

NEW FOREST ACCESS FORUM

Meeting: *Monday 5 September 2016*

Agenda Item 9: *Draft response to NFDC Local Plan Review consultation*

Dear Sirs,

New Forest District Local Plan Review 2016-36 Part 1: Planning Strategy

This letter constitutes formal advice from the New Forest Access Forum in response to the consultation on the New Forest District Local Plan Review 2016-36.

The New Forest Access Forum is the statutory Local Access Forum for the New Forest National Park plus the New Forest District Council area, as provided for under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Its membership is made up of individuals with a wide range of interests and expertise, including land owners/managers, conservationists, representatives of user groups and those with disabilities. The role of the Forum is to provide balanced advice that reflects the combined view of individual members.

According to section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, New Forest District Council is required to have regard to relevant advice from this Forum in carrying out its functions.

The Forum welcomes the opportunity to comment at this early stage of the Local Plan Review. We recognise that there is an increased requirement for additional housing within New Forest District and a corresponding need to identify additional sites for development. We are however very concerned about the pressures that further development represents, both for the protected areas of the Forest and for the access network that supports residents' and visitors' enjoyment of the area.

In addition we have the following specific comments:

1. Potential sustainable locations for 100+ homes (Map S1)

We are surprised to see that no potential has been identified for housing between Hythe and Hardley, and would suggest that this be revisited within the plan.

2. Accessible Opportunities, Facilities and Services (Local Plan Sustainability Objective no. 2)

We support the objective that services, facilities and opportunities should be accessible to the local community and reduce the need to travel. We would expect the Local Plan to include policies that specifically support the development of sustainable transport routes and encourage walking and cycling as realistic alternatives to using the car for access to local amenities. This should also include provision for those using mobility vehicles and children's pushchairs.

3. Accessible Green space, Coast and Water Bodies (Objective no. 6)

This is the objective of most interest to this Forum, and at this stage we suggest the following as general principles that should apply to this objective:

- a. SANGS should be carefully designed to be appealing, attractive and 'safe'-feeling, designed to encourage a range of activities including children's play, dog walking and other informal recreation, in order to offer a viable alternative to the protected areas of the Forest.
- b. There should be no net loss of access network. Existing access should be protected and where possible enhanced, to provide multi-use routes with surfaces appropriate for all users, including those with disabilities and children in pushchairs.
- c. Wherever possible green spaces should be linked by attractive 'multi-use' routes accessible to all (pedestrians, cyclists, users of mobility scooters and pushchairs and, where possible, horse riders).

- d. New development should include walking and cycling links to public transport, including buses as well as railway stations
- e. Routes should be well-signed, with destinations and distances as appropriate.
- f. At a strategic level, policy should support the development of a network of walking and cycling routes that will provide a viable alternative to car use for access to recreation and dog exercise.
- g. Where it is not possible to provide routes connecting to the wider network of countryside, policy should support the introduction of strategically-placed car parks that are linked to that network.
- h. Consideration should be given to the impacts of development within neighbouring authority areas, e.g. Dorset, together with more distant 'feeder' communities such as Basingstoke and other settlements within the M3 corridor.

4. Other plans and strategies

- a. The New Forest Local Plan 2016-36 should reference the **Hampshire Countryside Access Plan 2015-25** (the Rights of Way Improvement Plan or ROWIP for Hampshire - see <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-countryside/countryside-development/access-plans.htm>). This strategic document is the product of extensive research and consultation and describes how rights of way and access to the countryside will be managed within Hampshire over the next decade.
- b. We would also expect to see the New Forest National Park Authority **Recreation Management Strategy** (RMS) referenced in the NFDC Local Plan, given that the RMS covers the whole of the New Forest area and not just the National Park.

The New Forest Access Forum recognises the importance of developing an effective Local Plan that meets National Planning Policy requirements, and looks forward to continuing to participate in the next stages of this consultation.

Yours faithfully,

Ruth Croker

Ruth Croker
Chair, New Forest Access Forum