

Adopted Local Plan - New Forest

The New Forest

Objective: To maintain and enhance the traditional character of the New Forest through planning policy whilst ensuring the social and economic well-being of all those who live and work in the area.

8.1

The New Forest was created in around 1079 as a Royal Forest and remains today one of the largest areas of mainly unenclosed land in the south of England. Its importance as a whole rests in large part on its historic importance, on its outstanding range of wildlife habitats which make it of international significance for nature conservation, on the unique combination of landscape types which it contains, and on its aesthetic appeal and suitability for countryside recreation. The New Forest is a highly varied landscape and includes old woodlands, timber plantations of many different types, extensive tracts of heathland and bog, grassy lawns, enclosed farmland, large estates, coastal land and a number of different villages and small towns. Many of these types of landscape are not confined to the area within the Perambulation. This is an administrative and management boundary within which the Verderer's bylaws apply, rather than a landscape boundary. The Perambulation has never been the boundary of the New Forest system in its entirety and, until recently, the increasing tendency to use it as a boundary for the purposes of operating policies for which it was neither conceived nor intended, meant that the vulnerable and important areas around the Perambulation of the Forest were coming under increasing pressure from development.

8.2

In order to give recognition and protection to this wider area, in 1985, New Forest District Council proposed a draft designation of approximately 200 sq. miles within their District as the New Forest Heritage Area, to which particular policies would apply. This area has subsequently been extended by New Forest District Council and has been refined as Local Plans covering the area have been prepared. The importance of the New Forest was subsequently recognised by Salisbury District Council and Test Valley Borough Council with a boundary for the New Forest Heritage Area being defined through respective Local Plans.

8.3

The Government recognises that the New Forest is a unique area and, whilst not giving the area the same status as a National Park, intends to apply the same planning policies to the wider New Forest area as would apply if that area were a national park. The new planning regime will apply to the definition of the NFHA as established through Local Plans. In

Salisbury District the established boundary is as shown on the Proposals Map. The District Council supports the Government's proposals for the future of the New Forest and this is reflected in the policies for the New Forest contained within this Local Plan. For the purposes of this Local Plan the term "New Forest" means the New Forest Heritage Area.

Implications for Development

8.4

The District Council recognises the importance of the New Forest and the need to ensure the long-term protection of the system in its entirety. The New Forest is an area within which rigorous restraint policies apply to protect its character. The main aims of the policies are to resist all activities which could have an adverse effect on the overall character, natural beauty, ecology, historic importance or functioning of the New Forest whilst allowing for limited development to sustain the local economy. While individual developments may have relatively little impact, the cumulative effects of such development could result in harm to the Forest over time and this is taken into account in framing the Local Plan policies. In addition to the specific New Forest policies which are set out at the end of this chapter, a number of general policies apply within the area. In all cases the general principle of protecting the New Forest, which is embodied in policy HA1, will apply.

Policy HA1

Housing

8.5

The housing policies aim to protect the New Forest from additional pressures arising from increases in the resident population and the amount of built development, while recognising the need for some development, particularly to meet essential local needs. Housing Policy Areas identify where new residential development will be considered in the Forest villages. Within these areas however development will be limited. The restriction of infilling, subdivision and change of use to a net increase of only one dwelling is necessary to protect the character of the villages and to protect the New Forest from cumulative additional pressures arising from residential development. The extent of a residential curtilage will be taken to be as of September 1993 when the South Eastern Parishes Local Plan was adopted. Where a site or building is reasonably capable of being developed or redeveloped to provide more than a single new dwelling, such a site should normally be developed in accordance with policy H26 – local needs affordable housing. The additional considerations recognise the importance of ensuring that any

development is compatible with the existing, and that important open areas and features which contribute towards the character of the area are not eroded.

Policy HA2

8.6

Policy HA3 seeks to assist commoners in obtaining housing from which to exercise their commoning rights. In particular the policy seeks to assist young commoners who wish to continue their family's commoning traditions but who, on wishing to set up home themselves, are unable to purchase a dwelling from which they can continue commoning. The New Forest Commoning Trust has been set up specifically to support the implementation of this policy, and the Council will have regard to whether the proposal for a commoner's dwelling is supported by the Trust.

Policy HA3

8.7

A proposal by an applicant Commoner who already owns or has secure occupation of a dwelling which is suitably located for the purpose of commoning is unlikely to meet the terms of policy HA3. Applicants whose proposals are acceptable in principle are advised to discuss their detailed proposals – the size, siting and design of the proposed dwelling – with the Local Planning Authority. Commoners' dwellings should be appropriate to the landscape of the New Forest while providing for modern habitable requirements. Where a case can be made for permitting a commoner's dwelling, proposals involving the re-uses of redundant agricultural buildings will be encouraged.

8.8

In order to guarantee the long-term availability of dwellings built under this policy, applicants will be required to enter into legal agreements. The New Forest Commoning Trust have devised an agreement which is acceptable to the Local Planning Authority, further details of which are available upon request. In implementing this policy, the Local Planning Authority will also have regard to the potential impact of such development proposals upon the environment of the New Forest and to the criteria in policy HA1 and other relevant policies.

8.9

An important element of the traditional character of the New Forest is the built environment and the way in which this relates to the natural landscape of the Forest. The cumulative impact of proposals to replace traditional dwellings, if not carefully controlled, could lead in the long-term

to the erosion of the character of the area. Whilst there may be some scope for a modest increase in size of a replacement dwelling, it is important that its design reflects traditional New Forest character. As a general guide a replacement dwelling which is more than 30% of the original dwelling is unlikely to be acceptable unless the dwelling being replaced was extremely small and the new dwelling would reflect the character of traditional forest dwellings in the locality.

Policy HA4

8.10

Extensions to dwellings in the New Forest outside the defined villages will be considered under policy H31. In view of the importance of maintaining the character of the area, as with replacement dwellings, an extension of more than 30% of the original dwelling is unlikely to be acceptable due to its impact on the character of the surrounding area. A larger extension may be acceptable where a property is particularly small and the extension is required to bring it up to modern standards.

Employment

8.11

The main area of employment development within the New Forest in Salisbury District is at Giles Lane, situated in open countryside approximately half a mile north of Landford. Based in a disused sandpit, the use of the site for industrial purposes dates from the end of the 2nd World War, although the first rationalisation of the planning situation came in 1978 when the District Council resolved to grant Established Use Certificates on a number of buildings. The site is considered to perform a useful function as a base for industries needing low-cost premises. However, in view of its location within an area of general restraint, its substandard access and increasing emphasis on locating new development in sustainable locations readily accessible by means of transport other than the private car, the District Council is of the view that there is only limited potential for additional development within the parameters of policy HA6.

8.12

In order to reconcile the District Council's principles of restricting activities which could have an adverse impact on the New Forest with the need to maintain the local economy, small scale business uses will normally be permitted within the settlements of Landford, Lover, Nomansland and Redlynch, subject to a number of criteria. Elsewhere in the area, new

business development will be restricted to the conversion of existing buildings.

Policy HA5

8.13

The limited extension or redevelopment of existing business premises will normally be allowed provided that it is necessary for the efficient operation of the existing business and takes place within existing site boundaries.

Policy HA6

Change of Use of Buildings

8.14

As an exception to the general thrust of the Local Plan's countryside policies, and in line with Government advice, the conversion of buildings in the countryside to employment uses is considered acceptable, although the need to protect the quality of the rural environment and the character of traditional farm buildings is recognised. The intention is to put to beneficial use buildings that would otherwise fall into disrepair and be lost. Whilst the buildings should, in terms of their appearance, be worthy of retention and the proposed conversion should not perpetuate a rural eyesore, it is not necessary for the buildings to be of particular architectural or historic interest. There is no limitation upon the type of employment activity to be undertaken in such a converted building, save that the requirements of the policy are met and that the scale and type of operation is appropriate to the character of the building and compatible with the surrounding rural area. Where agricultural buildings are involved the Local Planning Authority will wish to be satisfied that the permitted development rights have not been abused. In addition, in view of the need to support commoning in the New Forest, applicants will be expected to show that the buildings are redundant in terms of their re-use for agricultural purposes within the New Forest.

Policy HA7

Recreation and Tourism

8.15

The New Forest is subject to increasing pressure from visitors and recreational activities which have a detrimental effect on the ecology and landscape of the area. The development of recreational facilities such as golf courses would attract additional visitors to the area, would have a detrimental effect on the natural beauty of the area and may lead to the loss of back up grazing land. The Local Plan therefore strictly limits all

new recreational activities within the New Forest. The only exceptions to this will be if the recreation facility is to serve local needs or will not increase the number of visitors to the New Forest, for example, a village hall, childrens play area, or if a facility is needed as part of a management initiative for the New Forest, for example, a small car park or interpretation centre.

Policies HA8, HA9 & HA10

8.16

Horse riding is a popular activity in the New Forest, but it is recognised that the Forest is suffering from problems of erosion caused by horse riding. The Local Plan seeks to prevent any increase in the number and size of riding establishments using or likely to use the New Forest. In addition to commercial establishments, a number of households keep horses and ponies for their own private recreational use. The Report of the New Forest Review Group recommended the adoption of a specific policy on shelters and private stabling in order to ensure that where accepted in principle, they are acceptable within the landscape. The District Council recognises the need to provide suitable shelters for these animals, but will ensure that they are designed and sited to have minimum impact on the New Forest and on any neighbouring property.

Policies HA11 & HA12

8.17

The value of tourism to the local economy is recognised by the District Council, but this does have to be reconciled with protecting the natural beauty of the Forest. Due to the increasing pressures on the New Forest from visitors, new tourist attractions will not be allowed within the Heritage Area. For the same reasons, new hotels or the change of use of existing buildings to tourist accommodation will not be acceptable. However, provision is made for minor extensions to existing premises in order for a better quality of service to be provided, for example, en-suite facilities. Similarly because of the need for restraint on the number of visitors and in view of the visual impact of caravans in the countryside, new sites for static caravans, holiday chalets, touring caravans and tents will not be permitted in the New Forest. Beyond the New Forest, limited provision is made for new recreational/tourist activities which may assist in drawing pressures off the Forest.

Policies HA13, HA14, HA15 & HA16

Transport

8.18

Proposals for traffic management in the New Forest are contained in the Transportation Strategy for the New Forest produced by Hampshire County Council. The objectives of the strategy include the introduction of a variety of initiatives to reduce the need to travel by car, improve road safety, and reduce undesirable impacts of traffic on wildlife and the unique Forest environment. Salisbury District Council supports the strategy's objectives and will consider complimentary measures within Wiltshire, including improved cycle routes into the Forest which link with the Forestry Commission's cycle network on gravel tracks.

Minerals and Waste

8.19

The control of mineral extraction and waste disposal is the responsibility of Wiltshire County Council and as such this Local Plan cannot contain policies relating to these types of development. However, the District Council is of the view that such proposals are unsuitable in the New Forest and that there should be a strong presumption against mineral extraction, oil and gas exploration, and sites for waste disposal in the New Forest. The District Council will support any such restrictions in Wiltshire County Council's Minerals and Waste Local Plans.