

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: *Monday 6 June 2016*

Agenda item 8: *Local Plan Review – David Illsley, Policy Manager NFNPA*

Briefing note from David Illsley attached, which provides context for his presentation on Local Plan Review.



New Forest Access Forum
6 June 2016 – Calshot Activities Centre
New Forest National Park Local Plan Review – Briefing Note

1. Current Planning Policies

- 1.1 The British planning system is described as a ‘Plan-led’ system, whereby planning decisions on individual applications are made in accordance with the ‘development plan’ for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The current development plan for the National Park is the New Forest National Park Core Strategy document which was adopted in December 2010 following extensive public consultation and endorsement by the Government’s Planning Inspectorate. The Core Strategy sets out a succinct range of policies to guide development within the National Park and forms the basis for determining the circa 1,000 planning applications received by the NFNPA per annum.

2. Government Planning Reforms

- 2.1 In 2012 the Coalition Government started reforming the planning system in an attempt to speed it up and increase the rate of development across the country. These reforms have included the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012; significantly extended Permitted Development Rights; and the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans. National planning policy continues to recognise the protection afforded to National Parks in primary legislation and confirms that as ‘areas of restraint’ they are not appropriate locations for major development.

3. The New Forest National Park Local Plan Review

- 3.1 The review started in Autumn 2015 and aims to ensure the National Park is covered by an up-to-date planning framework that takes forward the two statutory Park purposes and associated duty. Particular issues to be addressed in the review include:
- The scale and location of new housing development in the National Park. The revised Local Plan is likely to allocate land in the Park for development to meet local needs. Allocations may provide an opportunity to bring vacant sites back into use or provide other community benefits such as the provision of local greenspaces.
 - The impact of development on the integrity of the New Forest’s internationally protected habitats that make up over 50% of the National Park. The current approach of seeking financial contributions from new development to fund mitigation measures (such as the employment of seasonal rangers and the provision of alternative recreational areas in more robust locations) is likely to be extended.
 - The approach to visitor facilities and accommodation, including balancing the roles of serviced accommodation and campsites.

3.2 The revised Local Plan policies will focus on what constitutes ‘development’ and therefore requires planning permission. Significant parts of the NFNPA’s (and other partners) work is aimed at promoting the understanding and enjoying what makes the New Forest special, education and interpretation – most of which never require planning permission. These work areas will continue to be taken forward through avenues such as the Recreation Management Strategy, the National Park Management Plan and groups such as the Access Forum.

4. Timetable

4.1 The current intention is to publish a (non-statutory) draft version of the revised Local Plan for public consultation in October 2016. The final draft version of the Plan will then be published in Summer 2017 for a final period of public consultation prior to submission to the Government for independent examination. This must be done by March 2018 at the latest.

5. Neighbouring Areas

5.1 A number of neighbouring local planning authorities – including Southampton City Council and New Forest District Council – are also in the process of reviewing their Local Plans. These areas are under considerable development pressure and the increase in recreational pressures on the internationally protected habitats of the New Forest (including the Solent coastline) from new development will be an important issue as these reviews progress.

5.2 A number of local planning authorities (including New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Wiltshire Council) either have mitigation frameworks in place or the commitment to do so. These frameworks include measures such as the provision of local greenspaces close to development; the enhancement of the local Public Rights of Way network; the employment of additional rangers; and the development of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs). The NFNPA has recently received a planning application for the change of use of agricultural land within the Park to a SANG and more are likely to follow.

5.3 The NFNPA is a statutory consultee on development plans prepared by any neighbouring planning authorities. New Forest District Council is likely to be publishing their initial Local Plan consultation document in July 2016.

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