# New Forest National Park Authority

# Landscape

# Topic Paper

**August 2026**

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# 1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this topic paper is to provide further background and context regarding how the landscape protection afforded to the New Forest National Park through primary legislation and national policy is reflected in the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan. This paper should be read in conjunction with the 'Protected Landscapes Duty Topic Paper' which sets out how the draft Plan seeks to further the two statutory National Park purposes – as required by Section 245 of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023.

# 2. Primary legislation, national policy & guidance

2.1 The National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 established the two statutory National Park purposes that apply to the National Parks in England and Wales. These statutory purposes were amended through the Environment Act 1995 and are:

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

2.2 The New Forest National Park was designated by the Government in 2005 following an extensive landscape character assessment and public inquiry. The Inspector's Report into the New Forest National Park Designation Order 2002 (dated December 2003) concluded that the New Forest meets the statutory criteria for designation as a National Park.

2.3 Natural England's publication 'Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'[1] confirms that landscape quality is a key element of the designation criterion relating to natural beauty.

2.4 National planning policy for National Parks is currently set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024); the related National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) resource; and the extant National Park Circular (2010). These key landscape elements are summarised below:

- Paragraph 189 of the **NPPF** confirms, "…great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues."

[1] Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or AONB in England.pdf

- The **NPPG** resource on 'Landscape' confirms, "The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside." The NPPG goes onto state, "The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that the scale and extent of development in these areas [National Parks & National Landscapes] should be limited, in view of the importance of conserving and enhancing their landscapes and scenic beauty...All development in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Beauty will need to be located and designed in a way that reflects their status as landscapes of the highest quality."

- The **National Parks Circular** is referenced within bot the current NPPF (see footnote 66) and the NPPG guidance on 'Landscape' referenced above. The Circular sets out that, "…within the diversity of the English countryside, the [National] Parks are recognised as landscapes of exceptional beauty, fashioned by nature and the communities which live in them. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 enabled the creation of the National Parks and ensures that our most beautiful and unique landscapes have been, and will continue to be, protected in the future."

- Defra has published '**Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes**' (December 2024)[2] and this is covered in more detail in the 'Protected Landscapes Duty Topic Paper' that accompanies the Regulation 19 New Forest National Park Local Plan. The Defra guidance confirms relevant authorities (including national park authorities) will need to apply the duty when undertaking any function in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a Protected Landscape; and that this may include the preparation of Development Plans and associated assessments and documents. The duty is an active duty, not passive, which means, "…for development plan making and development management decisions affecting a Protected Landscape, a relevant authority should seek to further the purposes of the Protected Landscape - in so doing, the relevant authority should consider whether such measures can be embedded in the design of plans and proposals."

- The **New Forest National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027** is the Management Plan for the National Park. The Plan identifies the 'special qualities' of the New Forest, including its "…outstanding natural beauty - the sights, sounds and smells of ancient woodland with veteran trees,

[2] Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes - GOV.UK

heathland, bog, autumn colour and an unspoilt coastline with views of the Solent and the Isle of Wight.'

- The **New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment** (2015) describes the key characteristics and attributes of the 18 identified landscape character areas within the National Park.

# 3. How landscape considerations have fed into the New Forest National Park Local Plan Review

3.1 Work on a review of the New Forest National Park Local Plan was initiated during 2024 with various pieces of technical evidence being commissioned to inform the review. An initial public consultation on the 'Strategic Direction of Travel' for the Local Plan review and the main planning issues to be addressed in it, together with a 'Call for Sites', was undertaken in early 2025. This was followed by a Regulation 18 Part 2 consultation between November – December 2025.

3.2 The Local Plan Review process is supported by a series of appraisals, assessment and supporting documents that feed into the draft Plan. For relevant to landscape considerations are the Sustainability Appraisal/SEA and the housing land availability assessment.

3.3 The New Forest National Park Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (Aecom, October 2025) includes a specific section on 'Landscape' – pages 117 to 128. The Scoping Report sets out the policy context on landscape matters and confirms that the New Forest National Park is located with the New Forest National Character Area (as identified by Natural England).

3.4 The Scoping Report identified the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) in relation to the Landscape Sustainability Appraisal theme: (i) development within the New Forest could adversely affect the landscape character and special qualities of the National Park, particularly in relation to tranquillity, dark skies, and the cultural landscape; and (ii) the National Park lies within its own National Character Area designation, with unique landscape qualities and sensitives. Careful planning is needed to preserve the National Character Area's distinctive characteristics.

3.5 This led to the inclusion of the following objective in the Sustainability Appraisal in relation to landscape: 'Protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape of the National Park and surrounding National Landscapes.'

3.5 The New Forest National Park Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal Report (Aecom, November 2025) includes this objective relating to landscape

matters. The SA includes a series of supporting questions to assess policy options against under this objective, as follows. Will the option help to:

- 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?

3.6 It is important to highlight that this is one of a series of Sustainability Appraisal objectives and options have to be considered holistically. There may be options where the SA findings pull in different directions and it is the role of the National Park Authority – through the plan-preparation process – to balance the relevant objectives to deliver sustainable development within the National Park.

3.7 Paragraphs 6.5.70 to 6.5.81 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Regulation 18 Part 2 Plan set out the headline SA conclusions in relation to landscape. The main conclusion is set out in paragraph 6.5.81, set out below:

"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 adverse effects are likely from site allocations and small-scale development, but these should be mitigated through strict controls on scale, siting, and design."

3.8 The Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Regulation 19 proposed Submission draft Local Plan (Aecom, 2026) retains the objective to 'Protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape of the National Park and surrounding National Landscapes.' The following supporting questions are considered through the Regulation 19 Sustainability Appraisal work:

- Will the option help to safeguard the special qualities, scenic value, and setting of the National Park and nearby National Landscapes?
- Will the option help to protect and enhance the distinctive characteristics of the National Character Area covering the National Park?
- Will the option help to avoid or minimise harm to rural character, visual integrity, and panoramic views, particularly at settlement edges and in open countryside?

- Will the option help to reduce light pollution to protect dark skies and maintain the area's tranquillity and sense of remoteness?
- Will the option help to prevent adverse visual and landscape impacts from infrastructure, industrial, or coastal development?

3.9 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan considered a range of reasonable alternatives to the scale and distribution of housing development within the National Park. Option HO2 is the approach adopted in the Regulation 19 Local Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal concludes in relation to landscape impacts, “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.”

3.10 In terms of employment development, the Sustainability Appraisal similarly assesses a range of options, with option E3 representing the approach taken in the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan. In terms of landscape impacts, the Sustainability Appraisal of the Regulation 19 Local Plan concludes,

“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.”

3.11 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan (Aecom, 2026) also assesses the contribution the draft Local Plan policies make towards the objective of protecting and enhancing landscape character.

Paragraphs 6.5.71 to 6.5.82 assess the contribution the draft planning policies will make to the landscape objective and conclude,

‘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.’

3.12 Landscape considerations are also factored into other parts of the supporting evidence base for the New Forest National Park Local Plan Review. For example, the Strategic Land Availability Assessment considers landscape character and the site’s relationship to existing settlements and development; whether it is a brownfield or greenfield site; potential impacts on protected trees and hedgerows.

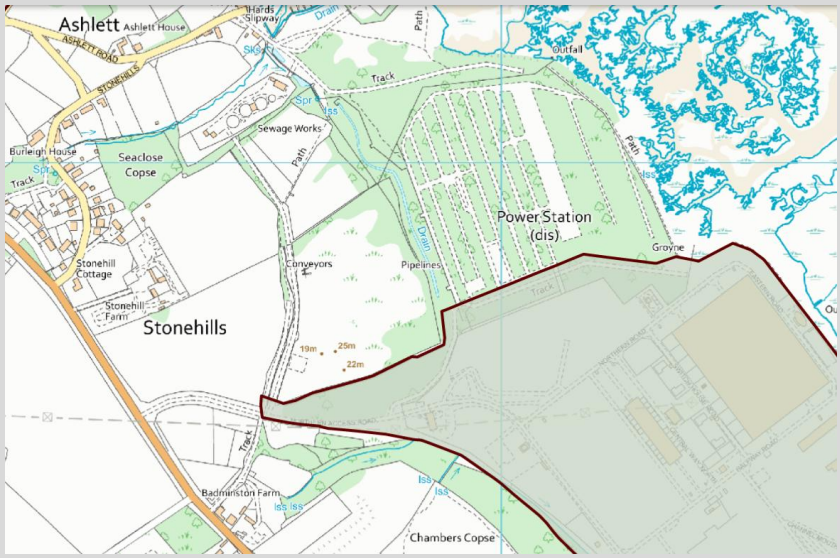
3.13 The ‘Protected Landscapes Duty Topic Paper’ provides a more detailed assessment of how the draft New Forest National Park Local Plan seeks to further the first statutory purpose relating to landscape and natural beauty. The remaining sections of this separate Landscape Topic Paper therefore focus on how landscape considerations have been factored into the proposed site allocations in the draft Local Plan

# 4. New Forest National Park Local Plan proposed site allocations – landscape considerations

4.1 This section of the Landscape Topic Paper sets out how landscape impacts have been considered in the proposed allocation of sites for development in the draft Local Plan. As set out in the Sustainability Appraisal Report, the draft Local Plan includes a suite of policies aimed at conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the New Forest National Park and the overall quantum of development proposed in the draft Plan is limited.

4.2 The tables below focus on the proposed new site allocations in the draft Local Plan, rather than those that are carried forward from the adopted Local Plan (2019) but retained due to the fact that development has not been completed. The sites listed below have all been visited and assessed by specialist planning and landscape officers from the National Park Authority in preparing this paper.

**Site: Land north of Fawley Waterside (draft policy SP5) – employment**




New Forest National Park Landscape Character Area: LCA15: *North West Solent Estate*

Landscape Type: *Coastal Plain Estates – large informal enclosures*

**Specialist Landscape comments:**

The site is located immediately north of the disused Fawley Power Station site and in proximity to the boundary of the New Forest National Park. Immediate boundaries to the site are characterised by mature trees and hedgerows with a gentle slope across the site down to the eastern boundary, where a watercourse runs along that boundary. The existing degradation of the higher part of the site includes areas of deposited waste material which in places is several metres above original ground levels and unstable in

locations. The waste materials alter the natural levels and contours of the site creating a degraded landscape character that blights the setting within the New Forest National Park. Before any development of the site is considered the waste materials would be required to be removed to restore the land to its previous levels and natural contours.

As noted in the New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment, at LCA 15: North West Solent Estates, the site's boundary trees and hedgerows would need to be enhanced and protected and gaps filled, including the replacement of any dead or dying trees, as part of any development. This would assist in restoring the site's landscape character by creating a link to the wider, historic and distinct field pattern, in this part of the National Park.

Careful consideration of potential development at the site would need to be given, with respect to any development's height, level of external lighting and the location and height of security style fencing and gates, to reduce the visual intrusion of such development, potential light pollution and its impact on the immediate and wider landscape character of the National Park.

The conservation and enhancement of the site, as part of any development, is of paramount importance, with restoration of its landscape character essential to re-establishing its place in this part of the National Park.

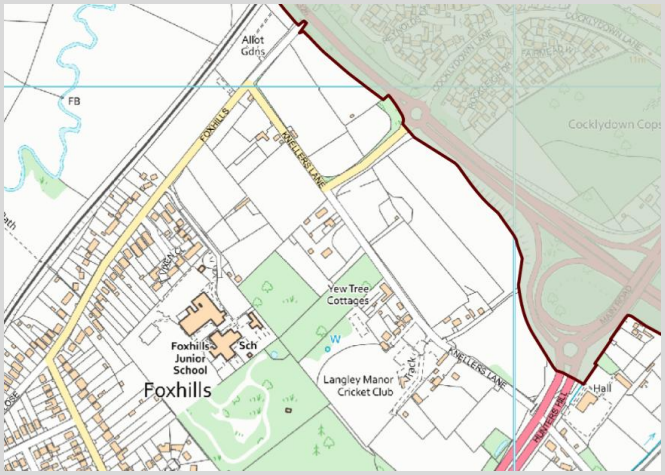
**References to landscape considerations within the draft Local Plan:**

One of the key objectives for the allocation is the remediation of the site. Criterion (f) in the draft allocation requires development to deliver the comprehensive remediation of the whole site through a layout that conserves and enhances the landscape setting of the National Park, reflects its historic character and maintains an appropriate transition from the urban form and land uses to the south to the countryside edge of the National Park. As illustrated from the images below, the site current detracts from the New Forest National Park and the site allocation is an opportunity to address this.





**Site: Land at Knellers Lane, Ashurst (draft policy SP34) – housing**




New Forest National Park Landscape Character Area: LCA 12: *Hythe and Ashurst Forest Farmlands*

Landscape Type: *Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings*

**Specialist Landscape comments:**

The site is bounded by the A326, Knellers Lane and Foxhills, which gives the site a strong set of boundaries, with some mature hedgerow trees inside the site and also hedgerows in the interior of the site and on the boundary. This structure is advantageous and any proposed development would benefit from retaining some of these landscape features.

The site at present does create a gap between Ashurst and Totton, but with the urban and imposing nature of the A326 as the boundary between the site and Totton, the site is not assessed as being crucial in this function. If the proposals for the site were designed to accommodate some/all of the existing trees and hedgerows, then that would be helpful in retaining existing landscape structure.

It is acknowledged that there are surface water drainage issues in the area. Pond and ditches could be designed into a scheme to help with this issue.

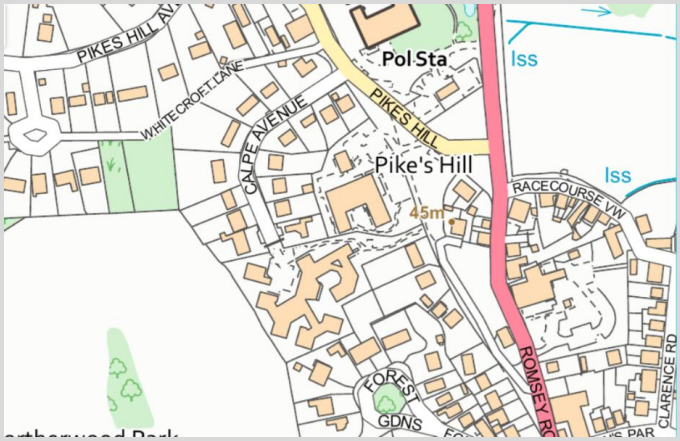
The A326 is elevated (with an underpass adjacent to the site) which increases the spread of noise from traffic. There is some planting on the northeast boundary of the site which helps buffer some of this noise and could be managed and have additional trees planted to increase this buffering.

In conclusion, from a landscape point of view, the site has potential although a successful scheme would depend on a thoughtful design incorporating existing trees and hedgerows where possible and the possibility of on-site water retention in the form of a pond and possible ditches.

**References to landscape considerations within the draft Local Plan:**

Criterion (a) of draft policy SP34 requires the provision of a landscaped buffer adjacent to Knellers Lane, to create a new village edge and to define the extent of the built-up area to avoid coalescence with urban areas adjacent to the Park boundary. Criterion (e) requires retention and enhancement of existing protected hedgerows and tree belts to be integral to the site layout to ensure the rural character of the site on the edge of the village is retained.

**Site: Land at Calpe Avenue, Lyndhurst (draft policy SP36) – housing**




New Forest National Park Landscape Character Area: LCA 22: *Furzey Woodlands and Villages*

Landscape Type: *Ancient Forest Farmlands*

**Specialist Landscape comments:**

The brownfield site holds an empty former care home, with the site surrounded by tall close-boarded fence for security purposes.

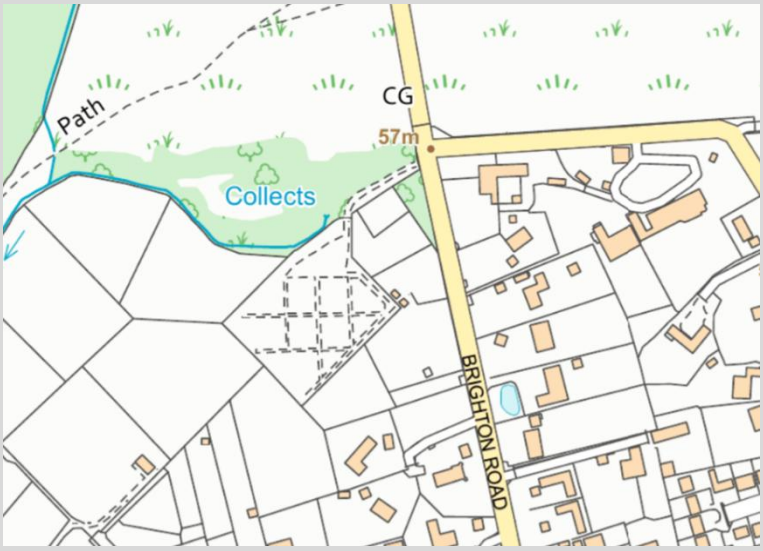
Immediately adjacent to the west is Northerwood Park, a registered Historic Parkland. This proximity to a sensitive landscape demands that a replacement for the existing care home is carefully considered with existing trees on the site retained to preserve important landscape structure, perimeter fencing being sensitive to the immediate and wider landscape setting, seeking to help integrate any new development into the locale.

The scale of any replacement buildings should avoid an over dominance of built form in what is essentially a residential area on 3 sides and a historic parkland on one. Night time lighting should also be sensitive to the location, avoiding over lighting and light spillage which leads to light pollution. It is expected that landscaped open spaces will be designed as part of any replacement care home layout and these should be sensitive to the immediate and wider location.

**References to landscape considerations within the draft Local Plan:**

Criterion (a) of draft policy SP36 states that proposals must retain the important trees on the site that contribute to the site's setting and edge-of-village location.

**Site: Land at Brighton Road, Sway (draft policy SP38) – housing**




New Forest National Park Landscape Character Area: *LCA 18: Sway Pasture and Residential Settlements.*

Landscape Type*: Ancient Forest Farmlands*

**Specialist Landscape comments:**

An irregular shaped site with Sway Cemetery to the immediate west, Brighton Roadd running to the east in a north-south direction, creating the east boundary to most of the site, housing to the south with substantial gardens and woodland to the north boundary and Open Forest beyond.

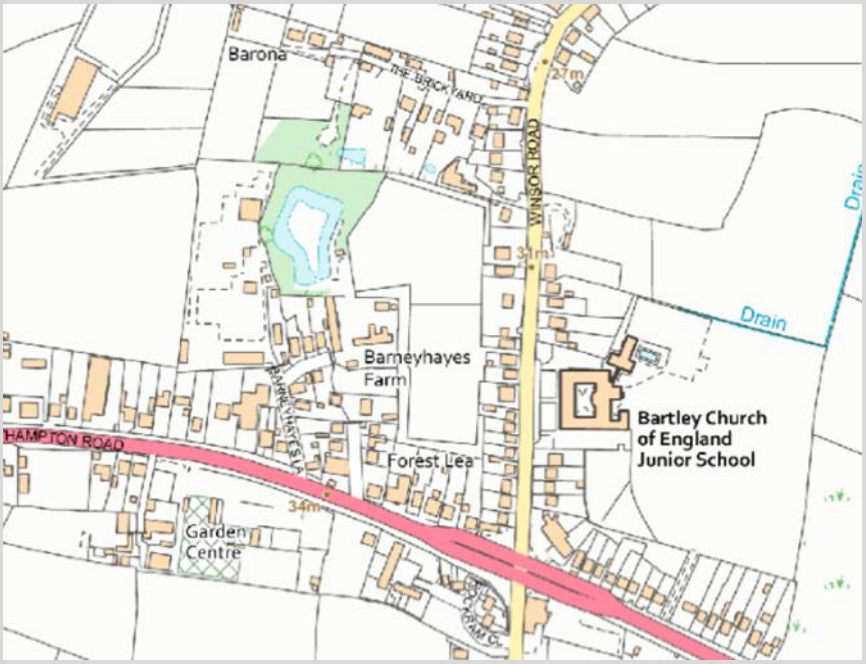
The site is sensitive, particularly due to the fact that it lies adjacent to the Open Forest to the north but also as Sway Cemetery lies to the immediate west. The site is constrained and irregular in shape with some mature trees on the boundary causing a measure of restriction on the area suitable for development due to the area of roots, which in deciduous trees (e.g the oaks found on the eastern boundary) normally mirror the crown spread of the trees, which in this example is considerable.

The irregular shaped boundary forms a pinch point halfway up the site which would require careful consideration in a layout plan for a development, (an option would be to leave part of the site as a landscape feature or open space.

The trees separating the cemetery and the site are over mature Scots Pine and Ash which are very tall and thin. This is not an ideal landscape boundary to the site as the trees will be unstable with branches being lost and eventually trees falling. Arboricultural work could be carried out on these trees to improve their safety and also allow more light to penetrate so that an effective native species hedgerow could be planted beneath them, which in

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| time could form a suitable landscape boundary to the site and a visual screen between the cemetery and development. |
| **References to landscape considerations within the draft Local Plan:**<br><br>Criterion (a) of draft policy SP38 requires the provision of a landscaped buffer to the north and west to create a new village edge, to define the extent of the built-up area, and to protect the adjacent area of designated Ancient Woodland. Criterion (c) requires the appropriate retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows and trees belts to be integral to the layout of the site. |

**Site: Land west of Winsor Road, Winsor (draft policy SP39) – housing**




New Forest National Park Landscape Character Area: LCA 11: *Copythorne Forest Farmlands.*

Landscape Type: *Ancient Forest Farmlands*

**Specialist Landscape comments:**

A large site in an upside down 'L' shape, orientated mainly north-south with an existing access off Winsor Rd to the east of the site. Few or no interior trees exist on the site, but a substantial number of mature trees on the boundaries abutting or within rear gardens of existing houses on the boundary and mature woodland to the north and northwest, all providing a good screen from outside the site and from the rear of existing houses.

The site is large and has no mature trees or hedgerows, so is essentially a blank canvas and has the potential to accommodate a substantial sized development, which could fit in with the layout of the existing housing and development. The narrower part of the site reaching southwards from the wider northern part. The northern part of the site is wider and would have the potential to incorporate landscape features such as an avenue of trees, open space, a pond, hedgerows etc.

**References to landscape considerations within the draft Local Plan:**

The supporting text to draft Policy SP39 highlights that the site is contained by existing residential development and therefore the impact of development on the wider landscape of the New Forest National Park is minimal.

Criterion (d) of draft Policy SP39 states the retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows and trees belts should be integral to the site layout.

**Site: South of Hamptworth Road, Landford (draft policy SP40) – housing**




New Forest National Park Landscape Character Area:

LCA 9: Landford Forest Farmlands

Landscape Type: Ancient Forest Farmlands

**Specialist Landscape comments:**

The proposed site lies immediately to the south of Hamptworth Road, and west of Lyndhurst Road, on the edge of the village of Landford. The land falls gently to its northern boundary and the site is part of a relatively open landscape of an agricultural character, with strong boundaries of roadside hedgerows and mature trees. A SSSI woodland lies to the immediate north-west of the site and to the south-west of the site is an Ancient Woodland, Heath Copse. The River Blackwater runs adjacent to the north-west corner of the site. It is known that the course of the River Blackwater north of Hamptworth Road and beyond, is a commuting corridor used by bats.

The rural setting confers great importance to conserving and enhancing of the landscape. The site falls within Landscape Character Area 9: Landford Forest Farmlands and within the Landscape Type of Ancient Forest Farmlands. Descriptions of the landscape of the area include hedgerows with frequent oak trees and well managed woodlands. Guidance is given that hedgerows should be managed with a healthy stock of hedgerow trees and hedgerow planting.

The proposed site is adjacent to existing dwellings located on the west side of Lyndhurst Road, a well-established linear development. The levels of the site fall gently northwards from this development edge and from a landscape perspective this part of the site, the higher part, would be a preferable location for any housing development, being visually connected to existing development and not isolated elsewhere within the site. To enhance the landscape character of the site, strengthening the existing hedgerow that runs alongside Lyndhurst Road with additional tree planting, would be beneficial in the long term. In addition, a new hedgerow planted with frequent oak trees, running northwards from the corner of Heath Copse to join the SSSI woodland to the north, adjacent to Hamptworth Road, would provide, in time, a strong boundary, defining the area of potential development.

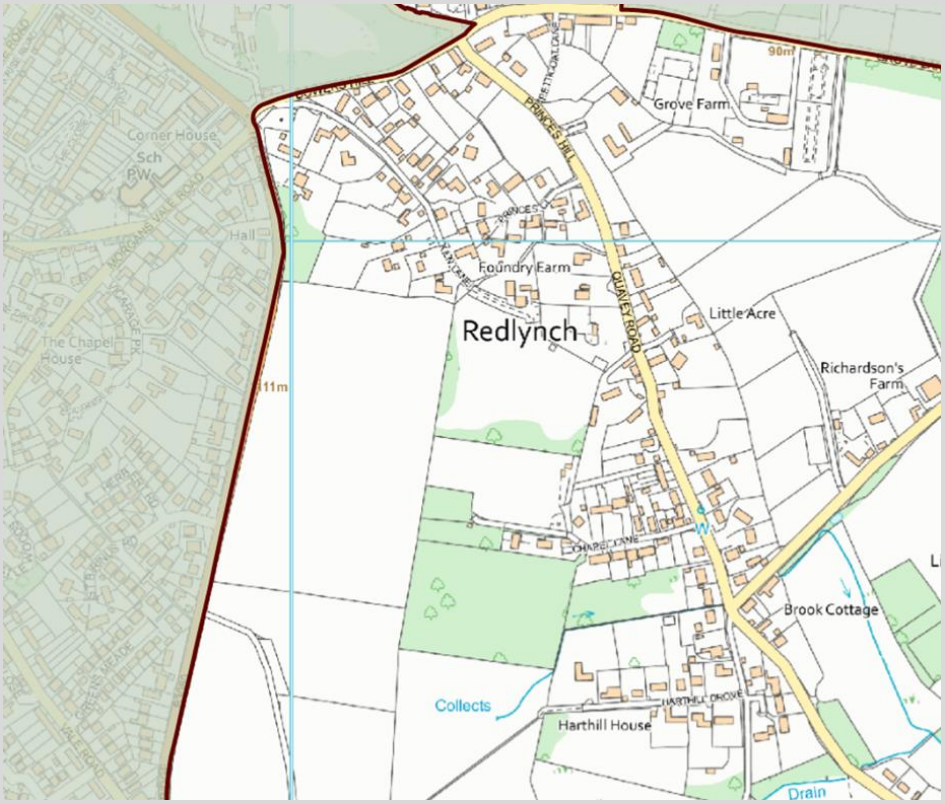
Careful attention with any development proposals would need to take into account impacts on the landscape character of the immediate and wider location. Landscape design would need to be the leading factor in the layout and detailed design of any development, respecting the character of Landford and incorporating both sensitively designed built form and landscape design. A vehicular entrance to the site, located on Lyndhurst Road, would need to be carefully designed to reduce its visibility splay whilst retaining safe sight lines. Although this would require the removal of a part of the existing hedgerow on Lyndhurst Road, new planting of native species plants and trees both at an entrance and within the possible development would help to lessen the impact of such development and also to integrate the development into the edge of Landford village.

Consideration would also be required to carefully designed external lighting, both street lighting (if required) and lighting at individual dwellings, to protect the dark night skies of Landford and the surrounding landscape.

**References to landscape considerations within the draft Local Plan:**

Criterion (c) of draft policy SP40 requires a landscape-led design and layout that reflects the landscape character of this part of Landford. Criterion (d) sets the provision of on-site informal public open space in accordance with Policy DP16 for the benefit of future residents and the existing local community. This will be available for a range of potential open spaces uses, to be determined in consultation with Landford Parish Council.

**Site: Land east of The Ridge, Redlynch (draft policy SP41) – housing**




New Forest National Park Landscape Character Area: *LCA 9: Landford Forest Farmlands*

Landscape Type: *Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings*

**Specialist Landscape comments:**

The large rectangular site lies on a ridge with levels falling from the road (The Ridge) away to the east. The landscape forms a slight rise in levels from the road before the levels start to fall away to the east, creating a slightly domed effect in levels. The site has two wooded boundaries, to the north and east with the south and west boundaries being more lightly bounded with hedgerows. There are no trees or hedgerows in the interior of the site.

The topography of the site would result in any development to the east of the highest part of the site being quite visible from the east, with little opportunity to screen the development on that part of the site. This could lead to both day time and night time visual impacts from housing and lighting. In landscape terms a development with less visual impact could be a located towards the west of the site, closer to the road (The Ridge), opposite the existing houses. This would have the advantage of reflecting a well-established pattern of development already in existence in the area and also avoids developing on

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| a part of the site where the topography is falling from the ridge and any new development would be visible and possibly intrusive in the wider landscape |
| **References to landscape considerations within the draft Local Plan:**<br><br>The draft site allocation policy sets out a range of relevant criteria for the development of the site, with the need to carefully consider the landscape sensitivity as key. Criterion (b) requires the appropriate retention and enhancement of existing trees belts and hedgerows that surround the site to enhance its landscape setting; and criterion (c) requires a landscape-led design and layout that reflects the landscape character of this part of Redlynch and helps to create a high-quality scheme in the National Park. |

**Site: Ringwood Road, Netley Marsh (draft policy SP50) – proposed travelling showpeople site allocation**




New Forest National Park Landscape Character Area: LCA 11: *Copythorne Forest Farmlands*

Landscape Type: *Ancient Forest Farmlands*

**Specialist Landscape comments:**

With reference to the New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), the site falls within Landscape Character Area 11: Copythorne Forest Farmlands and the Landscape Type of Ancient Forest Farmlands. A key positive landscape attribute noted in the LCA, relating to the area within which the proposed site is located, is a strong pattern of ancient, small and irregular fields, enclosed by hedgerows containing mature oaks. Any development of the site will benefit from a 20 metre wide woodland landscape buffer to the north side, to reinforce the existing strip of mature woodland that lies to the immediate south of the residences along the A336 Ringwood Road. This will provide a robust natural screen to reduce visual intrusion and buffer noise from the use of the site.

As the site forms part of a larger field, to define the southern boundary and create a smaller field, the planting of a new native species hedgerow with regular spaced oak trees will help to create a key positive landscape feature, typical of the area.

The topography of the site falls gently across the field towards the north-east corner where one of the existing entrances is located. This change in levels creates a subtle landscape feature of interest to the field, with additional woodland & hedgerow planting adding definition to the boundaries of the site.

The landscape design of hard surfaces, a new entrance, security fencing and planting will require careful attention to enhance key landscape attributes as identified in the LCA, also including attention being given to the hard landscape materials, species of plants and trees to be specified.

A widened entrance from the A336 Ringwood Road will need to be designed to minimise visual impact and be sensitive to the landscape character of the road, its hedgerows, ditches and mature oak trees.

The hours of use for the site for work on equipment will be limited to agreed hours via a planning condition, plus control on the type and use of external lighting, will help to retain the tranquillity of the of the immediate area and benefit the dark night skies of the New Forest National Park.

**References to landscape considerations within the draft Local Plan:**

The proposed allocation is specifically for travelling showpeople's use and the draft policy explicitly limits the use to this identified need. The site identified has previously been used as part of the local car boot sales and in association with the Netley Marsh Steam & Craft Show (see image below).




Criteria (b) of draft Policy SP50 requires a comprehensive landscape scheme, informed by the New Forest Landscape Character Assessment, setting out how the presence of the site within the New Forest's landscape will be softened. Criteria (a) of the draft policy requires a minimum 20-metre-wide landscape buffer along the northern boundary of the site.

# 5. Conclusions

5.1 The landscape character and protection of the New Forest National Park is at the heart of its designation as a National Park, confirmed by the Government in 2005 following an extensive landscape assessment and public inquiry.

5.2 The whole of the New Forest National Park is covered by the statutory National Park purposes (and related socio-economic duty). Primary legislation dating from the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (and amended in subsequent Acts) is reflected in national planning policy and guidance, which confirms that National Parks have the highest status of protected in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

5.3 Under the Environment Act 1995 and Town & Country Planning Act 1990, national park authorities are legally the sole planning authorities for their respective areas. The extant National Parks Circular (2010) confirms, "…the town and country planning system is a key instrument in the achievement of Park purposes. Planning legislation has a major impact on the form and location of development, is a vital tool for managing the impact of development on landscape and biodiversity and a key part of conserving and enhancing cultural heritage, including the built heritage in Park settlements…" (paragraph 136).

5.4 The review of the New Forest National Park Local Plan provides an opportunity to update the local planning policies for the National Park to ensure the appropriate level of landscape protection. The first 'Strategic Objective' in the draft Local Plan is to "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."

5.5 This objective is carried through to many of the draft policies in the Local Plan. The accompanying Sustainability Appraisal work similarly reflects the level of landscape protection afforded to the New Forest National Park. This Topic Paper – to be read in conjunction with the 'Protected Landscapes Duty Topic Paper' – sets out how landscape considerations have fed into the selection sites as proposed allocations in the Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan.