. Option HO7 also performs well through modest growth in accessible boundary locations that support strategic infrastructure planning and lower emissions. Options HO2 and HO5 perform moderately, benefiting from established transport links but delivering higher growth levels that increase emissions and adaptation challenges. Options HO3 and HO6 perform less favourably due to wider spatial distribution and higher delivery, increasing carbon footprints and infrastructure complexity. Option HO8 presents both opportunities and risks, with potential for sustainable design offset by the significant carbon cost of scale, while Option HO4 performs least favourably due to dispersed development and limited capacity for coordinated mitigation and adaptation.

Communities, Health and Wellbeing

5.2.6. Option HO6 performs most favourably by supporting a wide range of communities within and adjoining the National Park, helping to address housing need and improve access to services, despite benefits being dispersed. Options HO2 and HO5 also perform well by reinforcing settlements and improving connectivity, with peripheral growth under Option HO5 helping to relieve pressure on National Park communities and reduce isolation (compared to other higher housing delivery options). Development on the periphery of the National Park is less likely to support the vitality and services of the communities of the National Park, as it is likely to look outside the National Park to higher order settlement for services. Option HO3 performs less favourably due to development in smaller hamlets with limited services and reduced opportunities for active travel. Option HO8 offers potential for new infrastructure but carries risks to wellbeing due to scale and environmental impacts. Options HO7 and HO1 deliver more limited benefits due to modest or constrained housing delivery, while Option HO4 performs least favourably as dispersed growth risks inefficient service provision and weakened community cohesion.

Economy and Employment

5.2.7. Option HO6 performs most favourably by combining growth across settlements and boundary locations, supporting local economies, improving access to employment hubs and enabling strategic infrastructure investment. Option HO5 also performs strongly by linking housing to regional employment while continuing to support the National Park's rural economy, although development on the periphery of the National Park is less likely to support the socio-economic wellbeing of communities within it. Options HO3 and HO2 provide moderate benefits by supporting smaller settlements and established service centres, though capacity for diversification varies. Option HO8 offers substantial economic potential due to scale and infrastructure provision but carries risks to the rural and visitor economy. Options HO7 and HO1 deliver more limited economic benefits, while Option HO4 performs least favourably due to its lack of spatial focus and reduced viability for targeted investment.

Historic Environment

5.2.8. In relation to the Historic Environment SA theme, Option HO1 performs most favourably, as its low level of growth focused on main settlements allows heritage impacts to be managed effectively within established conservation frameworks. Option HO7 also performs well, with limited growth focused on the National Park boundary where conservation designations provide strong protection for heritage assets. Options HO2 and HO5 introduce increased pressure through higher housing delivery, but impacts are generally localised and capable of mitigation through careful site selection and design, particularly in peripheral locations. Option HO3 and Option HO6 perform less favourably due to wider spatial distribution and higher delivery levels, increasing risks to historic landscapes and undesignated heritage assets. Option HO8 presents significant risks due to its scale and potential effects on the setting of heritage assets, while Option HO4 performs least favourably, as its dispersed approach lacks spatial control and poses the greatest risk of cumulative harm to the historic environment.

Housing

5.2.9. Option HO8 performs most favourably, as it delivers the highest level of housing and has the greatest potential to meet some of the identified needs arising within the National Park, including affordable and family housing, supported by infrastructure at scale. Option HO6 also performs well, delivering high levels of housing across settlements within and adjoining the National Park, while Option HO5 ranks next by directing significant growth to well-connected peripheral settlements (although consideration would need to be given to how development in these locations can address the needs of communities within the National Park in line with the Authority's socio-economic duty, rather than those arising in adjacent urban areas outside the National Park). Options HO3 and HO7 perform moderately, with HO3 spreading provision more widely to smaller communities and HO7 offering good connectivity but lower overall delivery. Option HO2 and Option HO1 perform less favourably due to more limited housing provision, while Option HO4 performs least favourably as its dispersed approach lacks strategic focus and risks unsustainable delivery.

Landscape

5.2.10. Option HO1 performs most favourably, as concentrating limited growth around existing settlements avoids intrusion into open countryside and helps protect the National Park's landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities. Option HO7 also performs well by focusing development on the National Park boundary, avoiding direct impacts on central landscapes (whilst recognising that the whole of the National Park benefits from the highest level of landscape protection), although careful design is required to protect transitional views and setting. Options HO2 and HO5 perform moderately, introducing increased landscape pressure through wider distribution and peripheral growth, with potential impacts on settlement edges and gateway views, but in a planned and controlled manner Options HO3 and HO6 perform less favourably due to greater fragmentation, cumulative effects and encroachment into more sensitive landscapes. Option HO4 performs poorly as dispersed development risks harm to undeveloped landscapes, while Option HO8 performs least favourably due to its scale and potential for significant visual change and loss of tranquillity, with widespread cumulative landscape impacts.

Transport

5.2.11. Option HO1 performs most favourably, as compact growth around existing settlements supports walking, cycling and use of public transport, minimising traffic growth and pressure on the network. Option HO7 also performs well by focusing limited development on the National Park boundary in locations with generally better access to regional transport networks, reducing car dependency. Options HO2 and HO5 perform moderately; while increased growth raises traffic pressures, impacts are partly mitigated where development is focused in better-connected settlements. Option HO3 performs less favourably due to development in smaller hamlets with limited public transport, increasing reliance on private vehicles. Option HO6 generates higher traffic levels through its scale and wide spatial distribution. Option HO8 presents both risks and opportunities, with potential to deliver new transport infrastructure but a high risk of increased traffic due to scale, while Option HO4 performs least favourably as dispersed development undermines sustainable transport patterns and results in widespread car dependency.

Part 1 conclusions

5.2.12. Overall, the appraisal indicates that each spatial option presents a distinct set of strengths and weaknesses across the SA themes. Option HO1 – based on the existing adopted Local Plan approach - generally performs well for environmental themes, including air, soil, and water resources, due to its restrained level of growth and concentration around existing defined villages. However, its limited growth and distribution may constrain opportunities for meeting housing needs and supporting community vitality.

5.2.13. Option HO2 offers a broader spatial footprint and performs moderately across most themes. While this approach introduces some additional risks to soil and water resources compared to Option HO1, its focus on service-based settlements helps support accessibility and infrastructure provision, which benefits social and economic objectives, and delivers additional housing and supports for services across a wider range of settlements in the National Park. Option HO3 performs similarly but includes additional housing delivery in smaller hamlets, which may increase infrastructure requirements and reduce efficiency in service delivery and have increased landscape & biodiversity impacts.

5.2.14. Option HO4 disperses development without a settlement hierarchy, which increases infrastructure demands and environmental risks while offering limited strategic benefits. Option HO4 performs poorly across all the SA themes.

5.2.15. Option HO5 builds on Option HO2 by directing additional growth to settlements around the periphery of the National Park. This approach performs relatively well across several themes, benefiting from stronger connectivity to services, employment and transport networks outside the National Park, while reducing pressure on its most sensitive central areas. However, the higher level of growth associated with this option increases environmental pressures at the National Park boundary and would require careful management to protect landscape character and ecological connectivity. The appraisal also highlights the need to consider how development on the periphery of the National Park would support the socio-economic wellbeing of communities and the viability of services within the National Park.

5.2.16. Option HO6 extends development to a wider range of settlements, including peripheral areas adjoining the National Park boundary. This provides flexibility for housing delivery but amplifies environmental risks and may increase reliance on private vehicles.

5.2.17. Option HO7 performs well for environmental protection by focusing growth on the National Park's boundary, where existing infrastructure reduces potential impacts. Development under this option would also avoid some key sensitive areas in the National Park; however, it would place additional environmental pressures on the fringes of the National Park. In addition, housing delivery through this option may be less clearly linked to delivering benefits to communities within the National Park.

5.2.18. Option HO8, which includes a major new or expanded settlement, and increases growth across the National Park, poses significant challenges due to the scale of land clearance, infrastructure development, and long-term emissions, although it could deliver substantial housing numbers and associated economic benefits. Overall taking forward this option would be likely to significantly undermine the purposes, duty and special qualities of the National Park.

5.3. Part 2: employment strategy appraisal

5.3.1. **Table 5-11** to **Table 5-19** below present the findings of the appraisal of the three employment strategy options for each of the SA themes.

5.3.2. **Table 5-20** summarises the rankings of the options with regard to their relative performance in relation to each SA Theme.

5.3.3. As a reminder, the options considered for the employment strategy appraisal are as follows (see **Section 4.4** for further detail):

- **Option E1**: Retention of the adopted Local Plan approach only (no employment allocations);
- **Option E2**: Retention of the adopted Local Plan approach plus distributed employment allocations across National Park communities; and
- **Option E3**: Retention of the adopted approach plus a strategic employment allocation at Fawley.

Table 5-11: Appraisal findings (Air, Soil and Water Resources)

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
	1	3	2

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs most favourably against this SA theme as it avoids strategic employment site allocations and relies on a criteria-based approach to manage small-scale development. This limits the likelihood of significant effects on air quality, soils and water resources, with impacts assessed and mitigated at the project level. The approach is well suited to the environmentally sensitive context of the National Park and is likely to favour brownfield and existing employment sites.

Option E2 performs least favourably against this SA theme. Whilst directing employment development towards locations with existing communities and infrastructure may help to reduce the need to travel and limit impacts in some locations, the inclusion of multiple employment allocations introduces the potential for cumulative effects on air quality, soils and water resources across a wider geographic area. Meeting identified employment needs through a number of dispersed sites could result in a greater overall area of land being affected and increase pressures on local drainage networks and water environments. In addition, the dispersed nature of development may make it more difficult to secure a coordinated approach to mitigation and environmental enhancement across the National Park.

Option E3 performs more favourably than Option E2 but less favourably than Option E1 against this SA theme. The strategic employment allocation at Fawley introduces the potential for adverse effects on air quality, soil and water resources associated with employment development, and taking into account the wider existing industrial context in the Waterside area of the New Forest (including the refinery). However, by concentrating development at a single strategic location associated with an existing developed area, the option reduces the need for multiple employment allocations elsewhere in the National Park. The focus on a site which is part previously developed brownfield site also limits the need for development on undeveloped land elsewhere within the National Park, helping to reduce potential effects on soils and water resources. It also enables a coordinated approach to mitigation through masterplanning, including green infrastructure and sustainable drainage measures, which may help to manage and limit adverse effects relative to the more dispersed pattern of development represented by Option E2. Furthermore, the

location of the site on the edge of the National Park, adjacent to an established industrial area, means that development is likely to be directed towards a less sensitive location than a number of dispersed employment allocations across the interior of the National Park.

Table 5-12: Appraisal findings (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
	1	3	2

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs most favourably against this SA theme as it avoids strategic employment site allocations and relies on a criteria-based approach to manage small-scale development. This reduces the risk of direct and indirect impacts on designated sites, priority habitats and species, as well as geodiversity assets, with proposals assessed on a site-by-site basis. The approach is well aligned with the National Park's purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty and biodiversity.

Option E2 performs least favourably against this SA theme. Whilst the allocation of employment sites close to existing communities may help to limit pressure on some of the National Park's more remote areas, the inclusion of multiple employment allocations introduces the potential for cumulative effects on biodiversity and geodiversity across a wider area. Development at a number of locations could result in habitat loss, fragmentation, disturbance of species, recreational pressure and impacts on ecological networks. Given the extensive coverage of internationally and nationally designated biodiversity sites within and around the National Park, including Ramsar sites, SACs and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), there is a relatively high likelihood that employment allocations would lie within the setting of, or have functional relationships with, sensitive ecological receptors. This increases the potential for effects on designated sites and may also make it more difficult to deliver coordinated avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures due to the dispersed nature of this option.

Option E3 performs more favourably than Option E2 but less favourably than Option E1 against this SA theme. The strategic employment allocation at Fawley introduces the potential for adverse effects on biodiversity, including habitat loss, fragmentation, disturbance and potential effects on nearby designated sites and ecological networks. In particular, the site lies adjacent to internationally and nationally important biodiversity designations, including the Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site, the Hythe to Calshot Marshes SSSI, and Calshot Marshes Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Development therefore has the potential to result in indirect effects on sensitive habitats and species through pathways such as disturbance, recreational pressure, water quality impacts, habitat fragmentation and wider urban edge effects and these impacts

are assessed in more detail in the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan Review. However, extensive areas of the National Park are similarly constrained by internationally and nationally designated biodiversity sites, meaning these considerations are not unique to the Fawley location. Furthermore, the allocation is focused on a part previously developed brownfield site, reducing the need for employment development to be accommodated on undeveloped greenfield land elsewhere within the National Park, where impacts on habitats, species and ecological networks may be greater. Unlike Option E2, the concentration of development within a single strategic location provides greater opportunities for coordinated avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures to be embedded through a comprehensive masterplanning approach, including habitat creation, strategic green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain.

Table 5-13: Appraisal findings (Climate Change (Including Flood Risk))

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
	3	1	2

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs less favourably against this SA theme. Whilst the option supports small-scale employment development and avoids the emissions and resource demands associated with strategic employment allocations, it is unlikely to meet identified employment land needs over the plan period. This may result in a continued reliance on employment opportunities outside the National Park and associated out-commuting, potentially increasing transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the dispersed nature of development under this approach limits opportunities for the delivery of strategic low-carbon infrastructure and coordinated climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Option E2 performs most favourably against this SA theme. By providing additional employment opportunities across National Park communities, the option has the potential to reduce the need for residents to travel further afield for work, helping to limit commuting distances and associated emissions. The distribution of employment opportunities across the National Park may also support more balanced patterns of development and strengthen the relationship between homes and jobs. Whilst employment development would be delivered across multiple sites, potentially limiting opportunities for strategic low-carbon infrastructure, the proximity of employment opportunities to local communities is likely to support more sustainable travel patterns overall.

Option E3 performs more favourably than Option E1 but less favourably than Option E2 against this SA theme. The strategic employment allocation at Fawley provides opportunities to incorporate comprehensive climate change mitigation and adaptation measures through masterplanning, including sustainable drainage systems, renewable energy generation, energy-efficient buildings, green infrastructure and coordinated transport measures. The redevelopment of a site associated with an existing industrial area may also represent an efficient use of land. However, the location of Fawley on the periphery of the National Park, with limited public transport accessibility and no direct rail connection, is likely to result in a relatively high proportion of trips being made by private vehicle. Whilst the option would help meet identified employment needs, the potential for increased car-based

travel means it is expected to perform less favourably than Option E2 overall, although the opportunities for coordinated low-carbon design and climate resilience result in a better performance than Option E1.

Table 5-14: Appraisal findings (Communities, Health and Wellbeing)

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
	3	1	2

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs least favourably against this SA theme. The option supports small-scale, locally based employment opportunities that are generally well integrated with existing communities. This can help support local services, reduce the need to travel for work, and contribute positively to community cohesion, whilst ensuring that employment development remains closely aligned with the scale and character of communities within the National Park. However, the option is unlikely to meet identified employment land needs over the plan period, which may limit opportunities for local job creation, the retention of working-age residents and the long-term vitality of local communities. Consequently, the benefits for community wellbeing and the socio-economic wellbeing of National Park communities are likely to be more limited than under the other options.

Option E2 performs most favourably against this SA theme. The provision of additional employment sites across communities within the National Park has the potential to strengthen local economies, support access to jobs and services, and contribute to the vitality and viability of settlements. By providing opportunities for employment growth alongside housing growth, the option can help support more balanced communities and reduce the need to travel outside the National Park for work. The distribution of employment opportunities across a number of communities may also enable socio-economic benefits to be shared more widely across the National Park, helping to support the National Park Authority's duty to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities. However, increased development pressure in some locations could affect residential amenity or place additional strain on local infrastructure if not carefully managed through policy and design.

Option E3 performs more favourably than Option E1 but less favourably than Option E2 against this SA theme. The allocation at Fawley would support additional employment opportunities, generating economic benefits for the wider area. However, the location of the site on the periphery of the National Park means that many of these benefits may be less directly related to the day-to-day needs of communities within the National Park than under Option E2. Consequently, the option may be less effective at supporting the vitality and viability of National Park settlements, including local services and facilities that rely on resident

populations and locally accessible employment opportunities. The site is also less well connected to many National Park communities and may generate additional traffic movements, potentially affecting local amenity and wellbeing.

Table 5-15: Appraisal findings (Economy and Employment)

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
€ $ £ ¥	3	2	1

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs least favourably against this SA theme. Whilst the criteria-based approach supports the retention, redevelopment and expansion of existing employment sites and allows small-scale employment opportunities to come forward in response to local needs, it is unlikely to meet identified employment land requirements over the plan period. As a result, the option may be less effective in supporting economic growth, increasing employment opportunities, improving employment self-containment within the National Park, and reducing reliance on employment opportunities elsewhere.

Option E2 performs positively but less favourably than Option E3 against this SA theme. The allocation of additional employment sites across communities within the National Park would help to meet identified employment needs and support local economic growth. By distributing employment opportunities across several settlements, the option has the potential to improve access to jobs, support local businesses and contribute to the socio-economic wellbeing of communities throughout the National Park. However, the dispersed nature of development means that economic activity would be spread across a number of smaller locations, potentially limiting opportunities to achieve the economies of scale associated with a larger employment location.

Option E3 performs most favourably against this SA theme. Retaining the criteria-based approach supports small-scale local employment opportunities, whilst the strategic employment allocation at Fawley provides significant potential to deliver employment growth and respond to identified employment land needs. The site's association with the Solent Freeport and an existing employment area offers opportunities to support investment, regeneration and economic activity of wider strategic importance. This option is likely to provide the greatest increase in the scale and diversity of employment opportunities within and around the National Park and is therefore expected to make the strongest contribution to economic growth, productivity and job creation. Whilst some of the benefits may be less directly related to communities within the National Park than under Option E2, the overall economic benefits of the option are expected to be greater.

Table 5-16: Appraisal findings (Historic Environment)

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
	1	3	2

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs most favourably against this SA theme. The criteria-based and dispersed approach supports small-scale development that can be sensitively designed to respond to the historic character and setting of individual settlements and heritage assets. Impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets are considered on a site-by-site basis, reducing the risk of significant adverse effects. In addition, the absence of employment allocations limits the potential for concentrated development pressures on historic settlements and landscapes, whilst the comparatively low level of employment growth anticipated under this option further reduces the likelihood of adverse effects on the historic environment.

Option E2 performs least favourably against this SA theme. The allocation of multiple employment sites across communities within the National Park would increase the potential for effects on heritage assets and historic landscape character across a wider geographic area. Whilst individual sites could be designed to respond positively to local character and heritage sensitivities, the delivery of employment development at a number of locations increases the likelihood of effects on the setting and significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Option E3 performs less favourably than Option E1 but more favourably than Option E2 against this SA theme. The strategic employment allocation at Fawley introduces the potential for adverse effects on the historic environment associated with a larger scale of development than would be anticipated under Option E1. However, the focus of development at a single location reduces the need for employment allocations across a wider range of settlements and landscapes within the National Park. Furthermore, the Fawley area is relatively less constrained by designated heritage assets than many other parts of the National Park and is associated with an existing industrial landscape that has low heritage sensitivity. This reduces the likelihood of widespread effects on the historic environment and provides opportunities for heritage considerations to be addressed through a coordinated masterplanning process.

Table 5-17: Appraisal findings (Housing)

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
	1	3	2

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs most favourably against this SA theme. By avoiding the allocation of additional employment land, the option minimises potential competition between employment and housing uses within the constrained land supply of the National Park. This provides greater flexibility for land to come forward for housing over the plan period and is therefore considered to perform most positively against this SA theme.

Option E2 performs least favourably against this SA theme. Whilst the provision of additional employment sites across communities within the National Park may support local employment opportunities, it also requires the allocation of land at a number of locations that could otherwise contribute towards housing delivery. Within the context of the National Park's significant development constraints and limited land supply, this increases the potential for competition between housing and employment uses. As a result, the option performs least favourably against this SA theme.

Option E3 performs more favourably than Option E2 but less favourably than Option E1 against this SA theme. The strategic employment allocation at Fawley would require land to be allocated for employment purposes and therefore has the potential to reduce opportunities for alternative housing uses. However, unlike Option E2, employment development would be concentrated on a single strategic site comprising previously developed land on the periphery of the National Park. The site is generally less closely related to the main locations where housing growth is expected to be accommodated and is therefore less likely to represent a significant opportunity cost for housing delivery than a dispersed pattern of employment allocations elsewhere within the National Park. Consequently, Option E3 performs more favourably than Option E2 but less favourably than Option E1.

Table 5-18: Appraisal findings (Landscape)

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
	1	3	2

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs most favourably against this SA theme. The criteria-based and dispersed approach supports small-scale development that can be carefully sited and designed to reflect local landscape character, avoiding significant adverse effects on the wider National Park landscape. Impacts are considered on a site-by-site basis, allowing sensitive locations to be avoided.

Option E2 performs least favourably against this SA theme. Whilst the allocation of additional employment sites within National Park communities may direct development towards locations that have already experienced some degree of change, the provision of multiple employment allocations introduces the potential for landscape effects across a wider area of the National Park. Increased development pressure within and around settlements has the potential to affect village edges, settlement settings and local landscape character if not carefully managed. There is also potential for cumulative effects arising from development at a number of locations, particularly where sites are located within sensitive landscape settings. This could incrementally erode some of the National Park's special qualities, including its sense of tranquillity and distinctive settlement and landscape character.

Option E3 performs less favourably than Option E1 but more favourably than Option E2 against this SA theme. The strategic employment allocation at Fawley introduces the potential for adverse effects on landscape character associated with a larger scale of development than would be expected under Option E1. However, the site is located on the edge of the National Park and is associated with an existing industrial area, reducing the likelihood of effects on the more remote and sensitive landscapes within the interior of the National Park. By concentrating development at a single location, the option also reduces the need for multiple employment allocations across a wider range of landscape character areas. This is beneficial in helping to protect important National Park special qualities, including its outstanding natural beauty, tranquillity, low levels of urbanisation and sense of wildness. The site-specific framework provides opportunities for coordinated masterplanning and mitigation, including green infrastructure, structural landscaping and sensitive layout design, which may help to reduce landscape and visual effects. In

some areas, these measures may also deliver localised landscape enhancements through the remediation of previously developed land and the introduction of new planting and green infrastructure.

Table 5-19: Appraisal findings (Transport)

Rank of preference	E1	E2	E3
	2	1	3

Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options

Option E1 performs positively against this SA theme. The criteria-based approach supports local employment opportunities that can reduce the need for long-distance commuting, particularly where development is closely related to existing settlements and communities. However, as the option is unlikely to meet identified employment land needs, residents may continue to rely on employment opportunities outside the National Park, resulting in ongoing commuting patterns. The dispersed nature of development may also limit opportunities to deliver coordinated transport improvements and could result in continued reliance on private vehicle travel, particularly in locations with limited public transport accessibility.

Option E2 performs most favourably against this SA theme. The allocation of employment sites broadly aligned with the revised spatial strategy has the potential to place jobs closer to the communities where people live, helping to reduce commuting distances and support more sustainable travel patterns. By distributing employment opportunities across National Park communities, the option can help improve access to jobs whilst making use of existing transport networks and services. Although some sites may remain relatively dependent on private vehicles, the closer alignment between employment growth and the spatial strategy is likely to reduce transport-related impacts compared with the other options.

Option E3 performs least favourably against this SA theme. Whilst the allocation at Fawley would contribute towards meeting identified employment land needs and may reduce some out-commuting from the National Park, the site has the potential to generate significant traffic movements, including freight traffic and longer-distance commuting. Its location on the edge of the National Park, combined with limited public transport accessibility and the absence of a direct rail connection, means that a relatively high proportion of trips are likely to be made by private vehicle. The strategic nature and scale of the allocation could also concentrate traffic within the south-eastern part of the National Park and surrounding road network, increasing the risk of congestion and associated transport impacts. As a result, despite the potential economic benefits of the allocation, the option is

expected to perform less favourably than Options E1 and E2 overall in transport terms. There may, however, be opportunities to mitigate these effects by securing transport improvements through any site allocation policy.

Table 5-20: Appraisal rankings (compiled)

SA theme	Option:	E1	E2	E3
Air, Soil and Water Resources	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant?			
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant?			
Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)	Rank	3	1	2
	Significant?			
Communities, Health and Wellbeing	Rank	3	1	2
	Significant?			
Economy and Employment	Rank	3	2	1
	Significant?		+	+

SA theme	Option:	E1	E2	E3
Historic Environment	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant?			
Housing	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant?			
Landscape	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant?			
Transport	Rank	2	1	3
	Significant?			

*Significant beneficial effects are denoted by a '+', while significant adverse effects are denoted by a '-'

Summary of part 2 appraisal findings

Air, Soil and Water Resources

5.3.4. Option E1 performs most favourably for this SA theme, as the criteria-based approach limits the likelihood of direct effects on air, soil and water resources through the avoidance of employment land allocations. Option E3 performs moderately, reflecting the additional development pressures associated with the strategic allocation at Fawley. However, these effects are moderated by the site's location adjacent to an existing industrial area on the edge of the National Park and opportunities for coordinated masterplanning and mitigation. Option E2 performs least favourably due to the potential for cumulative effects arising from multiple employment allocations across the National Park and the more limited opportunities for coordinated mitigation.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

5.3.5. Option E1 performs most favourably for this SA theme by enabling development proposals to be assessed and managed on a site-by-site basis, reducing risks to designated sites, habitats and ecological networks. Option E3 performs moderately, reflecting the additional risks associated with a strategic employment allocation at Fawley. However, concentrating development at a single location provides opportunities for coordinated ecological mitigation and enhancement. Option E2 performs least favourably due to the potential for cumulative effects arising from multiple employment allocations across the National Park, including effects on habitats, ecological connectivity and designated sites.

Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)

5.3.6. Option E2 performs most favourably for this SA theme. By aligning employment growth with the revised spatial strategy and communities across the National Park, it has the potential to reduce commuting distances and support more sustainable travel patterns. Option E3 performs less favourably than Option E2 but more favourably than Option E1. Whilst the strategic allocation at Fawley may generate additional traffic and associated emissions, it would contribute towards meeting identified employment needs and could incorporate comprehensive climate mitigation and adaptation measures through masterplanning. Option E1 performs least favourably as it is unlikely to meet identified employment needs and may therefore perpetuate existing patterns of out-commuting whilst providing limited opportunities for strategic climate mitigation measures.

Communities, Health and Wellbeing

5.3.7. Option E2 performs most favourably for this SA theme. By distributing employment opportunities across communities in line with the revised spatial strategy, it has the potential to strengthen local economies, support access to jobs and services, and contribute to the vitality and viability of settlements across the National Park. Option E3 performs less favourably than Option E2 but more favourably than Option E1. Whilst it would support employment growth and help meet identified employment needs, the benefits are likely to be concentrated at a peripheral location and may be less directly connected to the day-to-day needs of National Park communities. Option E1 performs least favourably as it is unlikely to meet identified employment needs and therefore provides more limited benefits for local job creation and community wellbeing.

Economy and Employment

5.3.8. Option E3 performs most favourably for this SA theme by combining the criteria-based approach across the National Park with a strategic employment allocation at Fawley, helping to meet identified employment land needs and supporting economic activity of wider strategic importance associated with the Solent Freeport. Option E2 also performs positively by providing additional employment opportunities across National Park communities and supporting local economic growth. Option E1 performs least favourably as it is unlikely to meet identified employment needs and therefore provides the weakest support for economic growth, employment creation and improved employment self-containment.

Historic Environment

5.3.9. Option E1 performs most favourably by enabling small-scale employment development to respond sensitively to local historic character and the setting of heritage assets. Option E3 performs less favourably than Option E1 but more favourably than Option E2, as the strategic allocation at Fawley increases the potential for effects on the historic environment but focuses development in a location that is relatively less constrained by heritage assets and reduces the need for multiple allocations elsewhere in the National Park. Option E2 performs least favourably due to the potential for cumulative effects on heritage assets, historic settlements and historic landscape character arising from multiple employment allocations across the National Park.

Housing

5.3.10. Option E1 performs most favourably against this SA theme as it avoids the allocation of additional employment land and therefore minimises potential competition between housing and employment uses within the constrained land supply of the National Park. Option E3 performs less favourably than Option E1 but more favourably than Option E2, as the strategic employment allocation at Fawley would utilise land for employment purposes, but the site comprises previously developed land in a peripheral location that is generally less suitable for housing development than sites likely to be allocated under Option E2. Option E2 performs least favourably as it would require the allocation of employment sites across a number of communities within the National Park, increasing the potential for competition between employment and housing uses in locations that may otherwise contribute towards housing delivery.

Landscape

5.3.11. Option E1 performs most favourably by supporting small-scale employment development that can be carefully sited and designed to avoid significant effects on landscape character. Option E3 performs less favourably than Option E1 but more favourably than Option E2, as the strategic allocation at Fawley would introduce additional development pressure but would concentrate effects at a single location associated with an existing industrial area on the edge of the National Park. This reduces the need for multiple allocations elsewhere and helps protect the National Park's special qualities, whilst also providing opportunities for coordinated mitigation through masterplanning. Option E2 performs least favourably due to the potential for cumulative effects on landscape character, settlement settings and the special qualities of the National Park arising from multiple employment allocations.

Transport

5.3.12. Option E2 performs most favourably by aligning employment growth with the revised spatial strategy and locating opportunities closer to communities across the National Park, helping to reduce commuting distances and support more sustainable travel patterns. Option E1 performs positively but less favourably than Option E2, as locally based employment opportunities may reduce some travel demand but the option is unlikely to meet identified employment needs and may therefore perpetuate existing patterns of out-commuting. Option E3 performs least favourably due to the concentration of employee and freight traffic in one area, associated with development at Fawley. The site's peripheral location, limited public transport accessibility and lack of a direct rail connection are likely to increase reliance on private vehicle travel. However, the proximity of the potential site allocation to the much larger strategic brownfield site at the former Fawley Power Station (within New Forest District Council's planning remit) may provide an opportunity for transport improvements to be delivered.

Part 2 conclusions

5.3.13. Option E1 performs most favourably across a number of environmental themes, including air, soil and water resources, biodiversity and geodiversity, landscape, and the historic environment. By avoiding employment allocations, it consistently limits development pressures on the National Park's environmental assets and special qualities. The option also performs most favourably in relation to housing by avoiding the allocation of land for employment purposes within the constrained land supply of the National Park. However, the option is unlikely to meet identified employment land needs and consequently performs least favourably in relation to economy and employment, communities and health and wellbeing, and climate change.

5.3.14. Option E2 performs strongly in relation to climate change, communities and health and wellbeing, and transport by distributing employment opportunities broadly in line with the revised spatial strategy. This could help support more balanced communities, reduce commuting distances, and improve access to local employment opportunities. However, the provision of multiple employment allocations across the National Park has the potential to result in cumulative effects on landscape character, biodiversity, the historic environment, and other sensitive environmental receptors.

5.3.15. Option E3 combines the criteria-based approach of Option E1 with a strategic employment allocation at Fawley. It performs most favourably in relation to economy and employment by helping to meet identified employment land needs and supporting strategic economic opportunities associated with the Solent Freeport. The option also provides opportunities for coordinated masterplanning, infrastructure provision and environmental mitigation. However, the allocation would introduce additional development pressures associated with a larger-scale employment site, including potential effects on environmental receptors and increased traffic movements. The location of the site adjacent to an existing industrial area on the edge of the National Park may help to contain some of these effects, whilst enabling employment growth to be accommodated in a single strategic location.

5.4. Choice of approaches taken forward for the Local Plan Review

Housing options

5.4.1. The National Park Authority have chosen to proceed with Option HO2 as the preferred spatial strategy for the Local Plan. This decision reflects a careful balance between meeting housing and community needs and protecting the New Forest's nationally important landscape and habitats.

5.4.2. Option HO2 focuses the majority of planned new development around the larger villages of the National Park, allowing for modest, managed growth that respects the National Park's sensitive environment and reinforces established communities. This approach is considered the most appropriate in light of the National Park's statutory purposes and its responsibility to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage, while promoting public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. It also reflects the Authority's statutory duty to foster the socio-economic wellbeing of local communities within the National Park. Option HO2 broadens the number of existing 'defined villages' from 4 villages to 7 and will allow more of the identified housing arising from communities within the National Park to be met, while ensuring that development is spatially focused towards the most sustainable villages.

5.4.3. By avoiding the options that include more dispersed or larger-scale development, Option HO2 helps minimise impacts on biodiversity, landscape character, tranquillity, and the historic environment. It also supports sustainable transport and infrastructure planning, while maintaining the integrity of the National Park's ecological networks and cultural traditions. Option HO2 scores reasonably well across the broad range of SA themes, compared to other options that are less balanced in terms of impacts.

5.4.4. In choosing Option HO2, the Authority have prioritised a strategy that is locally responsive, environmentally responsible, and consistent with the long-term stewardship of the New Forest National Park. Option HO2 reinforces the role of existing 'defined' settlements and extends the benefits to other villages that have a basic range of services. The alternative option of more dispersed development would have greater landscape impacts; and the option of focusing development to the periphery of the National Park would not support the socio-economic wellbeing of communities within the National Park.

Employment options

5.4.5. The SA work has assessed a range of reasonable alternatives to meeting the identified need for additional employment floorspace within the National Park. The approach of delivering additional employment floorspace only through criteria-based policies performs well against the SA objectives around landscape impacts, reducing the need to travel and ensuring consistency with the delivery of new housing within the context of the Plan's spatial strategy. However, this option makes less of a contribution towards meeting the identified employment needs within the National Park.

5.4.6. Option E3 supplements the use of criteria-based policies that support small-scale employment opportunities in communities across the National Park with a site allocation on part previously developed Solent Freeport land at Fawley. The SA highlights the benefits this option provides in terms of delivering employment land to meeting the identified need. A single larger site allocation provides opportunities to address landscape and ecological impacts through the requirements of the site allocation policy, including through the delivery of green infrastructure.

6. Appraisal of the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version (i.e., the Regulation 19 version) of the Local Plan Review under the nine SA theme headings;
- Consideration of potential cumulative effects; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage.

6.2. Preferred approach for the Local Plan Review

6.2.1. The preferred approach for the Local Plan Review has been developed through a multi-stage process. The Local Plan Review will look ahead to 2043 and is a key mechanism for delivering the two statutory National Park purposes and the related socio-economic duty. The first stage involved publication of a 'Direction of Travel' document, which identified areas considered to be in scope for review and those elements of the adopted Local Plan that remain consistent with national planning policy. This document was subject to public consultation in February and March 2025.

6.2.2. As part of the initial evidence-gathering, the Authority also undertook a Call for Sites, inviting local communities, landowners, and developers to submit sites for potential residential, employment, Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, and other uses, including environmental mitigation.

6.2.3. The Local Plan Review is now at Regulation 19 stage. This SA Report has been prepared to appraise the proposed submission version of the Local Plan Review, reflecting how sustainability considerations have been taken into account through the plan-making process. The timetable for the Local Plan Review and subsequent stages is set out in the Authority's Local Development Scheme, with submission for independent examination due to take place in December 2027.

6.2.4. During plan preparation, the New Forest National Park Authority provided a full set of draft and emerging policies to inform the iterative SA process. This enabled the identification of potential sustainability effects and issues at an early stage and informed the refinement of policy wording and the development of the preferred approach.

6.2.5. A series of SA recommendations were made during earlier stages of plan preparation to support policy development. These recommendations are summarised in **Table 6-1**. Some recommendations also support wider initiatives, including delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan, where they relate to matters that complement but are not solely addressed through the land use planning system.

Table 6-1: Recommendations for consideration during the implementation of the Local Plan Review offered prior to the Regulation 18 stage (noting that some recommendations relate more closely to the National Park Partnership Plan)

Recommendation	Relevant SA theme
Support projects that improve the ecological status of rivers, streams, and wetlands in the National Park.	Air, Soil and Water; Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Promote water-sensitive urban design beyond SuDS. For example, consider greywater reuse.	Air, Soil and Water
Support landscape-scale initiatives to monitor, manage, and reduce Invasive Non-Native Species across the National Park.	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Encourage public awareness and responsible recreation to reduce INNS spread.	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Include references to the National Park's geodiversity. For example, a policy could be included that requires development proposals to conserve and enhance geodiversity features, including important geological formations, landforms, and soil types.	Biodiversity and Geodiversity; Landscape
Promote campaigns on walking, cycling, public transport, and EV use (for residents and visitors).	Transport, Climatic Change
Promote shared transport options.	Transport; Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Consider support for mobility hubs, allowing for better connection of public transport and active transport infrastructure.	Transport; Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Support community energy schemes and battery storage.	Climate Change

Recommendation	Relevant SA theme
Promote partnerships with local colleges, training providers, and employers to develop green apprenticeships, work experience, and career pathways.	Communities, Health and Wellbeing; Economy and Employment
Support improved digital connectivity to enable remote working, online retail, and digital services for rural businesses.	Communities, Health and Wellbeing; Economy and Employment; Transport
Promote adaptable housing, alongside accessible housing	Housing; Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Ensure that communities are consulted in the design of new projects, such as green infrastructure and new open spaces.	Communities, Health and Wellbeing

6.3. Policies in the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review

6.3.1. To support the implementation of the vision statement for the Local Plan Review, the Regulation 19 version of the plan puts forward 66 policies under seven chapter themes to guide new development within the National Park. These are outlined in **Table 6-2**.

6.3.2. It should be noted that in many places the Local Plan Review involves relatively minor edits to existing policies in the adopted Local Plan (2019), for clarity and updating, rather than substantial changes. A revised set of policy numbers and an indication of changes were presented at the Authority meeting on 16 October 2025 (see Schedule of Revised Policy Numbers) prior to the 6 week consultation on the Regulation 18 Part 2 Local Plan document between November and December 2025. Further updates to the draft Plan have been made following consultation on the Regulation 18 draft.

6.3.3. Regarding site selection, some of the identified development sites are allocations carried forward from the adopted Local Plan (2019). Several of these sites already have full planning permission and are under construction, including land at Whartons Lane in Ashurst, the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel site, and land at Church Lane in Sway. They are included in the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan on the basis that the developments are not completed and therefore there remains a need for a guiding planning policy for each of the sites.

Table 6-2: Policies in the Regulation 19 Submission draft New Forest National Park Local Plan Review

Chapter name	Policy reference	Policy name
Strategic Policies and Development Principles	Policy SP1	Supporting sustainable development
	Policy DP2	General development principles
	Policy SP3	Spatial Strategy
	Policy SP4	Major development in the National Park
	Policy SP5	Land to north of Fawley Waterside
	Policy SP6	Infrastructure provision and developer contributions
Climate Change	Policy SP7	Safeguarding and improving water resources
	Policy SP8	Flood risk
	Policy SP9	Sustainable construction
	Policy SP10	Renewable energy
Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment	Policy SP11	Nature conservation sites of international importance
	Policy SP12	The natural environment - nationally, regionally and locally important sites
	Policy SP13	Biodiversity Net Gain

Chapter name	Policy reference	Policy name
	Policy SP14	Landscape character
	Policy SP15	Green & Blue Infrastructure
	Policy DP16	Open space
	Policy DP17	Recreational horse keeping
	Policy DP18	Field shelters and stables
	Policy DP19	Maneges
	Policy SP20	Coastal development
	Policy SP21	Coastal Change Management Area
	Policy SP22	Tranquillity
	Policy SP23	Dark skies
Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment	Policy SP24	The historic and built environment
	Policy DP25	Heritage assets
	Policy DP26	Local distinctiveness
	Policy DP27	Design principles

Chapter name	Policy reference	Policy name
	Policy DP28	Residential character of the Defined Villages
Vibrant Communities	Policy SP29	New residential development in the National Park
	Policy SP30	Specialist housing for older people (Use Class C2)
	Policy SP31	The size of new dwellings
	Policy SP32	Land at Whartons Lane, Ashurst
	Policy SP33	Land at Ashurst Hospital
	Policy SP34	Land at Knellers Lane, Ashurst
	Policy SP35	Land at the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel, Lyndhurst
	Policy SP36	Land at Calpe Avenue, Lyndhurst
	Policy SP37	Land south of Church Lane, Sway
	Policy SP38	Land to west of Brighton Road, Sway
	Policy SP39	Land to west of Winsor Road, Winsor
	Policy SP40	Land to the south of Hamptworth Road, Landford
	Policy SP41	Land to the east of The Ridge, Redlynch
	Policy SP42	Affordable Housing provision within the Defined Villages and on allocated sites

Chapter name	Policy reference	Policy name
	Policy SP43	Rural exception sites
	Policy DP44	New Forest Commoners' dwellings
	Policy DP45	New Forest Estate Workers' Dwellings
	Policy DP46	New dwellings for agricultural and forestry workers
	Policy DP47	Removal of agricultural occupancy conditions
	Policy SP48	Self and Custom House Building
	Policy SP49	Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
	Policy SP50	Allocation of land at Ringwood Road, Netley Marsh for Travelling Showpeople's use
	Policy DP51	Replacement dwellings
	Policy DP52	Extensions to dwellings
	Policy DP53	Outbuildings
	Policy SP54	Local community facilities
Thriving Local Economy	Policy SP55	Maintaining and improving business floorspace
	Policy DP56	Redevelopment and extension to existing employment buildings

Chapter name	Policy reference	Policy name
	Policy SP57	The land-based economy
	Policy DP58	New agricultural and forestry related development
	Policy DP59	Reuse of farm buildings
	Policy DP60	Loss of local retail facilities
	Policy DP61	Retail development outside of the defined settlement boundaries
	Policy SP62	Sustainable tourism development
	Policy DP63	Holiday parks and camp sites
	Policy SP64	Telecommunications and digital Infrastructure
Transport and Accessibility	Policy DP65	Transport infrastructure
	Policy SP66	Sustainable transport and access

6.4. Approach to the appraisal

6.4.1. For each SA theme, ‘significant’ effects of the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. This includes, for example, consideration of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects as far as possible. These effect ‘characteristics’ will be described within the assessment, as appropriate.

6.4.2. Cumulative and in-combination effects are also considered. Cumulative effects refer to the combined impact of multiple policies or developments within the Local Plan Review over time, which may collectively influence conditions even if individual effects are limited. In-combination effects arise when the Local Plan Review’s implementation interacts with other plans, programmes, or projects, potentially leading to additional or amplified impacts on the baseline environment.

6.4.3. Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the Local Plan Review. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict ‘significant effects’, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.

6.4.4. It should also be noted that the Local Plan Review is at Regulation 19 stage, and the draft policies are still to be subject to independent examination (and potentially modification) prior to their adoption.

6.5. Appraisal

Air, Soil and Water Resources

6.5.1. The Local Plan Review includes a strong policy framework for protecting water resources and managing flood risk. Policy SP7 requires development to avoid harm to water quality and availability, and to manage surface water runoff on site, including through the requirement that surface water is not discharged into the foul or combined sewer network and that groundwater resources are protected. The policy also places a strong emphasis on the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions, requiring development to manage surface water runoff and integrate measures such as rainwater harvesting, rain gardens, permeable paving, and green roofs. These approaches will deliver significant benefits for water management, climate resilience, and biodiversity, particularly given the National Park's sensitive hydrology. The requirement for high water efficiency standards for new homes (100 litres per person per day, or any future national standard) is especially important in this area of 'serious water stress', helping to reduce pressure on local water supplies as new development comes forward. 'Serious water stress' is a designation used by the Environment Agency for areas where the water demand is high compared to supply, requiring careful management of water resources.

6.5.2. Policy SP8 complements SP7 by addressing flood risk, requiring developments to comply with national guidance and adopt a catchment-based approach. This is important in the New Forest, where low-lying areas and coastal zones are vulnerable to fluvial and surface water flooding. The requirement for compatibility with Shoreline Management Plans and Catchment Management Plans ensures alignment with wider strategic objectives for flood resilience and water quality.

6.5.3. Coastal policies (SP20 and SP21) are relevant in the context of water resources and flood risk, as they seek to avoid adverse impacts on coastal processes and manage development within the Coastal Change Management Area. These measures are particularly important given the National Park's southern boundary along the Solent, where rising sea levels and erosion pose long-term risks to soil and water resources.

6.5.4. Air quality is addressed through DP2, which requires development to avoid unacceptable impacts from pollution, including on air, soil, and water. Indirect benefits for air quality will also arise from DP65 and SP66, which promote sustainable transport and active travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles and associated emissions. The impacts of development on air quality and internationally-designated nature conservation sites are referenced within policy SP11.

6.5.5. Policies that safeguard and enhance green infrastructure, including SP11 to SP15, also contribute to air and water quality by supporting ecosystem services such as filtration, carbon sequestration, and soil stabilisation, as well as water regulation and wider natural capital benefits, consistent with the approach embedded within Policies SP1 and DP2.

6.5.6. Soil resources are protected through SP1, DP2, and SP9, which promote sustainable development principles such as minimising soil erosion and contamination. Policy DP56 supports the redevelopment and extension of existing employment buildings, reducing pressure on greenfield sites and helping to safeguard soil quality by reusing previously developed land where appropriate.

6.5.7. Site allocation policies (including SP32 to SP34, and SP37) require flood risk assessments and sewerage infrastructure upgrades, which will be essential for protecting water quality and managing surface water. Some allocations (including SP37 and SP38) are located on land identified as having good to moderate Agricultural Land Classification (ALC); however, these sites are either already developed, under construction, or limited in scale, meaning that the loss of higher-quality soils is relatively small. As such, the overall adverse effect on soil resources is likely to be minor. More broadly, while additional development will inevitably increase pressure on air, soil, and water resources, these risks are mitigated through requirements for sustainable design (SP9) and infrastructure provision (SP6). Construction activities may cause short-term adverse effects, but these are likely to be limited through standard good practice and policy safeguards.

6.5.8. Overall, **mixed effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Air, Soil and Water Resources SA theme. **Moderate (significant) medium-to-long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated through integrated sustainable design principles, nature-based solutions, and strong environmental safeguards. However, there remains potential for **minor (not significant) localised short-to-long-term adverse effects** where development increases pressure on sensitive water catchments, leads to the loss of some good agricultural land, or leads to increased emissions during construction and operation.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

6.5.9. Several policies in the Local Plan Review provide strong protection for designated nature conservation sites. Policy SP11 ensures compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, safeguarding internationally important sites within the National Park and requiring mitigation or compensation where necessary, including contributions to strategic mitigation schemes such as Bird Aware Solent or the established nutrient credit schemes. The policy adopts an avoidance-first approach, ensuring that development which would adversely affect the integrity of designated sites will not be permitted unless strict tests are met. Policy SP12 extends protection to nationally and locally designated sites, including SSSIs and priority habitats, and promotes ecological enhancement in line with Local Nature Recovery Strategies. These measures are anticipated to deliver significant beneficial effects by preventing habitat loss and supporting ecological resilience.

6.5.10. Policy SP13 references the mandatory national requirement for a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain and is underpinned by a clear mitigation hierarchy that prioritises avoiding and minimising harm before mitigation or compensation is considered. The policy requires biodiversity net gain to be delivered in a hierarchical manner, with a strong preference for on-site delivery, followed by off-site provision aligned with Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and the use of credits only as a last resort. The nationally required minimum 30-year management and monitoring period provides long-term security, reinforcing the mitigation hierarchy and contributing to ecological connectivity across the National Park.

6.5.11. New green and blue infrastructure provision is supported through SP15, which promotes habitat connectivity, recreational access, and ecological enhancement. This is particularly important in the New Forest context, where recreational pressure can adversely affect sensitive habitats. Policies DP16 to SP21 further regulate activities such as open space provision, horse keeping, field shelters, maneges, and coastal development to avoid harm to biodiversity and geodiversity. Similarly, SP62 and DP63 support sustainable tourism and camping relocation schemes that relieve visitor pressure on ecologically sensitive areas, while enhancing opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities.

6.5.12. Landscape and tranquillity policies (SP14 and SP22, respectively), alongside dark skies policy SP23, indirectly support biodiversity by maintaining natural features, reducing light pollution, and preserving habitats for nocturnal species. These measures contribute to the wider ecological network and help sustain the conditions necessary for species survival.

6.5.13. Strategic policies such as SP1, DP2, and SP3 guide development towards existing settlements, reducing pressure on ecologically sensitive areas. Policy SP4 further limits major development to exceptional circumstances and requires assessment and mitigation of environmental effects, helping to avoid significant harm to biodiversity and geodiversity. Design-based policies, including SP9 (sustainable construction) and SP10 (renewable energy), also encourage nature-based solutions such as swift bricks and restrict renewable energy schemes that could adversely affect wildlife. Collectively, these policies reflect a natural capital approach, recognising the role of ecosystems in supporting climate regulation, water management, recreation and overall environmental quality.

6.5.14. While site allocations (SP5; SP32 to SP41; SP50) present risks during construction and operation, these are mitigated through a range of policy safeguards. Most allocations require ecological assessments, habitat buffers, and tree retention, which will help reduce direct habitat loss and fragmentation. For example, allocations adjacent to designated sites include measures to maintain and strengthen green buffers, reducing edge effects and disturbance to sensitive habitats. The Regulation 19 draft Plan does not propose the allocation of any C3 housing sites within close proximity of the New Forest's internationally designated sites.

6.5.15. Several allocations also include site-specific mitigation requirements. For example, SP33 (Ashurst Hospital) requires the retention of a green buffer to protect adjacent protected habitats, alongside measures to enhance its role as a biodiversity corridor. SP40 (Hamptworth Road, Landford) includes reference to providing buffers between built development and the surrounding sensitive habitats within the policy criteria.

6.5.16. Policy SP5 (Land to north of Fawley Waterside) is anticipated to have mixed effects. While development could result in adverse effects due to its scale and potential intensity, the policy requires comprehensive remediation of the site and the delivery of significant environmental improvements, including habitat creation, restoration of the watercourse corridor, tree belts, hedgerows and woodland planting, secured through a site-wide masterplan. Opportunities to restore degraded land and enhance ecological value are therefore likely to result in net gains where effectively implemented.

6.5.17. Despite these safeguards, residual risks remain. Construction activities may lead to short-term disturbance, soil compaction, and increased risk of invasive species, particularly near sensitive habitats. Recreational pressure from new residents could also have cumulative impacts on the New Forest and coastal habitats. These risks are partly addressed through strategic mitigation schemes such as the Habitat Mitigation Scheme and Bird Aware Solent, but ongoing monitoring will be important to ensure effectiveness.

6.5.18. Overall, **moderate (significant) long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SA theme. This reflects the strong policy framework for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, including the safeguarding of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites, the requirement for biodiversity net gain, the delivery of green and blue infrastructure, and the use of strategic mitigation measures to address recreational and nutrient impacts. While there remains potential for localised adverse effects associated with construction activities and increased recreational pressure, these effects are expected to be limited and effectively managed through policy safeguards, site-specific mitigation measures, and ongoing monitoring.

Climate Change

6.5.19. The Local Plan Review embeds climate change considerations across its strategic framework. Policy SP1 defines sustainable development in the National Park as development that is resilient to climate change, supports energy efficiency, and incorporates small-scale renewables and SuDS. Policy DP2 complements this by requiring high-quality, energy-efficient design, minimisation of pollution, and promotion of active travel and access to green infrastructure. Together, these overarching policies will help ensure that climate change mitigation and adaptation are integrated into the design and delivery of development across the National Park.

6.5.20. Policy SP9 promotes sustainable construction, encouraging energy and water efficiency, passive solar design, and the use of locally sourced materials. These measures are likely to reduce the carbon footprint of new development and improve resilience to climate extremes. Policy SP10 supports small-scale renewable energy generation, provided it is sensitively designed and located. While the scale of renewable energy supported is small, the policy aligns with the National Park's Purposes and Duty and offers opportunities for community-scale solutions. The policy also promotes resource efficiency and minimises waste, which contributes to reducing overall emissions.

6.5.21. Design and heritage policies also contribute to climate objectives. Policy SP24 supports climate change mitigation by encouraging the reuse and, where appropriate, adaptation of historic buildings to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable development. DP27 also promotes sustainable design and construction across all new development, reinforcing the integration of climate-sensitive design and environmental best practice within the National Park.

6.5.22. Transport-related policies play an important role in reducing emissions. In this regard, Policy SP66 supports sustainable transport modes, including walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle charging, while DP65 promotes transport infrastructure that minimises visual and ecological impacts. These are complemented by the general development principles (DP2), spatial strategy (SP3), and infrastructure policy (SP6), which collectively encourage development in accessible locations and reduce reliance on private cars. In combination, these measures are expected to support low-carbon mobility and contribute to climate change mitigation.

6.5.23. Climate change adaptation is addressed through policies on flood risk and water management. Policies SP8, SP20, and SP21 restrict development in high-risk areas and require a catchment-based approach to flood management, which is particularly relevant given the National Park's low-lying coastal areas and network of rivers and wetlands. Policy SP7 complements this by safeguarding water resources and requiring SuDS that incorporate nature-based solutions. These policies also require development to take account of climate change through flood risk assessment and design. Overall, these measures are expected to have beneficial effects by reducing flood risk, protecting water quality, and enhancing ecological resilience.

6.5.24. Indirect benefits for climate adaptation also arise from policies that safeguard the National Park's ecological sites, habitats, and green infrastructure (SP11 to DP16), which provide regulating ecosystem services and natural buffers against climate extremes. Policies on landscape character (SP14) and tranquillity (SP22) further support adaptation by maintaining natural features and reducing pressures that could exacerbate climate vulnerability.

6.5.25. New development through site-specific allocations (SP5; SP32 to SP41) poses risks of localised adverse effects on climate change mitigation and adaptation, for example through increased emissions during construction and operation, and the introduction of impermeable surfaces. However, these risks are mitigated through embedded requirements for flood risk assessments, SuDS, habitat buffering, and sustainable design measures. Policy SP5 (Fawley Waterside) also requires a coordinated masterplan that integrates ecological enhancements and remediation of despoiled land, which could deliver long-term climate resilience benefits. However, the scale of development at this location may increase transport-related emissions compared to smaller-scale development.

6.5.26. Overall, mixed effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Climate Change SA theme. **Major (significant) long-term positive effects** are anticipated by supporting sustainable construction, provision of renewable energy, management of flood risk, and encouragement of sustainable transport. Some **minor (not significant) localised short-to-long-term adverse effects** may arise from new development; however, these are expected to be effectively managed through embedded mitigation measures and strategic policy safeguards.

Communities, Health and Wellbeing

6.5.27. The Local Plan Review places strong emphasis on supporting vibrant, inclusive, and healthy communities. This reflects the National Park Authority's statutory duty under Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 to foster the socio-economic wellbeing of local communities. This duty is considered in shaping policies that prioritise local needs within the constraints of the National Park designation.

6.5.28. Policy SP1 establishes the overarching commitment to sustainable development that delivers social and economic wellbeing for local communities. This principle underpins the housing strategy, infrastructure provision, and policies that promote access to services, green spaces, and sustainable transport. Policy DP2 reinforces this by requiring high-quality design and sustainable construction, which can improve living environments and contribute to healthier, safer places.

6.5.29. Regarding Housing, SP29 provides for 950 new dwellings over the plan period, helping to maintain population levels and support local services. Policies SP30 to DP46 address a wide range of housing needs, including specialist housing for older people, affordable housing, rural exception sites, and accommodation for commoners, estate workers, and agricultural workers. Affordable housing delivered within the National Park under the local planning policies will have local connections conditions; and open market housing will include a 'principal residency' policy to ensure new housing meets the identified needs. These policies are likely to have significant beneficial effects by supporting inclusive communities, reducing outmigration, and ensuring that housing provision reflects local needs and affordability. Policies SP49 and SP50, which address Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's accommodation, also contribute to meeting diverse housing needs and promoting social inclusion. While the new allocation of land at Ringwood Road may result in localised disturbance effects for nearby residents, Policy SP50 includes mitigation measures such as landscape buffers and locating development away from existing residential properties, which are expected to limit any potential adverse effects.

6.5.30. Access to open space and recreational opportunities is supported through DP16, which sets standards for public open space provision and protects existing recreational land. Similarly, Policy SP15 promotes green and blue infrastructure, delivering multifunctional benefits such as recreation, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Other policies that safeguard and enhance the quality of the local environment, including SP11 to SP14, are also important for preserving the landscapes, habitats, and scenic qualities that underpin outdoor recreation and contribute to physical and mental wellbeing.

6.5.31. Policies such as SP20 on coastal development, SP22 on tranquillity, and SP23 on dark skies further help maintain the environmental qualities that make the New Forest an attractive place for residents and visitors. These measures protect the sense of peace, natural beauty, and access to unspoilt landscapes that are important for health and wellbeing.

6.5.32. Policies DP17 to DP19 regulate recreational horse keeping, field shelters, and maneges, ensuring that these activities are managed in a way that respects the landscape and avoids harm to biodiversity or amenity.

6.5.33. Traditional commoning practices, which are important to the cultural identity and ecological health of the New Forest, are supported through other policies such as DP44 (Commoners' dwellings), SP57 (land-based economy and back-up grazing), and DP58 to DP59 (agricultural infrastructure and farm diversification). Together, these measures help sustain rural traditions and community cohesion while balancing environmental safeguards.

6.5.34. Community facilities are protected and supported through SP54, which encourages the retention and development of essential services such as schools, shops, and healthcare facilities. This is particularly relevant in rural areas where such services are important for community sustainability. Policy SP33, which allocates land at Ashurst Hospital for mixed-use development including retained healthcare provision, is a good example of integrating health infrastructure into the spatial strategy (the site has outline planning permission but not full consent). Policies DP60 and DP61 also contribute by supporting local retail provision, helping maintain access to everyday goods and services.

6.5.35. Transport and accessibility are addressed through DP65 and SP66, which promote sustainable transport modes and support local initiatives such as the New Forest Tour and community rail partnerships. These policies aim to improve access to services and reduce isolation, particularly for those without access to private vehicles. The safeguarding of disused railway lines and the promotion of walking and cycling infrastructure also contribute to healthier lifestyles and more connected communities. Policy SP6 on infrastructure provision supports this by ensuring that new development contributes to necessary transport and community improvements.

6.5.36. Transport is also supported by the spatial strategy (SP3), which ensures that development is focused in appropriate locations, supporting access to services and reducing travel needs.

6.5.37. Communities are also supported indirectly through SP62, which promotes sustainable tourism development that enhances understanding and enjoyment of the National Park. By encouraging small-scale visitor facilities and accommodation within appropriate locations, the policy supports local economies while providing opportunities for recreation and cultural engagement. However, careful management will be required to avoid cumulative visitor pressures on local communities and sensitive habitats.

6.5.38. Similarly, economic policies such as SP55 to SP57 indirectly support community resilience by sustaining local employment opportunities and the land-based economy, which helps maintain traditional practices and cultural identity. Policy SP5, which allocates land north of Fawley Waterside for employment, is also expected to support local employment opportunities and contribute to the socio-economic wellbeing of communities within and around the National Park.

6.5.39. Policies DP27 and DP28 promote high-quality design and ensure that development reflects the built heritage and distinctiveness of the Defined Villages. SP24 to DP26 also safeguard the historic environment and local distinctiveness, reinforcing cultural identity and supporting the visitor economy. These measures contribute to a strong sense of place and community cohesion.

6.5.40. Overall, **major (significant) long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Communities, Health, and Wellbeing SA theme. This is achieved through the provision of housing to meet identified local needs, including affordable housing and specialist accommodation, alongside policies supporting community facilities, employment opportunities, green infrastructure, recreation, healthcare provision, and sustainable transport. While some localised pressures may arise from housing growth and visitor activity, these are expected to be limited and managed through the wider policy framework and associated mitigation measures.

Economy and Employment

6.5.41. Policies SP55 and DP56 provide a clear framework for maintaining and improving business floorspace, particularly within the expanded tier of Defined Villages. These policies support small-scale employment development and the redevelopment or intensification of existing sites, provided that proposals are appropriate in scale, respect local character, and do not harm amenity or landscape quality. Outside the Defined Villages, employment development is encouraged through farm diversification schemes and the reuse of existing buildings, which helps sustain rural livelihoods and contributes to the local economy throughout the National Park. These policies are likely to have beneficial effects by enabling economic activity that reflects the National Park's Purposes and Duty.

6.5.42. The land-based economy is specifically addressed through SP57, which supports commoning, farming, and forestry (activities that are linked to the cultural identity and ecological health of the New Forest). This includes enabling affordable housing for commoners and maintaining the supply of back-up grazing land. The policy also encourages farm diversification and the promotion of local produce, which can help sustain traditional practices and strengthen the cultural identity of the National Park. Policies DP58 and DP59 further support agricultural and forestry development, provided that proposals are appropriately scaled and do not result in adverse environmental impacts. This will support the vitality of an important component of the National Park's economy.

6.5.43. Retail and tourism are also important components of the New Forest economy. Policies DP60 and DP61 seek to retain valued local retail facilities and support small-scale retail development outside the Defined Villages, including farm shops. These policies help maintain access to services and support local producers. Policy SP62 supports sustainable tourism development, including small-scale visitor accommodation and facilities that enhance understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities. Policy DP63 allows for the relocation of holiday park pitches from sensitive areas, provided there are overall environmental benefits.

6.5.44. The spatial strategy (SP3) and overarching sustainable development policy (SP1) influence economic outcomes by guiding development to appropriate locations and ensuring infrastructure supports employment and service provision. While SP4 restricts major development to exceptional circumstances (in line with national policy on development in National Parks), it ensures that growth remains compatible with the statutory purposes of the National Park, as set out in paragraph 190 of the NPPF (2024).

6.5.45. Policy SP5, which allocates land north of Fawley Waterside for around 12,000 sqm of mixed-use employment floorspace, is particularly important in economic terms. The allocation will make a substantial contribution towards meeting the identified need for additional employment floorspace within the National Park and is therefore expected to support job creation, investment and economic growth. The policy also requires comprehensive site remediation, transport improvements, active travel connections and landscape and ecological enhancements, helping to ensure that economic benefits are delivered alongside environmental improvements.

6.5.46. Infrastructure provision (SP6) will support economic activity by ensuring that new development contributes to necessary services and transport improvements. Policies SP7 to SP10 on water resources, flood risk, sustainable construction, and renewable energy also have indirect economic implications by reducing climate-related risks and promoting resource efficiency, which can lower long-term operational costs for businesses.

6.5.47. Indirectly, policies on housing (SP29 to DP46), transport (DP65 and SP66), and community facilities (SP54) support the local economy by enabling workforce retention, improving accessibility, and maintaining essential services. The level of housing provision in the draft Plan (policy SP29) is projected to stabilise the population of the National Park, supporting local services. Design and heritage policies (SP24, DP25, DP27, and DP28) will also preserve the character of the New Forest's settlements, which is important for tourism and the visitor economy.

6.5.48. Overall, the Local Plan Review is expected to deliver **major (significant) beneficial effects** in relation to the Economy and Employment SA theme. This is achieved by supporting a diverse and resilient rural economy through policies that enable appropriately scaled development, protect traditional land-based practices, and promote sustainable tourism and retail. The proposed employment site allocation at Fawley is expected to meet the identified need for additional employment floorspace.

Historic Environment

6.5.49. Policies SP1 and DP2 together establish the overarching framework for sustainable development in the National Park and set out cross-cutting requirements for all proposals. Both policies explicitly recognise the need to conserve and enhance the historic environment as part of achieving sustainable outcomes. This links to the first statutory Park purpose to conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of the National Park. They require development to respect the character, appearance, and setting of heritage assets and demonstrate how proposals conserve or enhance the historic environment.

6.5.50. Policy SP24 establishes the approach to protecting nationally, regionally, and locally important heritage assets. It supports the sensitive reuse and adaptation of historic buildings, particularly where this contributes to climate change mitigation and sustainable development. This reflects a balanced strategy that recognises the cultural, environmental, and social value of historic buildings.

6.5.51. Policy DP25 sets out detailed criteria for assessing proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets, including listed buildings, conservation areas, and registered parks and gardens. It requires proportionate heritage impact assessments and, where appropriate, archaeological evaluations. This ensures that planning decisions are informed by a clear understanding of significance and potential impacts.

6.5.52. Design policies also play an important role in safeguarding the historic environment. Policy DP27 promotes high-quality design that enhances the built and historic character of the National Park. Policy DP28 ensures that development within Defined Villages reflects their locally distinctive character and built heritage. Policy DP26 reinforces this by requiring all development to respect local distinctiveness. Together, these policies guide development in a way that reinforces historic context and contributes positively to local identity.

6.5.53. Site-specific allocations (SP32 to SP41) could adversely affect heritage assets; however, where appropriate, the Local Plan Review includes requirements to retain historic buildings or undertake heritage assessments. For example, the redevelopment of Ashurst Hospital (SP33) must retain the Victorian chapel.

6.5.54. In addition, several allocations (SP34, SP38, SP39 and SP40) require the consideration of design statements, which will ensure that the layout, scale, and design respond sensitively to historic context and setting.

6.5.55. Commoning practices form part of the cultural heritage of the New Forest and have influenced its historic landscape over many centuries. Policies DP44 (New Forest Commoners' dwellings) and DP46 (New dwellings for agricultural and forestry workers) support the continuation of land-based activities, which can help maintain the landscape character and heritage features linked to commoning. Without these practices, changes in land management could alter the appearance and character of the historic environment.

6.5.56. Provision of transport infrastructure (DP65) and renewable energy (SP10) have the potential for adverse effects on the historic environment (either directly or indirectly); however, the policies require that any proposals avoid adverse impacts on the historic environment. Sustainable construction techniques (SP9), including the use of locally sourced materials, will support these requirements. Policy SP64 also protects the historic environment by requiring telecommunications equipment to be sensitively located and designed to avoid harm to heritage assets and their setting, as well as the character and tranquillity of the National Park.

6.5.57. The National Park's historic environment will also benefit indirectly from policies that support landscape (such as SP14), tranquillity (SP22), and dark skies (SP23) by preserving the setting and character of heritage assets. The emphasis on avoiding visual intrusion and maintaining rural darkness is particularly relevant in the New Forest, where the historic landscape and sense of place is closely tied to its natural qualities.

6.5.58. Policies promoting sustainable tourism (SP62) and the reuse of existing buildings (SP55 and DP60) offer opportunities for beneficial effects on the historic environment (for example, contributing to the understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's cultural heritage), provided that adaptive reuse respects historic character. While these can deliver positive outcomes, careful implementation will be important to avoid adverse impacts on heritage significance.

6.5.59. Overall, **moderate (significant) medium-to-long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Historic Environment SA theme. This is achieved through strong heritage and design policies, site-specific requirements, and measures supporting landscape and local distinctiveness.

Housing

6.5.60. Draft policy SP29 sets out the proposed overall housing requirement for the Local Plan Review period, with circa 950 additional new dwellings proposed between 2024 and 2043. This includes allocated sites and windfall development (including schemes within the Defined Villages and rural exception sites). The spatial strategy (SP3) directs most new housing to settlements with existing infrastructure, reducing the need for dispersed development in sensitive rural areas. This approach supports the objectives of SP1, which promotes sustainable development that conserves the National Park's special qualities while meeting community needs. By focusing housing growth in appropriate locations, the strategy helps maintain landscape character and biodiversity while supporting local services and community vitality.

6.5.61. The Local Plan Review includes targeted policies to address specific housing needs. Policy SP30 supports specialist housing for older people, while SP31 limits the size of new dwellings to 100 sqm in most cases, ensuring a supply of smaller homes that meet identified local demand and prevent the loss of smaller, more affordable units. Policies SP42 and SP43 secure affordable housing within Defined Villages and on rural exception sites, respectively, helping to meet local housing needs. Local connections criteria will be used where appropriate to ensure new affordable housing provision is available for people in housing need with a connection to the New Forest National Park. These measures collectively ensure that type, size, and affordability are given appropriate consideration.

6.5.62. Given the National Park's unique context, the Local Plan Review includes housing policies linked to rural occupations. Policies DP44, DP45 and DP46 allow for dwellings for New Forest Commoners, estate workers, and agricultural and forestry workers, subject to strict occupancy conditions. These provisions are reinforced by SP57, which supports the land-based economy by maintaining commoning and farming practices. Together, these policies ensure that housing supports traditional livelihoods and cultural heritage. Policy DP47 provides a framework for removing agricultural occupancy conditions only where there is clear evidence of lack of need, preventing the unnecessary loss of rural worker housing.

6.5.63. The Local Plan Review also addresses the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople through SP49 and SP50, which support permanent and transit accommodation where there is an established local need and subject to criteria on landscape impact, access to services, and highway safety. This ensures that housing provision is inclusive and meets the needs of all sectors of the community.

6.5.64. Location-specific constraints are also given consideration in the Local Plan Review. Policy SP21 designates a Coastal Change Management Area where new residential development is generally not appropriate, reducing exposure to flood risk and coastal erosion. This reflects the Local Plan Review's consideration of climate resilience and sustainable housing locations.

6.5.65. Site-specific housing allocations (SP32 to SP41) include detailed requirements to ensure development is sustainable and locally appropriate. For example:

- Policy SP36 (Calpe Avenue, Lyndhurst) supports redevelopment for around 50 extra care units (C2 use), subject to tree retention, conservation area sensitivity, and habitat mitigation;
- Policy SP37 (Church Lane, Sway) allocates land for around 40 dwellings, requiring 50% affordable housing, and provision of informal greenspace to mitigate recreational pressure on protected habitats; and
- Policies SP38-SP41 allocate smaller and medium-sized sites in Sway, Bartley, Landford, and Redlynch, each requiring 50% affordable housing, landscape-led design, and measures to protect biodiversity and local character.

6.5.66. These allocations demonstrate a strong emphasis on affordability, design quality, and environmental protection, consistent with SP1 and DP2.

6.5.67. Housing design and quality are addressed in SP9 and SP10, alongside DP2, DP27 and DP28, which require new dwellings to achieve high standards of design, reflect local distinctiveness, and incorporate sustainable construction techniques. This is supplemented by the New Forest National Park Design Guide SPD, referenced within an annex to the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan. These policies ensure that housing growth respects the built heritage of Defined Villages and the wider landscape, while also contributing to climate change mitigation through energy efficiency and renewable energy integration.

6.5.68. Policy SP48 supports self-build and custom housebuilding, provided that occupants have a local connection, offering further opportunities to address local housing need. Policies DP51 and DP52 control replacement dwellings and extensions, limiting floorspace to prevent incremental suburbanisation and protect the rural character of the National Park. Policy DP53 similarly restricts outbuildings to ensure they remain incidental to the main dwelling and do not create additional habitable space. These controls ensure that housing change over time remains compatible with the National Park's special qualities.

6.5.69. It is acknowledged that the draft Local Plan Review does not meet the full 'policy-off' housing need figure for the National Park-area derived from the Government's standard method figure for New Forest District Council (approximately 260 dwellings per annum for the National Park area), with the proposed requirement equating to around 50 dwellings per annum. This shortfall is capacity-led and reflects the statutory purposes of National Parks and the extensive environmental designations within the New Forest, which significantly constrain development capacity. While this approach is justified, it represents a notable gap between identified need and planned provision, which is a relevant consideration for the SA.

6.5.70. Overall, **major (significant) long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Housing SA theme. This is achieved by providing dwellings that address local housing needs (including affordable and specialist provision), while ensuring high-quality design and sustainable construction. Policies also direct housing to appropriate locations, avoid areas at risk, and apply strict controls on size and extensions, helping to safeguard the National Park's special qualities. Meeting housing needs in full would conflict with the National Park's statutory purposes and many of the SA objectives.

Landscape

6.5.71. National Parks are nationally designated landscapes, and the conservation and enhancement of landscape character is therefore a core objective of the Local Plan Review. This reflects the statutory purposes of National Parks and aligns with paragraphs 189-190 of the NPPF (2024), which require great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in these areas.

6.5.72. Policy SP14 provides the principal framework for landscape protection in the Local Plan Review. It requires development proposals to be informed by the New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment and to demonstrate compatibility with the distinct features and type of landscape in which they are located. The policy prioritises conserving the scenic beauty of the National Park and protecting open and undeveloped areas between and within settlements. This objective is reinforced by SP1, which sets out the overarching approach to sustainable development, requiring proposals to enhance and protect the unique landscape of the New Forest through high-quality design and local distinctiveness.

6.5.73. The spatial strategy (SP3) supports landscape protection by focusing new development within the expanded list of Defined Villages, thereby reducing pressure for dispersed development in the open countryside and helping to maintain the integrity of rural landscapes. Policy DP16 complements this by safeguarding open space and resisting its loss unless appropriate justification is provided.

6.5.74. Several design-related policies contribute to beneficial effects on the New Forest's landscapes and townscapes. Policy DP2 sets general development principles requiring proposals to respect landscape character, protect trees and hedgerows, and use appropriate materials and boundary treatments. Policies DP27 and DP28 promote contextually appropriate design and ensure that development within Defined Villages reflects their built heritage and landscape setting. Policy DP26 seeks to prevent suburbanising effects that would erode local character, while SP9 and SP31 promote sustainable construction, use of local materials, and limit dwelling sizes to reduce visual impact. Policies DP51 to DP53 provide additional safeguards by controlling the scale and siting of replacement dwellings, extensions, and outbuildings, ensuring that incremental changes do not cumulatively harm the landscape.

6.5.75. Several policies in the Local Plan Review address specific types of development that could affect landscape character. Policies DP17 to DP19 regulate recreational horse keeping, field shelters, and maneges, requiring proposals to avoid adverse effects on the landscape. Policy SP10 complements this by ensuring that renewable energy proposals are small-scale and designed to avoid visual intrusion. The policy supports appropriate small-scale renewable energy proposals that do not have an adverse impact on landscape character. This approach balances the need for sustainable energy generation with the protection of the National Park's distinctive qualities. Policy SP64 also contributes to protecting landscape character by ensuring that telecommunications and digital infrastructure is appropriately located and designed, with a clear requirement to minimise visual impacts on the landscape, the built environment, and the National Park's special qualities.

6.5.76. The coastal landscape of the National Park is protected through SP20, which ensures that development does not harm seaward or landward views or consolidate scattered development, while Policy SP21 proposes a Coastal Change Management Area and restricts new residential development in vulnerable coastal zones, helping to preserve the coastal landscape.

6.5.77. Tranquillity and dark skies, identified as special qualities of the National Park, are protected through SP22 and SP23, respectively, which seek to minimise noise, visual intrusion, and light pollution from new developments. This includes support for the removal of visually intrusive structures. Policy SP4 provides additional safeguards by strictly limiting major development to exceptional circumstances and requiring consideration of detrimental effects on landscape, tranquillity, and cumulative impacts.

6.5.78. Site-specific housing allocations (SP32 to SP41) may result in localised adverse landscape effects. However, these impacts are mitigated through requirements for landscape buffers, tree retention, and design that reflects local character. Policy SP5, which allocates land north of Fawley Waterside for employment and nature conservation, includes strong landscape enhancement measures such as tree belts, hedgerows, and greenspace, supported by a comprehensive masterplan.

6.5.79. Policies SP29 to SP31, SP43 to DP46, and SP48 to SP51 allow for housing and traveller accommodation outside Defined Villages, but apply strict criteria on scale, siting, and local need to minimise landscape harm. Similarly, SP54 supports community facilities only where proportionate and sensitively designed, while SP62 supports sustainable tourism that enhances the National Park's special qualities. Policy DP63 ensures changes to holiday parks or campsites deliver environmental benefits and restore sensitive areas.

6.5.80. Policies supporting the land-based economy and rural diversification (including SP55 to DP59) permit small-scale employment and farm diversification, with safeguards to ensure buildings are appropriate in scale, design, and location. Policies DP60 and DP61 allow small-scale retail in rural areas where it serves local needs, provided it does not extend into open countryside or harm landscape character.

6.5.81. Indirect beneficial effects on the landscape are anticipated from policies related to biodiversity (SP11 to SP13; SP15), water management (SP7 and SP8), and transport (DP65 and SP66). These policies promote green infrastructure, nature-based solutions such as SuDS, and sustainable transport, which can enhance landscape quality and reduce fragmentation.

6.5.82. Overall, **mixed effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Landscape SA theme. **Major** (**significant) long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated through strong landscape protection policies, design principles, and spatial policy that is sensitive to the National Park's scenic beauty and character. **Localised minor (not significant) adverse effects** are likely from site allocations and small-scale development, but these should be mitigated through strict controls on scale, siting, and design.

Transport

6.5.83. The Local Plan Review includes two dedicated transport policies: Policies DP65 (Transport Infrastructure) and SP66 (Sustainable Transport and Access). These promote reduced car dependency, support walking, cycling, and public transport, and encourage the transition to electric vehicles through provision of small-scale charging facilities. The safeguarding of disused railway lines and enhancement of active travel infrastructure under Policy SP66 are particularly relevant in the New Forest context, where recreational opportunities are an identified special quality. Through Policy SP21 (Coastal Change Management Area), the Local Plan Review also supports essential coastal infrastructure, including the potential re-routing of the England Coast Path in response to coastal erosion.

6.5.84. The aims of the transport policies are reinforced by strategic policies. Policies SP1 (Supporting Sustainable Development) and DP2 (General Development Principles) include provisions for reducing the need to travel, enabling active travel, and improving access to public transport. Policy SP6 (Infrastructure Provision and Developer Contributions) further strengthens this approach by ensuring that development proposals make provision for necessary infrastructure, including sustainable transport measures.

6.5.85. The spatial strategy (SP3) and housing policies (SP29 and site allocations SP32 to SP41) will deliver circa 950 dwellings between 2024 and 2043, primarily within Defined Villages and allocated sites. This concentration of development is likely to have beneficial effects by supporting public transport viability and reducing car dependency. However, it also brings risks of increased traffic and parking pressures in some settlements. These risks are mitigated through requirements for transport assessments for developments with significant transport implications, as reflected in site-specific policies such as SP35 which requires a transport assessment, and SP36 which requires adequate parking provision.

6.5.86. Policy SP5 (Land north of Fawley Waterside) has the potential to generate additional traffic movements associated with new employment development. However, the policy includes a range of measures to address transport effects, including requirements for transport assessment and design, contributions towards necessary highway improvements, enhancement of the B3059 and Northern Access Road junctions where required, and the provision of active travel links connecting the site to surrounding settlements, employment areas and public transport networks. These measures are expected to help mitigate transport impacts and improve accessibility to the site by modes other than the private car.

6.5.87. Several other policies indirectly support sustainable transport. Policy SP49 (Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople) requires good highway access and proximity to public transport for permanent sites. Policy SP54 (Local Community Facilities) encourages retention and development of facilities within villages, reducing the need for longer car journeys. DP60 and DP61 also help protect and enable local retail, supporting shorter travel distances and reducing reliance on private vehicles.

6.5.88. Policies such as DP59 (Reuse of Farm Buildings) may result in new residential or tourism uses in rural areas, which could increase car dependency if sites are remote. However, re-using existing buildings avoids the need for new development in more sensitive locations. Integration of sustainable transport measures, such as EV charging and active travel links, could help mitigate potential adverse effects.

6.5.89. Similarly, other tourism-related policies, including SP62 (Sustainable Tourism Development) and DP63 (Holiday Parks and Campsites), may increase visitor numbers and associated vehicle movements. However, the emphasis on sustainable tourism under SP62 (including the reuse of existing buildings and providing facilities outside the busiest areas) will help reduce traffic pressures in sensitive locations.

6.5.90. Policy SP4 (Major Development in the National Park) also requires that proposals for major development demonstrate how they maximise sustainable transport opportunities. This will help mitigate potential adverse effects from large-scale proposals by encouraging active travel and reducing reliance on private vehicles.

6.5.91. Overall, **mixed effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Transport SA theme. **Moderate (significant) medium-to-long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated on transport in the National Park through the promotion of active travel, public transport, and appropriately locating development in settlements with existing services, facilities and transport links. Some **minor (not significant) medium-to-long-term adverse effects** are also anticipated, particularly where development may increase traffic in sensitive areas, although these are expected to be mitigated through transport assessments, sustainable design measures, and limits on the scale of development.

6.6. Cumulative and in-combination effects

6.6.1. Cumulative and in-combination effects refer to the combined impacts of multiple policies, proposals, or developments - either within the National Park or alongside other plans and activities in the wider area:

- Cumulative effects arise when several policies or developments affect the same environmental receptor or issue over time; and
- In-combination effects occur when the Local Plan Review's impacts interact with those from other plans or projects, potentially leading to greater overall effects.

Cumulative effects

6.6.2. The Local Plan Review's emphasis on sustainable development (through policies such as SP1, DP2, and SP9) will contribute to improved energy efficiency, reduced carbon emissions, and enhanced climate resilience across multiple sites. Similarly, policies supporting biodiversity net gain (SP13), green infrastructure (SP15), and landscape character (SP14) are likely to strengthen ecological networks and improve the National Park's visual and environmental quality.

6.6.3. Housing delivery through SP29 and site allocations (SP32 to SP41) will make a contribution towards meeting some of the identified local needs, but cumulatively may increase pressure on infrastructure, air quality, and sensitive habitats, particularly near designated sites. Tourism-related policies (SP62, DP63) also present cumulative challenges, as increased visitor numbers could intensify recreational and transport pressures. In addition, the strategic allocation at Fawley (Policy SP5) represents a more concentrated form of development which may contribute to cumulative pressures on transport networks, landscape character, and nearby ecological receptors. However, these risks are mitigated through design-led policies, strategic mitigation schemes, and requirements for transport assessments and habitat buffers.

6.6.4. In addition, the cumulative impact of policies supporting the land-based economy, rural diversification, and small-scale employment (SP55 to SP57) is likely to reinforce the resilience of local communities and sustain traditional practices. When combined with policies that safeguard cultural heritage and promote high-quality design, these measures contribute to a coherent strategy that protects the National Park's special qualities while enabling appropriate growth. The strategic allocation at Fawley (SP5), when considered alongside these policies, also has the potential to contribute to economic resilience, provided that its environmental safeguards are effectively implemented.

6.6.5. Policy DP26 provides an additional safeguard by stating that 'built development and changes of use which would individually or cumulatively erode the National Park's local character, or result in a gradual suburbanising effect within the National Park will not be permitted'. This policy strengthens the protection against adverse cumulative effects by ensuring that incremental changes do not undermine the National Park's distinctive character.

6.6.6. Overall, the **cumulative effects of the Local Plan Review are mostly beneficial**, with long-term benefits expected across all SA themes. **Localised adverse cumulative effects** may arise, but these are likely to be effectively managed through embedded safeguards and monitoring.

In-combination effects

6.6.7. Cross-boundary effects are particularly relevant in relation to water and biodiversity. The National Park shares hydrological catchments and ecological networks with neighbouring areas, and development within its boundaries can have wider hydrological impacts. Such effects are mitigated by requiring developments to align with regional plans in Policy SP8 and further assessment is set out in the Habitats Regulation Assessment of the proposed Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan.

6.6.8. Recreational pressures on internationally designated sites (SACs, SPAs, Ramsar) also require strategic mitigation. Through SP11, the Local Plan Review aligns with the New Forest Habitat Mitigation Scheme and Bird Aware Solent, which will ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations and help to manage cumulative visitor impacts.

6.6.9. The Local Plan Review also complements the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan, particularly in its focus on tranquillity, landscape character, and sustainable tourism. Sub-regional transport strategies and national frameworks such as the NPPF and Environment Act 2021 further reinforce the Local Plan Review's direction, especially in relation to climate change and biodiversity net gain.

6.6.10. In the wider area surrounding the National Park, neighbouring authorities such as New Forest District Council are progressing new Local Plans that include higher levels of housing growth than those proposed in the Local Plan Review. The adopted Local Plan (2016-2036) for the New Forest District (outside the National Park) sets a target of 10,420 dwellings, with stepped delivery increasing to 700 dwellings per annum from 2026 onwards. However, recent updates to national planning policy have increased the standard method housing need to over 1,500dwellings per annum, indicating that delivery figures for the district will rise in future.

6.6.11. These proposals, alongside other strategic plans such as neighbourhood plans and infrastructure improvements, have the potential to interact with development in the National Park. In particular, cross-boundary pressures may arise in relation to water resources, biodiversity, transport, and recreational impacts, with the Fawley allocation (SP5) representing a key location where such cross-boundary interactions may arise due to its scale and location on the edge of the National Park. The Local Plan Review addresses these through alignment with regional strategies (for example, SP8), strategic mitigation (for example, SP11), and cooperation with neighbouring authorities.

6.6.12. Local Plans currently being prepared by councils bordering the National Park (including Test Valley, Wiltshire, Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole, and Southampton) are expected to propose significant levels of housing and employment growth. These plans may interact with development in the National Park, particularly through shared ecological networks, transport corridors, and recreational destinations.

6.6.13. Strategic infrastructure projects in the wider region also have potential in-combination effects. These include the New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which proposes expanded active travel networks across the National Park and surrounding areas.

6.6.14. Ongoing cooperation with neighbouring authorities will be important to manage housing need, infrastructure, and ecological networks. Provided these relationships are maintained, **no significant adverse in-combination effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review.

7. Next steps

7.1.1. This SA Report accompanies the current Regulation 19 consultation on the Local Plan Review ('*New Forest National Park Local Plan Review 2024 - 2043: Regulation 19 Consultation*').

7.1.2. The Regulation 19 consultation represents the statutory consultation on the proposed submission version of the Local Plan Review, during which representations are invited on the plan's legal compliance and soundness. This SA Report has been prepared to support the Regulation 19 Local Plan Review and forms part of the evidence base.

7.1.3. Following the close of the Regulation 19 consultation period, the National Park Authority will consider all representations received. The main issues raised will be identified and summarised, and the Authority will assess whether the Local Plan Review can be submitted for Examination without modification or whether changes are required.

7.1.4. If the Local Plan Review is considered ready for submission, it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination, alongside supporting documentation including a statement of representations and this SA Report.

7.1.5. During the Examination, the appointed Inspector(s) will consider the Local Plan Review, the representations received and the SA Report. If the Inspector(s) identify the need for main modifications to make the Plan sound, these will be prepared by the National Park Authority, subject to SA, and published for consultation alongside an SA Addendum.

7.1.6. Following receipt of the Inspector's report, and once the Local Plan Review is found to be sound, it will be formally adopted by the New Forest National Park Authority. At the point of adoption, an SA Adoption Statement will be published, setting out how environmental considerations and consultation responses have been taken into account, the reasons for choosing the adopted plan, and the arrangements for monitoring its significant effects.