

Guidance on Access

for Planners and Developers



The New Forest Access Forum (NFAF) is a statutory advisory body under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Under section 94 of CROW, the function of this Local Access Forum is to advise a range of bodies, including local planning authorities, about:

'... the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed.'



This document sets out the Forum's recommendations to planning authorities and developers within the New Forest and wider visitor catchment areas to minimise and mitigate the effects of development on recreational access in the Forest. The guidance identifies actions that are **essential** and others that are **desirable**.

NFAF's area includes all of New Forest National Park and the New Forest District outside the Park boundary.

Introduction

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that:

1. Local planning policies protect and enhance public rights of way and access (paragraph 98);
2. Local authorities seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users of rights of way and other access, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks;
3. Plans and decisions seek to promote sustainable transport (para 102(c)), reduce congestion and emissions (para 103) and create safe, secure and attractive places which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles (para 110(c));
4. Development does not hinder the creation and maintenance of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast (para 168(d)); and
5. Impacts upon biodiversity are minimised and net gains in biodiversity provided (para 170(d)).

A properly-planned and maintained network of rights of way and other non-motorised access can offer significant benefits, both within any new development and in the wider area, including:

- Walking and cycling routes to schools, shops and other local amenities
- Car-free connections to bus stops and railway stations
- Connections to the wider area for people to explore the countryside on foot, cycle or horseback
- Opportunities for local dog-owners to exercise their pets directly from home, away from sensitive wildlife habitats and farm land
- Health, social and environmental benefits associated with access to countryside and the natural environment, active lifestyles and sustainable transport
- Provision of an extensive network of green corridors, which support biodiversity

A network of paths that is well laid out and that fulfils some or all of these adds both to the amenity and to the overall quality of any new development. Within the wider area it may also help reduce road congestion and mitigate impacts on sensitive areas protected for wildlife.

It is therefore important to consider the network beyond any site or administrative boundary so that the impacts and opportunities of development are evaluated over an appropriate range or area.



1. The New Forest - a special place

The New Forest is a unique area, highly valued for its landscape, history, tranquillity, community and wildlife. It is a popular destination for day visitors and holidaymakers, and a highly significant, internationally designated area for nature conservation. The following considerations are therefore particularly important and relevant to this area:

- Good on-site and local greenspace provision outside the designated Special Protected Area and other designated areas.
- Resources for the future management/maintenance of these areas if they are to represent adequate and sustainable alternative provision.
- Health benefits of active travel and recreational access close to dwellings.
- While adequate green space should be provided close to home as much as possible, it is inevitable that the New Forest Crown Lands will continue to draw local residents for recreation; it is therefore important that there are non-motorised routes connecting to this area from population centres wherever possible to reduce car journeys.

KEY POINTS FOR PLANNERS AND DEVELOPERS:

	Essential	Desirable
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) for dog walking and recreation, close to where people are living. • Provide adequate resources for the future maintenance of SANGS and other provision. • Retain on-site rights of way within a suitable green buffer either side of the paths which conserves their character and biodiversity value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide short, multi-user circular access within the development site. • On larger sites consider more detailed provision to attract and retain dog walkers, e.g. enclosed dog walking area, dog activity trail (see Kennel Club/Hampshire County Council guidance- Planning for dog ownership in new developments). • Provide information boards showing circular routes. (Note: some information boards may require local authority consent.) • On larger sites consider providing facilities to educate and inform about the wider area of the Forest. • Seek opportunities for improving the rights of way network, e.g. through diversion, dedication of new routes and upgrading of existing routes.
Avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where it is necessary to divert a right of way to accommodate development, any alternative alignment should follow suitable desire lines and avoid the use of made-up estate roads, with preference given to paths through landscaped or open spaces away from vehicular traffic (Defra Rights of Way Circular 1/09, paragraph 7.8). 	

2. Effects of development within the Region on the New Forest road network

New developments in the New Forest and in the wider visitor catchment area are forecast to result in more than 1 million additional visitor days in the New Forest each year, resulting in:

- Increased traffic, including short journeys for dog-walking, etc;
- Road safety issues for non-motorised users due to the number and speed of vehicles, leading to:
 - Cycling on pavements where a shared user route is not designated, and
 - Fragmentation of the RoW and countryside access network, as the quiet lanes that link different parts of that network become busy with fast-moving traffic.

KEY POINTS FOR PLANNERS AND DEVELOPERS:

	Essential	Desirable
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide multi-user routes for sustainable walking and cycling to schools, employment, local amenities and wider countryside.• Where there are nearby rights of way and other access to greenspace and countryside nearby, provide direct access to them from development sites.• Provide safe/controlled crossing points, bridges or underpasses for non-motorised users on major roads.• Provide pedestrian links to bus stops and walking/cycling links to railway stations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upgrade existing Footpaths to Bridleways in and adjacent to developments, thus providing off-road routes for cyclists and equestrians as well as pedestrians.• Seek opportunities to develop circular routes by creating new paths linking existing ones.• Extend existing routes to provide off-road connections between settlements and other key destinations.• Create new on- and off-road cycle routes that will contribute to a connected cycle network within the New Forest area.
Avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Routing roads over rights of way (see para 7.8 of Defra Rights of Way Circular 1/09).	

3. Impacts of development on the Rights of Way network

New development can affect the rights of way network in a number of ways, including:

- Increased recreational and utility pressure upon the network from new residents and visitors.
- Enclosure of rights of way between new structures and/or boundary features, with potential loss of character, amenity value, and biodiversity.
- Narrowing of paths.

Well-planned development can also provide opportunities to improve the network of public rights of way and other off-road access. Key references in this respect are the Hampshire [Countryside Access Plan](#) (CAP) 2015-25 and the [Wiltshire Countryside Access Improvement Plan](#) (CAIP) 2015-25. The Rights of Way Improvement Plans for Hampshire and Wiltshire, these two documents set out the Councils' policies for improving rights of way in their area.

KEY POINTS FOR PLANNERS AND DEVELOPERS:

	Essential	Desirable
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult Hampshire County Council and/or Wiltshire Council rights of way teams (as the Highway Authorities for Public Rights of Way) at an early stage in site masterplanning.• Seek opportunities to improve the rights of way network (in line with the Hampshire CAP and Wiltshire CAIP) in and around the new development, in order to optimise provision for new and existing residents.• Conduct early consultation with right of way user groups on any proposals which may affect rights of way.• Improve surfacing of rights of way close to settlements and in other areas of heavy use. (Note: surfacing must be approved by the rights of way team and may also require planning consent.)• Ensure that new and improved access is accessible to all (including baby buggies and mobility scooters).• Make sure that paths are wide enough to accommodate the users for whom they are designed.• Identify and allocate resources for future maintenance of paths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involve local groups in maintaining access areas and rights of way using grant funding (e.g. Rural Communities Fund: Countryside Access) to get equipment and surface/drainage improvements.
Avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enclosing paths on two sides between substantial structures and boundary features.	

Useful references

National Planning Policy Framework

Sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

Planning for dog ownership in new developments

Access and greenspace design guidance for planners and developers, published by Hampshire County Council in partnership with the Kennel Club, East Hampshire District Council and Bordon Eco-Town.

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/ccbs/countryside/planningfordogownership.pdf>

Defra Rights of Way Circular 1/09

Gives advice to local authorities on recording, managing and maintaining, protecting and changing public rights of way.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rights-of-way-circular-1-09

Rural Communities Fund: Countryside Access

Funding scheme that supports Parish councils, groups and organisations in rural Hampshire and small market towns, aiming to build community resilience and encourage self-help.

www3.hants.gov.uk/grants/ccbs-grants/rural-communities-fund.htm

Hampshire Countryside Access Plan 2015-25

Describes how rights of way and access to the countryside in Hampshire will be managed and improved over the coming years.

www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/countryside/accessplan

Wiltshire Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2015-25

Sets out Wiltshire Council's proposals for managing and improving access to the countryside.

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/recreation-rights-of-way

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