

Sustainability Appraisal for the New Forest National Park Local Plan Review

SA Report to accompany the Regulation 18
version of the Local Plan Review

New Forest National Park Authority

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Quality Information

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Cover Image: Disused Brockenhurst to Ringwood railway, northeast of Holmsley Inclosure

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Non-technical summary

The New Forest Local Plan Review

AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the New Forest National Park Authority's Local Plan Review.

The Local Plan Review for the New Forest National Park will include planning policies that address the strategic priorities for the area, covering a diverse range of topics including climate change, housing, economy, infrastructure, biodiversity, and transport.

The Local Plan Review, which will replace the existing and adopted policies set out in the current adopted Local Plan (2016-2036) (adopted August 2019), will be prepared to complement and reinforce the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan. It will also be prepared in recognition of the statutory purposes and duty as applied to National Park Authorities.

What is Sustainability Appraisal?

SA is a mechanism for assessing and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising its contribution to sustainable development.

SA of Local Plans is a legal requirement and is undertaken in line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations').

This SA Report

This SA Report accompanies the current version of the draft Local Plan Review for consultation (*New Forest National Park Local Plan Review 2024 - 2043: Regulation 18 (Part 2) Consultation*).

It presents:

- An overview of the stages undertaken to date for the SA, including scoping
- An assessment of a series of growth strategy options, which have been assessed as reasonable alternatives
- An assessment of the latest version of the draft Local Plan Review
- Next steps for the SA process.

What is the scope of the SA?

The scope of the SA was established in mid-2025 and provides the basis for the SA process. It was presented in a Scoping Report which underwent consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England in August 2025 for a period of five weeks.

The Scoping Report presented the following information:

- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the Local Plan Review
- Baseline data against which the Local Plan Review can be assessed
- The key sustainability issues for the Local Plan Review
- An ‘SA Framework’ of objectives and assessment questions against which the Local Plan Review can be assessed.

Following the receipt of the responses received at scoping consultation, the Scoping Report was reviewed and updated. The scoping responses (along with comments on how these have been considered and addressed through the SA process) are presented in Appendix A in the main body of the SA Report.

The scope of the SA is summarised by a series of SA objectives that form the structure for the assessment, under nine SA ‘themes’. These are accompanied by a series of assessment questions. Each option and proposal in the plan identified for SA has been assessed against each of these SA objectives/assessment questions.

The SA Themes and SA Objectives are presented below. The main body of the SA Report (Chapter 2) includes the full SA framework including the assessment questions.

Table NTS1: SA Themes and SA Objectives

SA Theme	SA Objective
Air, Soil and Water Resources	To protect and improve air quality, soil condition, and water resources by minimising pollution, managing sustainable use of natural resources, and reducing risks from contamination and coastal erosion.
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Maintain and enhance the extent and quality of designated sites for biodiversity conservation, habitats, geology, and biodiversity networks within and surrounding the National Park.
Climate Change	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience by supporting a low-carbon economy, promoting energy efficiency and renewables, and adapting land use and infrastructure to future climate risks.

SA Theme	SA Objective
Communities, Health and Wellbeing	Support healthy, inclusive, and safe communities by improving access to services, promoting wellbeing for all ages, and reducing inequalities related to age, disability, deprivation, and rural isolation.
Economy and Employment	Support a productive, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all.
Historic Environment	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the National Park.
Housing	Provide for the full range of housing needs and maximise delivery of affordable housing.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape of the National Park and surrounding National Landscapes.
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

Appraisal of reasonable alternatives

A key requirement of the SEA Regulations is the appraisal of ‘reasonable alternatives’.

To support the development of the preferred approach for the emerging Local Plan Review (i.e., the spatial strategy), the SA process has considered a range of growth strategy options as reasonable alternatives. This is with a view to understanding the relative sustainability merits of different potential spatial strategies for the Local Plan Review. These growth strategy options have been developed based on strategic variables associated with the following two components:

- Different scales of growth; and
- Different locations of growth.

A discussion of these strategic variables is set out within Chapter 4 of the main body of the SA Report.

Growth strategy options

An overview of the growth strategy options considered through the SA process is presented in Table NTS1 below. A more detailed breakdown of the spatial distribution of housing represented by each option, including in relation to key locations in the National Park, is presented in Table 4-2 and subsequently mapped in Figures 4-1 and 4-2 in the main body of the SA Report.

Table NTS2: Growth strategy options considered as reasonable alternatives

Growth strategy option	Indicative housing delivery and rationale
<p>Option A:</p> <p>Focus development on four existing defined villages with settlement boundaries</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 780 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>It comprises the current Local Plan approach, with site allocations taking place adjacent to settlement boundaries in the four existing defined villages (Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway).</p>
<p>Option B:</p> <p>Existing defined villages and newly defined villages based on service provision</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 900 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>It would expand the settlement hierarchy through including Landford/Nomansland, Redlynch and Bartley/Cadnam within the defined villages. Allocations would take place adjacent to settlement boundaries.</p>
<p>Option C:</p> <p>Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 940 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>As Option B, but with the inclusion of other settlements for potential allocations, including smaller hamlets.</p>
<p>Option D:</p> <p>Full dispersal with no settlement hierarchy</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 980 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>It would disperse growth across the National Park without the application of a settlement hierarchy. This would enable development in villages and hamlets across the National Park, potentially guided by criteria-based policies, but with no settlement hierarchy to guide/focus development spatially.</p>
<p>Option E:</p> <p>Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 1,140 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>As Option C, plus the allocation of some land around the periphery of the National Park on sites that relate to settlements outside of the National Park (e.g. the Waterside, Lymington, New Milton).</p>

Growth strategy option	Indicative housing delivery and rationale
<p>Option F:</p> <p>Focus development solely around the periphery of the National Park, adjacent to settlements outside the National Park boundary</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 860 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>It would focus growth on sites that relate to settlements outside of the National Park, and not involve any site allocations (or a defined settlement hierarchy) within the main villages of the National Park.</p>
<p>Option G:</p> <p>Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park, with new or expanded settlement</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 1,540 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>It would include the scenarios presented under Options A-G, plus a major development focused on a new or expanded settlement. This would engage the National Planning Policy Framework's 'major development test' currently set out in paragraph 190 of the Framework</p>

Appraisal of growth strategy options

Summary appraisal findings for the established growth strategy options are presented below by SA Theme. The detailed narrative explaining these findings is presented in Chapter 5 of the SA Report.

Air, Soil and Water Resources

The most favourable option for the Air, Soil and Water Resources SA theme is Option A, which delivers the lowest level of growth and concentrates development around existing defined villages. This approach minimises land disturbance, reduces risks of water pollution, and helps maintain air quality by limiting traffic increases and avoiding sensitive or remote locations. Option F also performs well, focusing growth on the periphery of the National Park in accessible locations with existing infrastructure. Options B and C introduce a broader footprint, which increases risks but can be mitigated through careful site selection. In contrast, Option D and Option G perform least favourably. Option D disperses development across the National Park without spatial control, increasing risks to soil profiles, watercourses, and air quality. Option G, which includes a major new or expanded settlement, poses significant risks due to the scale of land clearance, infrastructure development, and long-term emissions.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

In relation to the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SA theme, the most favourable options are Option A and Option F, which deliver the lowest rates of housing growth. Option F avoids development within the central areas of the National Park and benefits from strategic planning near its periphery, while Option A limits land take and recreational pressure through a low delivery rate and delivering houses near to the

main settlements. Options B, C, and E introduce greater housing numbers, and more spatial spread, increasing risks of habitat fragmentation and disturbance, particularly in the smaller settlements (associated with Options C and E) or ecologically linked areas. Option D and Option G perform least favourably. Option D disperses development without a guiding hierarchy, increasing the likelihood of encroachment into areas with significant biodiversity sensitivities. Option G, due to its scale and intensity, poses the greatest risk of harm to ecological networks and designated sites.

Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)

The most favourable option for the Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) SA theme is Option A, which supports compact growth, lower emissions, and better alignment with existing infrastructure and flood risk mapping. Option F also ranks favourably due to its strategic focus towards areas on the National Park's boundary and alignment with commuting patterns. Option B perform moderately, while Options C and E spread impacts more widely. Option G offers potential for climate-positive design but carries high risks due to its scale. Option D performs least favourably due to its lack of spatial control and reduced capacity for coordinated adaptation.

Communities, Health and Wellbeing

The most favourable option for the Communities, Health and Wellbeing SA theme is Option E, which supports both the National Park's communities and adjacent communities, whilst helping to deliver housing provision across a wider area. Option B offers moderate benefits by supporting housing in main settlements and additional villages. Option C delivers slightly more housing but faces challenges integrating development in hamlets, which may affect cohesion and access to services. Option F performs well in some respects, providing modest growth near the National Park boundary with good connectivity to external services, helping reduce isolation and improve access to facilities. Option G offers the highest level of housing delivery and the potential to support significant new infrastructure. However, the scale of growth proposed by the option has the potential to undermine health and wellbeing, including through undermining the second statutory purpose of the National Park. Option A, while reinforcing existing communities and supporting walkability, ranks lower due to its limited housing delivery and reduced capacity to meet future needs. Option D performs least favourably, with its dispersed approach risking inefficient service provision and weakening community cohesion.

Economy and Employment

The most favourable option for the Economy and Employment SA theme is Option E, which offers strong potential for economic growth by combining development in main settlements, additional villages, and sites near the National Park boundary. This approach supports local economies while improving access to regional employment hubs and enabling more efficient infrastructure investment. Options B and C also rank favourably, as they reinforce existing settlements and extend benefits to smaller communities. Option G performs well in terms of economic potential due to its scale and ability to deliver infrastructure and employment opportunities, but also has the potential for adverse effects on the rural and visitor economy through impacts on the National Park's special qualities. Option F performs moderately well by improving access to regional employment hubs but offers limited benefits to the main settlements in the National Park. Option A supports local services in main settlements but limits opportunities for broader economic expansion. Option D

performs least favourably due to its lack of strategic focus and potential to undermine infrastructure investment.

Historic Environment

The most favourable option for the Historic Environment SA theme is Option A, which delivers the lowest growth and benefits from existing conservation protections in the main settlements where heritage constraints can be managed. Option F also ranks favourably, with a low rate of delivery, focused in areas by the National Park's boundary. Options B and C follow, introducing greater risk to historic assets from the higher levels of growth. Option D performs least favourably due to its lack of spatial control and increased likelihood of encroachment into sensitive historic landscapes. Option G carries significant risk due to its scale, although mitigation may be possible through sensitive design. In this respect Option G has the potential to enhance local historic assets, if designed and located appropriately.

Housing

The most favourable option for Housing SA theme is Option G, which delivers the highest level of housing and has the largest potential to meet local needs, including affordable and family housing. Options E, C, and B also rank favourably, offering higher delivery and better access to services. Option F performs moderately, with good connectivity but lower overall delivery. Option A performs less well due to limited housing provision, and Option D ranks least favourably due to inefficiency and lack of strategic focus.

Landscape

The most favourable option for the Landscape SA theme is Option A, which concentrates development around existing settlements, minimising intrusion into open countryside and preserving the National Park's visual coherence. This approach helps safeguard the special qualities of the National Park, including its sense of tranquillity and scenic beauty. Option B also ranks favourably, though it introduces greater risks of visual intrusion. Options C and D increase fragmentation and loss of tranquillity due to their dispersed nature, with potential adverse effects on the National Park's special qualities. Option E creates cumulative impacts across broad areas of the National Park. Option F avoids direct impacts on central landscapes but requires careful design to protect transitional views and ensure the integrity of the National Park's special qualities is maintained. Option G performs least favourably due to its scale and transformative impacts on landscape character, which could significantly undermine the special qualities that define the National Park.

Transport

The more favourable options for the Transport SA theme are Options A and F. In this respect Option A supports compact growth and sustainable travel through proximity to existing infrastructure and services, and Option F also ranks favourably, benefiting from good access to regional transport networks and reduced car dependency. Options B and C perform moderately, with increased reliance on private vehicles in smaller settlements. Option E spreads impacts more widely, increasing overall traffic movements. Option D performs least favourably due to its dispersed nature and lack of support for sustainable transport. While Option G is likely to result in the highest increase in traffic flows due to its overall scale of growth, it also presents increased

opportunities to deliver new transport infrastructure that could help manage movement and support more sustainable travel patterns.

Appraisal of growth strategy options: conclusions

Overall, the appraisal indicates that each spatial option presents a distinct set of strengths and weaknesses across the SA themes.

Option A generally performs well for environmental themes, including air, soil, and water resources, due to its restrained level of growth and concentration around existing defined villages. However, its limited growth and distribution have the potential to limit opportunities for meeting localised housing needs and supporting community vitality across the National Park.

Option B offers a broader spatial footprint and performs well across most themes. While this approach introduces some additional risks to soil and water resources compared to Option A, its focus on service-based settlements helps support accessibility and infrastructure provision, with benefits in relation to social and economic objectives. **Option C** performs similarly but includes additional housing delivery in smaller hamlets, which may increase infrastructure requirements and reduce efficiency in service delivery.

Option D disperses development without a settlement hierarchy, which increases infrastructure demands and environmental risks while offering limited strategic benefits. Option D performs poorly across all the SA themes.

Option E extends development to a wider range of settlements, including peripheral areas adjoining the National Park boundary. This provides flexibility for housing delivery but amplifies environmental risks and may increase reliance on private vehicles.

Option F performs well for environmental protection by focusing growth on the National Park's boundary, where existing infrastructure reduces potential impacts. Development under this option would also avoid some key sensitive areas in the National Park; however, it would place additional environmental pressures on the fringes of the National Park. In addition, more limited housing delivery through this option may limit economic benefits, including in key 'core' parts of the National Park.

Option G, which includes a major new or expanded settlement, and increases growth across the National Park, poses significant challenges due to the scale of land clearance, infrastructure development, and long-term emissions, although it could deliver substantial housing numbers and associated economic benefits. Overall taking forward the options would be likely to significantly undermine the purposes, duty and special qualities of the National Park.

Choice of approach taken forward for the Local Plan Review's growth strategy

The National Park Authority have chosen to proceed with Option B as the preferred spatial strategy for the Local Plan. This decision reflects a careful balance between meeting housing and community needs and protecting the New Forest's nationally important landscape and habitats.

Option B focuses the majority of planned new development around the larger villages of the National Park, allowing for modest, managed growth that respects the

National Park's sensitive environment and reinforces established communities. This approach is considered the most appropriate in light of the National Park's statutory purposes and its responsibility to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage, while promoting public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. It also reflects the Authority's statutory duty to foster the socio-economic well-being of local communities within the National Park. Option B broadens the number of existing 'defined villages' from 4 villages to 7 and will allow more of the identified housing arising from communities within the National Park to be met, while ensuring that development is spatially focused towards the most sustainable villages.

By avoiding the options that includes more dispersed or larger-scale development, Option B helps minimise impacts on biodiversity, landscape character, tranquillity, and the historic environment. It also supports sustainable transport and infrastructure planning, while maintaining the integrity of the National Park's ecological networks and cultural traditions. Option B scores reasonably well across the broad range of SA themes, compared to other options that are less balanced in terms of impacts.

In choosing Option B, the Authority have prioritised a strategy that is locally responsive, environmentally responsible, and consistent with the long-term stewardship of the New Forest National Park. Option B reinforces the role of existing 'defined' settlements and extends the benefits to other villages that have a basic range of services. The alternative option of more dispersed development would have greater landscape impacts; and the option of focusing development to the periphery of the National Park would not support the socio-economic well-being of communities within the National Park.

Appraisal of the current version of the Local Plan Review

Chapter 6 of the SA Report presents an appraisal of the latest version of the draft Local Plan Review, as currently consulted on under Regulation 18 of the Planning Regulations. A series of narratives are presented under each SA theme, providing a commentary on the National Park-wide policy provisions, cumulative effects, and overall conclusions. The appraisal identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' of the plan on the baseline, drawing on the SA objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework.

Prior to sending across the final Local Plan Review Regulation 18 draft, New Forest National Park Authority provided a full set of draft policies for the SA to review. These policies formed the basis for an iterative appraisal process, through which initial assessments informed feedback on potential sustainability issues. Following the appraisal of these draft policies, a series of recommendations were suggested for the purposes of informing the ongoing development of the draft policies. This feedback supported the refinement of policies, ensuring that sustainability considerations were embedded throughout the preparation of the Local Plan Review.

The draft plan as consulted on was then appraised. The following overview summaries the appraisal findings.

Air, Soil and Water Resources

Overall, mixed effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Air, Soil and Water Resources SA theme. Moderate (significant) medium-to-long-term beneficial effects are anticipated through integrated sustainable design

principles, nature-based solutions, and strong environmental safeguards. However, there remains potential for minor localised short-to-long-term adverse effects where development increases pressure on sensitive water catchments or leads to increased emissions during construction and operation.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Overall, mixed effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SA theme. Significant long-term beneficial effects are anticipated through biodiversity net gain requirements, protection and enhancement of designated sites, and promotion of green infrastructure. Potential minor localised short-to-long-term adverse effects from development pressure and recreational impacts remain, but these are generally well mitigated through policy safeguards and strategic mitigation schemes.

Climate Change

Overall, mixed effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Climate Change SA theme. Major (significant) long-term positive effects are anticipated by supporting sustainable construction, provision of renewable energy, management of flood risk, and encouragement of sustainable transport. Some minor localised short-to-long-term moderate adverse effects may arise from new development; however, these are expected to be effectively managed through embedded mitigation measures and strategic policy safeguards.

Communities, Health, and Wellbeing

Overall, mixed effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Communities, Health, and Wellbeing SA theme. Major (significant) long-term beneficial effects are anticipated through the delivery of housing, transport infrastructure, green infrastructure, and community facility policies. However, there is potential for minor adverse effects from cumulative pressures resulting from housing growth and tourism, which will require careful monitoring and mitigation.

Economy and Employment

Overall, the Local Plan Review is expected to deliver moderate (not significant) beneficial effects in relation to the Economy and Employment SA theme. This is achieved by supporting a diverse and resilient rural economy through policies that enable appropriately scaled development, protect traditional land-based practices, and promote sustainable tourism and retail.

Historic Environment

Overall, significant medium-to-long-term beneficial effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Historic Environment SA theme. This is achieved through strong heritage and design policies, site-specific requirements, and measures supporting landscape and local distinctiveness.

Housing

Overall, major (significant) long-term beneficial effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Housing SA theme. This is achieved by providing dwellings that address local housing needs (including affordable and specialist provision), while ensuring high-quality design and sustainable construction. Policies also direct housing to appropriate locations, avoid areas at risk, and apply strict controls on size and extensions, helping to safeguard the National Park's special qualities.

Landscape

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 some site allocations and small-scale development, but these should be mitigated through strict controls on scale, siting, and design.

Transport

Overall, mixed effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Transport SA theme. Major (significant) medium-to-long-term beneficial effects on transport in the National Park through the promotion of active travel, public transport, and appropriately locating development close to existing transport links. Some minor medium-to-long-term adverse effects are also anticipated, particularly where development may increase traffic in sensitive areas, although these are expected to be mitigated through transport assessments, sustainable design measures, and limits on the scale of development.

Cumulative effects

Cumulative effects occur from the combined impacts of policies and proposals on specific areas or sensitive receptors. In the context of the SA, cumulative effects can arise as a result of the in-combination effects of a plan's policies and proposals and can also result from the combined impacts of a plan with impacts of another plan, or the 'inter-plan' effects.

For the Local Plan Review, cross-boundary effects are particularly relevant in relation to water and biodiversity. The National Park shares hydrological catchments and ecological networks with neighbouring areas, and development within its boundaries can have wider hydrological impacts. Such effects are mitigated by requiring developments to align with regional plans in Policy DP8.

Recreational pressures on internationally designated sites (SACs, SPAs, Ramsar) also require strategic mitigation. Through SP11, the Local Plan Review aligns with the New Forest Habitat Mitigation Scheme and Bird Aware Solent, which will ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations and help to manage cumulative visitor impacts.

The Local Plan Review also complements the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan, particularly in its focus on tranquillity, landscape character, and sustainable tourism. Sub-regional transport strategies and national frameworks such as the NPPF and Environment Act 2021 further reinforce the Local Plan Review's direction, especially in relation to climate change and biodiversity net gain.

In the wider area surrounding the National Park, neighbouring authorities such as New Forest District Council are progressing new Local Plans that include higher levels of housing growth than those proposed in the Local Plan Review. The adopted Local Plan (2016-2036) for the New Forest District (outside the National Park) sets a target of 10,420 dwellings, with stepped delivery increasing to 700 dwellings per annum from 2026 onwards. However, recent updates to national planning policy have increased the standard method housing need to 1,511 dwellings per annum, indicating that delivery figures for the district will rise in future.

These proposals, alongside other strategic plans such as neighbourhood plans and infrastructure improvements, have the potential to interact with development in the

National Park. In particular, cross-boundary pressures may arise in relation to water resources, biodiversity, transport, and recreational impacts. The Local Plan Review addresses these through alignment with regional strategies (for example, DP8), strategic mitigation (for example, SP11), and cooperation with neighbouring authorities.

Local Plans currently being prepared by councils bordering the National Park (including Test Valley, Wiltshire, Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and Southampton) are expected to propose significant levels of housing and employment growth. These plans may interact with development in the National Park, particularly through shared ecological networks, transport corridors, and recreational destinations.

Strategic infrastructure projects in the wider region also have potential in-combination effects. These include the New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which proposes expanded active travel networks across the National Park and surrounding areas.

Ongoing cooperation with neighbouring authorities will be important to manage housing need, infrastructure, and ecological networks. Provided these relationships are maintained, no significant adverse in-combination effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review.

Next steps

This SA Report accompanies the current Regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan Review (*'New Forest National Park Local Plan Review 2024 - 2043: Regulation 18 (Part 2) Consultation'*).

Following the receipt of responses on this Regulation 18 consultation, the Local Plan Review will be updated and released by the New Forest National Park Authority for Regulation 19 consultation with a full SA Report.

Regulation 19 consultation on the proposed submission version of the Local Plan Review is anticipated to take place in Summer 2026.

Once the period for representations on the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review document / SA Report has finished, the main issues raised will be identified and summarised by the National Park Authority, which will then consider whether, in light of representations received, the plan can still be deemed 'sound'. If this is the case, the Local Plan Review will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination, alongside a statement setting out the main issues raised during the consultation. The National Park Authority will also submit the SA Report alongside it. This is anticipated to take place in December 2026.

At Examination, the Inspector(s) will consider representations (alongside the SA Report) before then reporting back. If the Inspector identifies the need for modifications to the Local Plan, these will be prepared (and undergo SA) and will then be subject to consultation (with an SA Report Addendum published alongside).

Once found to be 'sound', the Local Plan Review will be formally adopted by the New Forest National Park Authority. At the time of adoption, an SA 'Adoption Statement' must be published that sets out (amongst other elements) 'the measures decided concerning monitoring the Plan'.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of New Forest National Park Authority's Local Plan Review (henceforth known as the 'Local Plan Review').
- 1.1.2. The Local Plan Review is being prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004¹, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012,² and the Environment Act 1995.³ These acts and regulations provide the legal framework for local planning authorities covering National Parks in England to develop and implement their local plans.
- 1.1.3. New Forest National Park Authority is the planning authority for the National Park. This is a separate planning authority to New Forest District Council, who are the planning authority for the parts of New Forest district that fall outside of the National Park.

1.2. New Forest National Park

- 1.2.1. New Forest National Park (henceforth known as 'the National Park'), located in south-west Hampshire and a small part of Wiltshire, is one of 15 National Parks in the UK. The National Park boundary is depicted in **Figure 1-1**.
- 1.2.2. National Parks are designated to protect and celebrate areas of outstanding natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage. Their 'special qualities' are the unique features and characteristics that make each National Park distinctive and valuable.

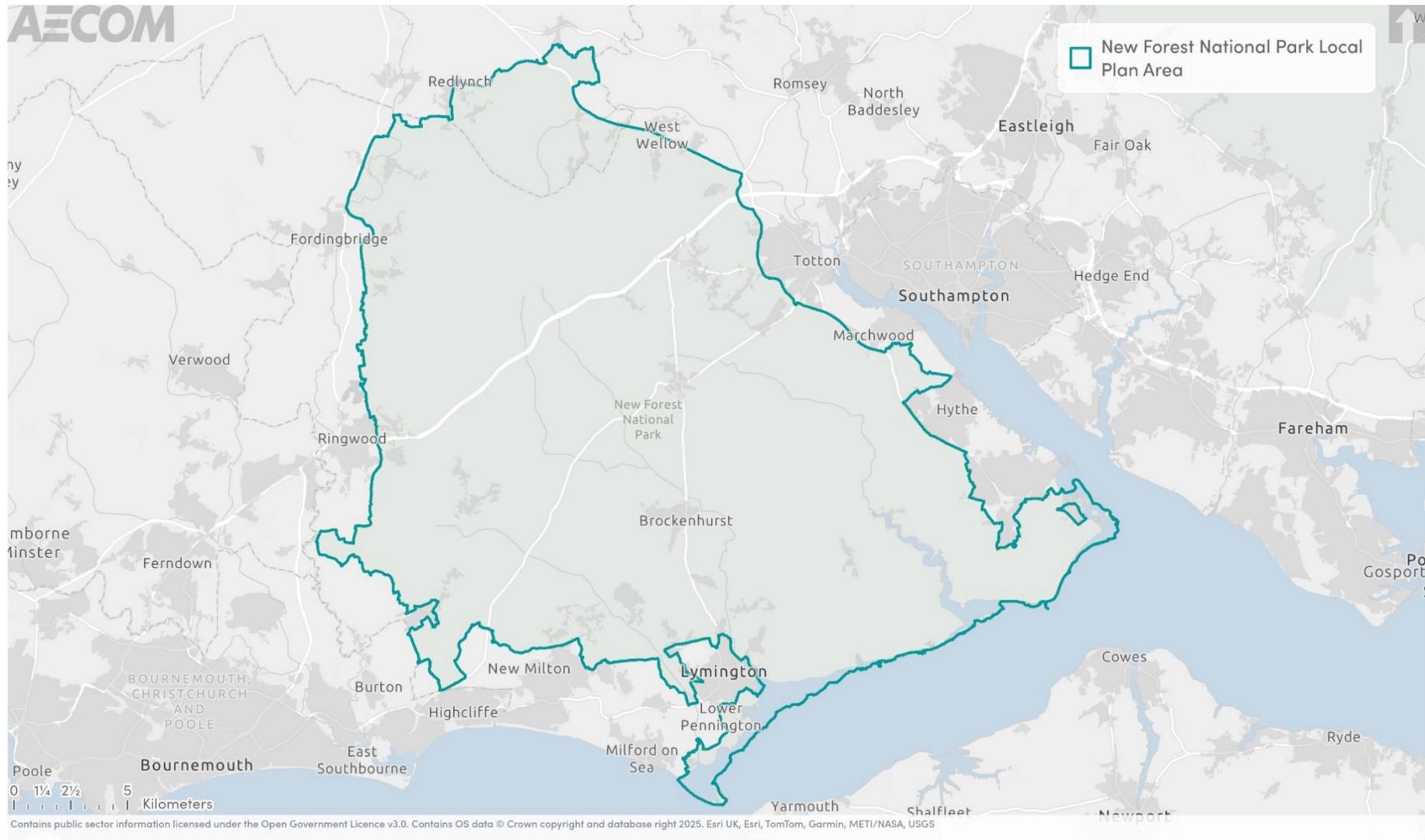
¹ UK Government (2004). 'Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004' can be accessed through [this link](#).

² UK Government (2012). 'Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012' can be accessed through [this link](#).

³ UK Government (1995). 'Environment Act 2005' can be accessed through [this link](#).

- 1.2.3. The New Forest's special qualities include:
- Its outstanding natural beauty;
 - The extraordinary diversity of plants and animals;
 - A unique historic, cultural and archaeological heritage;
 - An historic commoning system;
 - The iconic New Forest pony;
 - Tranquillity;
 - Strong and distinctive local communities;
 - Opportunities for quiet recreation, learning and discovery; and
 - A healthy environment.
- 1.2.4. The National Park's population is distributed across four larger villages (Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst, Sway, and Ashurst) as well as numerous smaller settlements and large areas of countryside.
- 1.2.5. In close proximity to the National Park are several larger towns and cities (including Southampton, Salisbury, Bournemouth, Poole, Lymington, Ringwood, Totton, and Christchurch) which have significant social, economic, and environmental influences on the National Park.
- 1.2.6. The National Park and the surrounding areas of New Forest District are covered by separate planning authorities, each with their own Local Plan. The New Forest National Park Authority is responsible for planning within the National Park boundary, while New Forest District Council covers the adjoining areas outside the National Park. Although each authority prepares its own Local Plan, there is ongoing collaboration to ensure that policies on cross-boundary issues are coordinated.

Figure 1-1: New Forest National Park



1.3. The Local Plan Review

- 1.3.1. The Local Plan Review will replace the existing and adopted policies set out in the current adopted Local Plan (2016-2036) (adopted August 2019).⁴
- 1.3.2. The Local Plan Review will include policies that address the strategic priorities for the area, covering a diverse range of topics including climate change, housing (to reflect the 2024 update to the National Planning Policy Framework), economy, infrastructure, biodiversity, and transport.
- 1.3.3. The Local Plan Review will be prepared to complement and reinforce the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan.⁵ The Partnership Plan provides the overarching strategic framework for the long-term care, conservation, and enjoyment of the National Park; however, unlike the Local Plan Review, it is not a statutory planning document forming part of the 'development plan'. It is prepared jointly with a range of partners and sets out shared priorities for the National Park beyond land use planning, including cultural heritage, biodiversity, climate action, and community engagement. The Local Plan Review supports the delivery of many of the objectives within the Partnership Plan, but the two documents have distinct roles.

1.4. Planning Policy Context for the Local Plan Review

- 1.4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides an overarching framework for development in England. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is supported by planning practice guidance, which is a suite of policy papers covering a broad range of topics, including SEA.
- 1.4.2. The revised NPPF was published in December 2024. The new framework includes significant reforms aimed at boosting housing supply and supporting sustainable growth. One of the key changes is the reintroduction of the Government's standard methodology for calculating housing need for local authorities in England.

⁴ New Forest National Park Authority (2019). 'New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016 – 2036' can be accessed through [this link](#).

⁵ New Forest National Park Authority (2019). 'Re:New Forest – Partnership Plan 2022-2027' can be accessed through [this link](#).

- 1.4.3. The Local Plan Review should though be seen in the context of the statutory purposes and duty as applied to National Park Authorities. As specified by the Environment Act 1995, the New Forest National Park Authority has two statutory purposes:
- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and
 - To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- 1.4.4. Where it appears that there is a conflict between the National Park purposes, greater weight will be attached to the first of those purposes.
- 1.4.5. In pursuit of these purposes, the National Park Authority will pay due regard to its duty to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of the local communities within the National Park. This was further reinforced by Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, which amended the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Parks, National Landscapes, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (collectively referred to as Protected Landscapes) in England. This requires relevant authorities to ‘seek to further’ the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes, replacing the previous duty on relevant authorities to ‘have regard to’ their statutory purposes.
- 1.4.6. In this context, the Local Plan Review is being prepared within a distinct planning policy framework which is shaped by the purposes and duty of the National Park Authority and its special qualities.

1.5. SA Explained

- 1.5.1. SA is a mechanism for assessing and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives, with a view to achieving sustainable development, fulfilling the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 1.5.2. The aim of the SA will be to inform plan-making both directly (i.e. through structured, systematic and evidence-based analysis), and indirectly (through providing stakeholders with information on potential plan impacts and so facilitating effective consultation).
- 1.5.3. The use of an SA approach will help ensure consistency in the development and evaluation of the Local Plan Review, and is considered best practice.

Requirements associated with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations

- 1.5.4. Sustainability Appraisal for Local Plans is undertaken to address the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA Regulations').⁶ The SEA Regulations only formally apply to plans and programmes for which there is a statutory requirement; this includes Local Plans.
- 1.5.5. Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
- When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
 - A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the draft plan for consultation that presents an assessment of the draft plan (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives. In SA, the Environmental Report is referred to the SA Report.

1.6. Structure of this SA Report

- 1.6.1. This SA Report incorporates the information required for Environmental Reports by the SEA Regulations. The information presented in this SA Report is outlined in **Table 1-1**.

⁶ UK Government (2004). '*The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004*' can be accessed through [this link](#).

Table 1-1: Questions that Must be Answered by the SA Report to Meet the Regulatory⁷ Requirements

SA Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ⁸
What is the plan seeking to achieve?	An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
What is the sustainability 'context'?	<p>Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.</p> <p>The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level.</p> <p>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.</p>
What is the scope of the SA?	<p>What is the sustainability 'baseline'?</p> <p>The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan.</p> <p>The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.</p> <p>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.</p>
What are the key issues and objectives?	Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making/SA involved up to this point?	<p>Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with.</p> <p>The likely significant effects associated with alternatives.</p> <p>Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.</p>

⁷ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

⁸ NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

What are the assessment findings at this stage?

The likely significant effects associated with **the Regulation 18 version of the plan.**

The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing **the Regulation 18 version of the plan.**

What happens next?

The next steps for the plan making / SA process.

2. What is the Scope of the SA?

2.1. Summary of SA Scoping

2.1.1. A Scoping Report was prepared for the SA in August 2025. The purpose of this report was to outline the 'scope' of the SA through setting out the following information:

- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the Local Plan Review;
- Baseline data against which the Local Plan Review can be assessed;
- The key sustainability issues for the Local Plan Review; and
- An 'SA Framework' of objectives against which the Local Plan Review can be assessed.

2.1.2. Baseline information (including the context review and baseline data) is available to view in the SA Scoping Report, which is available on the National Park Local Plan Review webpage.⁹

2.1.3. The SEA Regulations require that: '*When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*'. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England.¹⁰ These authorities were consulted on the scope of the SA in August 2025.

2.1.4. Responses received on the Scoping Report, and how they were addressed, have been summarised in **Appendix A**.

SA Framework

2.1.5. The SA framework provides a way in which environmental effects can be defined and subsequently analysed based on standard 'tests'. The reasonable alternatives and each proposal within the current version (i.e., the Regulation 18 version) of the Local Plan Review will be assessed consistently using the framework.

⁹ <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning/local-plan/new-forest-national-park-local-plan-review-2025/>

¹⁰ In-line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because '*by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programme*'.

2.1.6. The updated SA framework (including amendments following statutory consultation) is presented in **Table 2-1**.

Table 2-1: SA Framework for the Local Plan Review

SA Theme	SA Objective	Supporting Questions (will the option help to...)
Air, Soil and Water Resources	To protect and improve air quality, soil condition, and water resources by minimising pollution, managing sustainable use of natural resources, and reducing risks from contamination and coastal erosion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit emissions of NO₂ and particulates, particularly near major roads such as the A31 and A35? • Support improvements in the ecological condition of rivers and other water bodies? • Ensure adequate wastewater treatment to maintain water quality? • Promote sustainable water use and improve water efficiency? • Assess and manage risks to groundwater resources to protect their quality? • Manage and adapt to coastal erosion and flood risk in line with SMPs? • Identify, assess and remediate contamination risks from historic landfills and previously developed land? • Avoid inappropriate development near hazardous installations? • Increase recycling rates?
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Maintain and enhance the extent and quality of designated sites for biodiversity conservation, habitats, geology, and biodiversity networks within and surrounding the National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver biodiversity net gain in accordance with statutory requirements? • Avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on internationally and nationally designated biodiversity sites within and around the National Park? • Ensure appropriate consultation with Natural England where development falls within SSSI Impact Risk Zones? • Protect locally designated nature conservation sites (such as LNRs and SINCs)? • Safeguard and improve BAP Priority Habitats and the species they support? • Maintain and strengthen ecological networks, avoiding fragmentation of important wildlife corridors? • Protect geodiversity features and manage geological constraints?

SA Theme	SA Objective	Supporting Questions (will the option help to...)
Climate Change	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience by supporting a low-carbon economy, promoting energy efficiency and renewables, and adapting land use and infrastructure to future climate risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport, including private vehicle use? • Support low-carbon tourism and encourage sustainable travel choices within and to the National Park? • Promote energy efficiency in buildings and reduce emissions from industrial and commercial energy use? • Encourage the uptake of renewable energy and low-emission technologies? • Improve the energy performance of homes and reduce fuel poverty across the National Park? • Reduce the risk of flooding through appropriate land use and infrastructure planning? • Protect and enhance natural carbon sinks such as valley mires, grasslands, and ancient woodland? • Support climate adaptation through resilient land management, habitat restoration, and nature-based solutions?
Communities, Health and Wellbeing	Support healthy, inclusive, and safe communities by improving access to services, promoting wellbeing for all ages, and reducing inequalities related to age, disability, deprivation, and rural isolation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the needs of an ageing population by improving access to healthcare, social care, housing, and community facilities? • Avoid pressure from future development on existing services such as healthcare, education, and public transport? • Reduce health inequalities and address local challenges such as obesity, self-harm, and alcohol-related conditions? • Promote inclusion and ensure equitable access to services for under-represented groups? • Reduce the risk of social isolation, particularly for older people and those with disabilities or limited mobility? • Protect and enhance access to green infrastructure to support physical and mental wellbeing? • Ensure sufficient and accessible school places in areas where development may increase demand? • Improve infrastructure for walking and cycling to encourage active travel? • Improve access to indoor recreational and community facilities?

SA Theme	SA Objective	Supporting Questions (will the option help to...)
Economy and Employment	Support a productive, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to education and training, particularly deprived areas? • Increase the availability of a skilled local workforce to meet the needs of key sectors? • Support employment opportunities for economically inactive residents and those reliant on benefits? • Strengthen the tourism sector while managing associated environmental and infrastructure pressures? • Support micro and small businesses, and promote opportunities for career progression within the local area? • Reduce out-commuting by supporting the creation of quality local employment opportunities? • Improve digital infrastructure to support business flexibility, remote working, and enterprise growth? • Retain and enhance existing employment land and support the delivery of suitable new employment sites and premises?
Historic Environment	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets from inappropriate development (including within their setting)? • Ensure that new development respects the historic context of conservation areas? • Support the preparation or updating of conservation area appraisals to strengthen the evidence base for heritage protection? • Preserve historic settlement patterns and protect important views? • Support the preservation and enhancement of heritage assets identified as at risk? • Incorporate climate-resilient design and practices to reduce the impact of extreme weather on heritage sites? • Encourage public realm and accessibility improvements that enhance understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment? • Promote sustainable conservation approaches, including the use of local materials to maintain historic assets?

SA Theme	SA Objective	Supporting Questions (will the option help to...)
Housing	Provide for the full range of housing needs and maximise delivery of affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver an appropriate mix of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of all household types, including older residents and smaller or younger households? • Increase the supply of affordable housing? • Reduce homelessness by addressing issues related to affordability, access to support services, and the availability of suitable housing? • Meet identified accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople within the National Park? • Promote energy-efficient housing design and support measures to reduce fuel poverty, particularly in rural and isolated areas? • Ensure housing growth is coordinated with provision of essential infrastructure such as schools, healthcare, and public transport? • Make better use of the existing housing stock and reduce pressures associated with high numbers of second homes? • Support inclusive, accessible, and age-appropriate housing that enables older people and those with support needs to live independently?
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape of the National Park and surrounding National Landscapes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?

SA Theme	SA Objective	Supporting Questions (will the option help to...)
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce car dependency by improving public transport coverage and frequency, especially in rural and isolated areas?• Make use of existing rail infrastructure to support sustainable travel options?• Reduce road congestion on key routes such as the A326, A31, and A35?• Improve the resilience of transport infrastructure to extreme weather and climate change impacts?• Encourage active travel modes such as walking and cycling?

3. Vision and Strategic Objectives for the Local Plan Review

3.1. Purpose of the Vision and Strategic Objectives

3.1.1. The Vision and Strategic Objectives for the Local Plan Review capture the New Forest National Park Authority's aspirations for the New Forest National Park as expressed through the Local Plan Review.

3.2. Vision for the New Forest National Park for 2043

3.2.1. The Vision for the Local Plan Review is as follows:

In 2043 the New Forest's outstanding natural beauty has been safeguarded and enhanced. Nature recovery has enabled sites of international, national and local importance for nature conservation and the National Park as a whole to continue to host an extraordinary diversity of plants and animals. The New Forest remains an area with a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place, with a mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats including lowland heath, mire, ancient woodland, the Solent coastline and farmed landscapes. Tranquillity and a feeling of naturalness pervade large parts of the National Park.

At the same time it is a place where people can enjoy the wonderful opportunities for quiet recreation, learning and discovery, to support their health and well-being. Recreation and visitor pressures have been successfully managed through a shared understanding of the issues. Traditional land management practices, particularly commoning, are supported and continue to thrive and shape the Forest's landscape and strong cultural identity. The impacts of climate change are being actively addressed through adaptation and change through nature-based solutions consistent with the special qualities of the New Forest. People live and work sustainably, and everyone contributes in appropriate ways to keeping the New Forest a special place for present and future generations.

The limited development that has taken place within the National Park has been focused on catering for the socio-economic needs of local people rather than meeting external demand, to create strong and distinctive communities...

...Small scale housing development on allocated sites, within the Larger Villages of Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway and the Smaller Villages of Cadnam/Bartley, Landford and Redlynch has provided a mix of appropriate new housing to meet local needs arising within the National Park. Rural exception schemes and new dwellings focused on the needs of New Forest Commoners and Estate workers have helped deliver appropriate housing in the rest of the National Park.

The cultural heritage and historic environment is better understood and appreciated through its continued protection and enhancement. The inherent characteristics and local distinctiveness of the individual villages have been retained and enhanced through the highest standards of design that respect the natural and built heritage of the Park. The rural economy has been supported by small scale employment development that does not conflict with the special qualities of the National Park.

3.3. Strategic Objectives

3.3.1. With a view to implementing the vision, the Strategic Objectives for the Local Plan Review are as follows:

- 1. 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.*
- 2. Conserve and enhance the cultural heritage and historic environment of the National Park, especially the wealth of individual characteristics that contribute to its local distinctiveness.*
- 3. Plan for and adapt to the likely impacts of climate change on the special qualities and communities of the New Forest.*
- 4. Strengthen the health and well-being, identity and sustainability of rural communities and the pride of local people in their area.*
- 5. Promote appropriate housing to meet local needs and maintain the vibrant communities of the National Park.*
- 6. Develop a diverse and sustainable economy that contributes to the well-being of local communities throughout the National Park.*
- 7. Encourage land management that sustains the special qualities of the National Park.*
- 8. Support development which encourages sustainable tourism and recreation, and provides opportunities for enjoying the National Park's special qualities.*
- 9. Reduce the impacts of traffic on the special qualities of the National Park and support a range of sustainable transport alternatives within the Park.*

4. Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives through the SA

4.1. Introduction

- 4.1.1. A key element of the SA process is the appraisal of ‘reasonable alternatives’ for the Local Plan Review.
- 4.1.2. In accordance with the SEA Regulations the SA Report must include...
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
 - The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.
- 4.1.3. The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative, stating only that the Environmental Report (or SA Report) should present an appraisal of the “*plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan*”.

4.2. Defining Reasonable Alternatives

- 4.2.1. In line with regulatory requirements, there is a need to explain how work has been undertaken to develop and then appraise reasonable alternatives.
- 4.2.2. A key component of the Local Plan Review will be to present an overall spatial strategy for the National Park during the plan period to 2043.
- 4.2.3. To support the development of the preferred approach for the Local Plan Review (i.e., the spatial strategy), the SA process has considered a number of options which evaluate different scales and distributions of growth in the National Park. This is with a view to understanding the relative sustainability merits of different potential spatial strategies for the Local Plan Review.
- 4.2.4. These growth strategy options have been developed based on strategic variables associated with the following two components:
- different scales of growth; and
 - different locations of growth.
- 4.2.5. A discussion of these strategic variables is set out below.

4.3. Different scales of growth to consider through the growth strategy options

4.3.1. In terms of housing numbers, a number of variables can be considered for the purposes of establishing growth strategy options. The two key variables are as follows.

Standard method figure for housing need

4.3.2. The Government's standard method for calculating housing¹¹ needs generates figures for 'local authority' areas, rather than 'local planning authority' areas. The New Forest National Park Authority does not therefore receive a housing need figure generated through the Government's standard methodology.

4.3.3. However, the current national standard method figure for housing needs sets a figure of 1,511 dwellings per annum (dpa) for New Forest District (which includes circa 94% of the New Forest National Park). The Strategic Housing Market Assessment¹² output indicates the housing need for the District Council's plan area is 1,254 dpa, which is 83% of the overall New Forest-wide figure. The difference between the overall New Forest District need and the District Plan area indicates an unconstrained need of about 250 - 300 dpa in the National Park, or a total 4,750 - 5,700 dwellings over the Local Plan Review period.

Current delivery

4.3.4. The adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019) makes provision for 40 net new dwellings per annum. This figure, if projected forward, equates to 760 over the new plan period from 2024 - 2043.

¹¹ Housing need is an unconstrained assessment of the minimum number of homes needed in an area. The NPPF expects strategic policy-making authorities to follow the standard method for assessing local housing need. The standard method uses a formula that incorporates a baseline of local housing stock which is then adjusted upwards to reflect local affordability pressures to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

¹² The report will be published on New Forest National Park Authority's [website](#) in due course

Delivery of housing in the context of the National Park's Purposes and Duty

- 4.3.5. As specified by the Environment Act 1995, the NFNPA has two statutory purposes:
- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
 - To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- 4.3.6. This is framed by the National Park Authority's duty to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in pursuit of the National Park's purposes.
- 4.3.7. This was further reinforced by Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, which amended the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Parks, National Landscapes, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (collectively referred to as Protected Landscapes) in England. This requires relevant authorities to 'seek to further' the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes, replacing the previous duty on relevant authorities to 'have regard to' their statutory purposes.
- 4.3.8. In relation to housing delivery through the Local Plan Review, Defra's National Parks Vision and Circular¹³ states that National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing development but that national park authorities have an important role to play as planning authorities in the delivery of affordable housing. This was reinforced by the latest NPPF (December 2024, paragraph 11, footnote 7 and paragraph 189) which identifies national parks as areas where the scale and extent of development should be limited. As such, the expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements in the National Park and that the NFNPA should work with local housing authorities and others to ensure that the needs of local communities are met.

¹³ Defra (March 2010). 'English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010' can be accessed through [this link](#).

4.3.9. The scales of growth addressed through the SA's growth strategy options should therefore be framed in the context of these considerations. In this respect the consideration of an option which meets full unrestricted housing needs is not appropriate or reasonable in the context of a National Park Local Plan. For the purposes of the Local Plan Review, it is instead appropriate to consider options which range from a level of housing delivery which broadly mirrors existing growth rates, to higher growth options which double the existing rate of delivery. This has been discussed in more detail below.

4.4. Different locations of growth to consider through the growth strategy options

4.4.1. The following broad locations have been considered through the growth strategy options.

Four defined villages

4.4.2. Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway are identified in the current Local Plan as 'Defined Villages'. This is due to their character, population and the range of facilities and services they provide. These settlements have the broadest range of community facilities, local employment opportunities and transport links in the National Park and offer a good range of other services for residents and visitors.

Additional villages

4.4.3. There are a number of additional settlements, which whilst not villages with defined settlement boundaries, have the potential to be considered for some limited growth. They are accessible locations with some services and facilities.

4.4.4. They include:

- Landford/Nomansland;
- Redlynch
- Bartley/Cadnam

Other smaller villages and hamlets

4.4.5. These comprise other locations outside of the four defined villages and additional villages set out above.

Land adjoining settlements outside of the National Park

- 4.4.6. This comprises land adjacent to the larger settlements that adjoin the National Park boundary, including, for example, in the vicinities of Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood, Totton and Hythe. This recognises that these locations may be considered accessible in terms of access to services and facilities and public transport nodes such as railway stations and bus routes.

New or expanded settlement

- 4.4.7. There is the potential to deliver a new or extended settlement in the National Park, which would be of sufficient size to support and deliver new services and amenities. Potential locations include the village of Calshot in the south east of the National Park.

4.5. Establishing growth strategy options for the SA

- 4.5.1. In relation to the strategic variables set out above, there are a number of key components that can provide the building blocks for developing the growth strategy options. These comprise:

- **Growth scenario components which are ‘constants’:** These are the components which would be similar across all the growth strategy options.
- **Growth scenario components which are ‘variables’:** These comprise the components which can vary across the growth strategy options.

- 4.5.2. The following components can therefore be considered constants and variables in the context of the growth strategy options.

Constants

- 4.5.3. The following components can be considered ‘constants’ for the purposes of the assessment of the growth strategy options

Commitments and completions

- 4.5.4. These comprise extant planning permissions and completions in the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. This amounts to a total of 281 net new dwellings with either extant consent or completed within this period.

Windfall sites in Defined Villages of National Park

- 4.5.5. Paragraph 75 of the NPPF allows local authorities to make an allowance for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply in their Local Plan. An allowance therefore has been made of the delivery of c 20 dpa over the 19 year time period. This allowance also includes rural exception sites and housing for New Forest Commoners, Estate Workers and tied agricultural and forestry worker dwellings.

Variables

- 4.5.6. The key variables relate to the following components, as discussed under **section 4.4** above:

- Existing defined villages with settlement boundaries:
 - Ashurst
 - Brockenhurst
 - Lyndhurst
 - Sway
- Additional villages, comprising:
 - Landford/Nomansland
 - Redlynch
 - Bartley/Cadnam
- Other smaller villages and hamlets
- Land adjoining settlements outside of the National Park
- New or expanded settlement

4.6. Growth strategy options

- 4.6.1. Utilising these ‘constants’ and ‘variables’, a number of options have been developed for the purpose of exploring alternative spatial strategies for growth in the National Park.
- 4.6.2. An overview of the growth strategy options considered through the SA process is presented in **Table 4-1**. These are in addition to the completions, extant consents and windfall allowance, which are applied across each of the options. A more detailed breakdown of the spatial distribution of housing represented by each option, including in relation to key locations in the National Park, is presented in **Table 4-2**. Options A and B have been mapped (see **Figure 4-1** and **Figure 4-2**). Options C to G have not been mapped due to their lack of defined spatial extents.

- 4.6.3. It should be noted that the appraisal represents a high-level review of strategic growth options rather than an assessment of individual site proposals.

Table 4-1: Growth strategy options considered as reasonable alternatives

Growth strategy option	Indicative housing delivery and rationale
<p>Option A:</p> <p>Focus development on four existing defined villages with settlement boundaries</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 780 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>It comprises the current Local Plan approach, with site allocations taking place adjacent to settlement boundaries in the four existing defined villages.</p>
<p>Option B:</p> <p>Existing defined villages and newly defined villages based on service provision</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 900 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>It would expand the settlement hierarchy through including Landford/Nomansland, Redlynch and Bartley/Cadnam within the defined villages. Allocations would take place adjacent to settlement boundaries.</p>
<p>Option C:</p> <p>Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 940 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>As Option B, but with the inclusion of other settlements for potential allocations, including smaller hamlets.</p>
<p>Option D:</p> <p>Full dispersal with no settlement hierarchy</p>	<p>This option would deliver circa 980 dwellings over the plan period.</p> <p>It would disperse growth across the National Park without the application of a settlement hierarchy. This would enable development in villages and hamlets across the National Park, potentially guided by criteria-based policies, but with no settlement hierarchy to guide/focus development spatially.</p>

Growth strategy option

Indicative housing delivery and rationale

Option E:

Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park

This option would deliver circa **1,140 dwellings** over the plan period.

As Option C, plus the allocation of some land around the periphery of the National Park on sites that relate to settlements outside of the National Park (e.g. the Waterside, Lymington, New Milton).

Option F:

Focus development solely around the periphery of the National Park, adjacent to settlements outside the National Park boundary

This option would deliver circa **860 dwellings** over the plan period.

It would focus growth on sites that relate to settlements outside of the National Park, and not involve any site allocations (or a defined settlement hierarchy) within the main villages of the National Park.

Option G:

Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park, with new or expanded settlement

This option would deliver circa **1,540 dwellings** over the plan period.

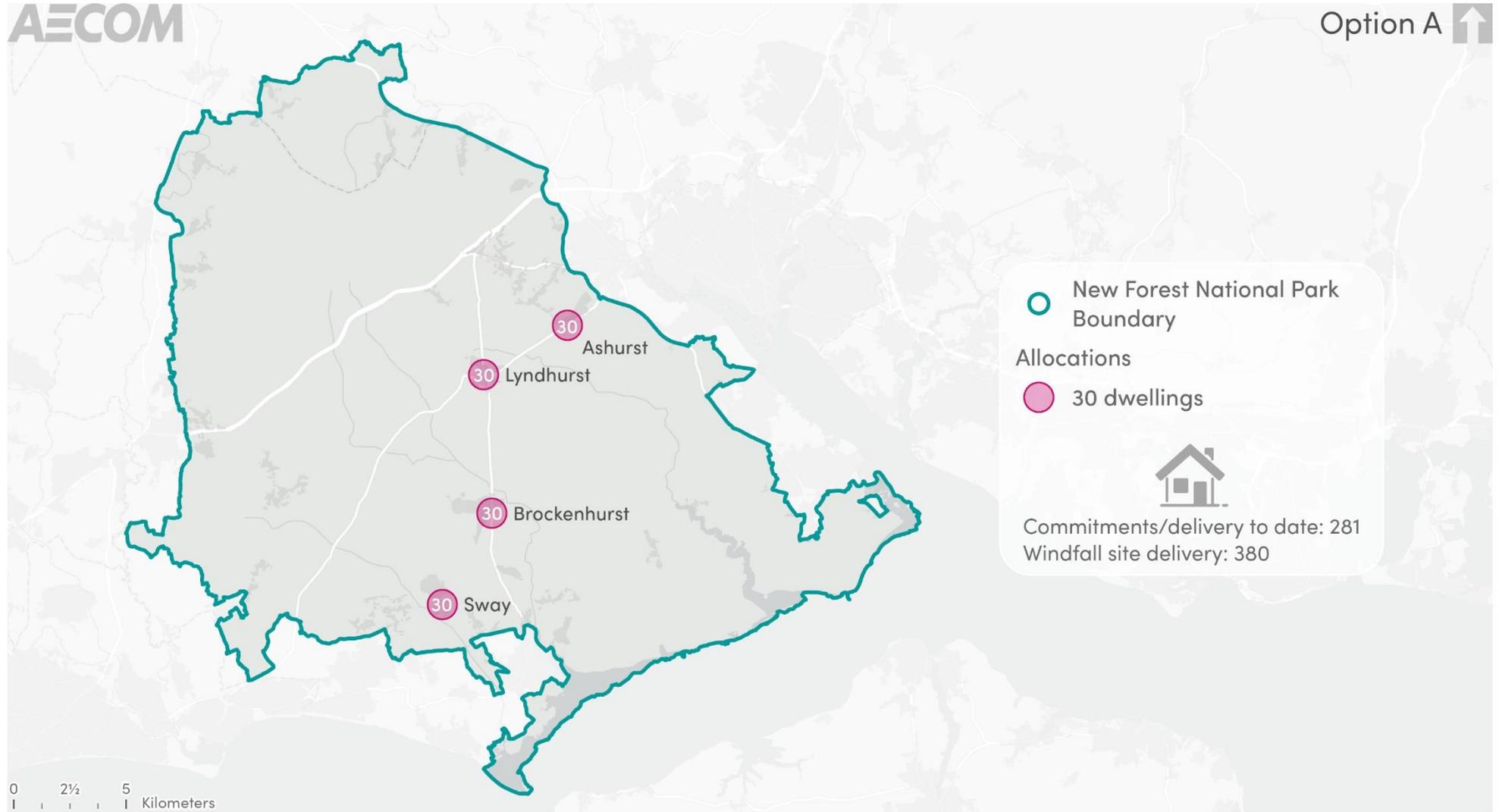
It would include the scenarios presented under Options A-G, plus a major development focused on a new or expanded settlement. This would engage the NPPF's 'major development test' currently set out in paragraph 190 of the Framework

Table 4-2: Growth strategy options considered as reasonable alternatives (indicative figures)

	Option A: Focus development on four existing defined villages with settlement boundaries	Option B: Existing defined villages and newly defined villages based on service provision	Option C: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets	Option D: Full dispersal with no settlement hierarchy	Option E: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park	Option F: Focus development solely around the periphery of the National Park, adjacent to settlements outside the National Park boundary	Option G: Option E plus new or expanded settlement
Constants							
Commitments & delivery to date	281	281	281	281	281	281	281
Windfall site delivery	380	380	380	380	380	380	380
Choices (indicative figures)							
Site allocations adjacent to existing four defined villages							
Ashurst	30	30	30	30	30	0	30
Brockenhurst	30	30	30	30	30	0	30
Lyndhurst	30	30	30	30	30	0	30
Sway	30	30	30	30	30	0	30
Extension of the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages							
Landford/Nomansland	0	40	40	40	40	0	40
Redlynch	0	40	40	40	40	0	40
Bartley/Cadnam	0	40	40	40	40	0	40

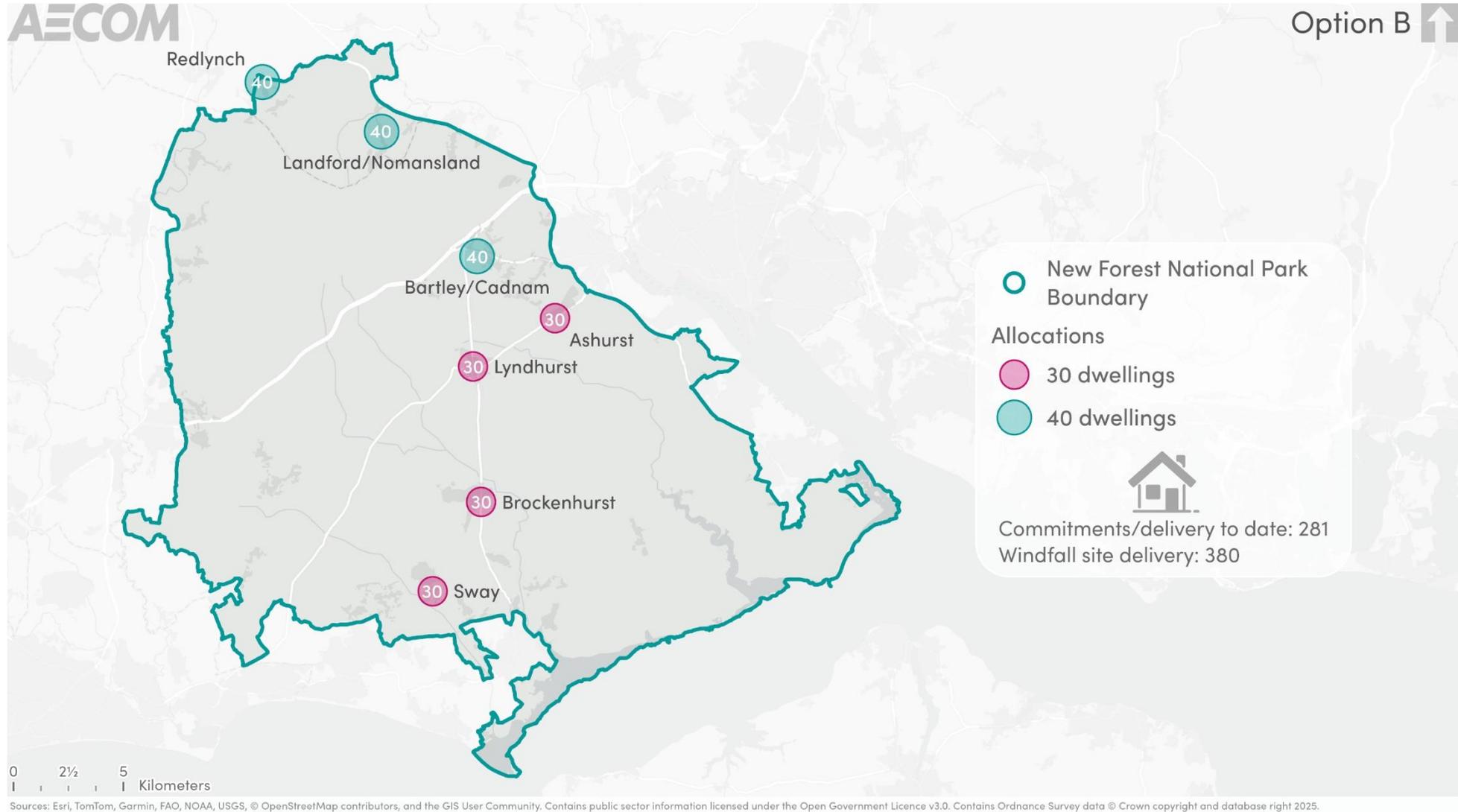
	Option A: Focus development on four existing defined villages with settlement boundaries	Option B: Existing defined villages and newly defined villages based on service provision	Option C: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets	Option D: Full dispersal with no settlement hierarchy	Option E: Existing defined villages, newly defined villages based on service provision and other settlements including smaller hamlets, with allocation of land around the periphery of the National Park	Option F: Focus development solely around the periphery of the National Park, adjacent to settlements outside the National Park boundary	Option G: Option E plus new or expanded settlement
Other smaller villages and hamlets (not in those listed above)	0	0	40	80	40	0	40
Land adjoining settlements outside of the National Park							
Land adjoining settlements outside of the National Park	0	0	0	0	200	200	200
New or expanded settlement							
New or expanded settlement	0	0	0	0	0	0	400
Total (rounded)	780	900	940	980	1140	860	1540
Local Housing Need	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250	5,250
Percent of LHN met through option	14.86%	17.14%	17.90%	18.70%	21.71%	16.38%	29.33%
Delivery at current rates	760	760	760	760	760	760	760
Percent of scenario met through option	102.63%	118.42%	123.68%	128.95%	150.00%	113.16%	202.63%
50% of Local Housing Need	2,625	2,625	2,625	2,625	2,625	2,625	2,625
Percent of scenario met through option	29.71%	34.29%	35.81%	37.33%	43.43%	32.76%	58.67%

Figure 4-1: Option A



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2025.

Figure 4-2: Option B



4.7. Other potential options

- 4.7.1. It should be noted that there are, in theory, numerous other growth strategy alternatives comprising different combinations of location and site options that could be considered through the SA process. However, it is important that the alternatives considered are suitably distinct in order to allow a meaningful appraisal to be carried out. In this respect the appraisal of the identified options above has enabled the relative sustainability merits of key variables with regards to the Local Plan Review's spatial strategy to be effectively explored.
- 4.7.2. A further element to note is that the SA Report is a vehicle for consultation. Its central purpose is to provide stakeholders (including the general public) with an understanding of the relative merits of different approaches.¹⁴ As such, whilst there is an almost limitless number of combinations of location and site options which could be appraised, there is a need to ensure that the assessment of reasonable alternatives remains accessible, coherent and understandable.
- 4.7.3. This is particularly important given the need to simplify the plan making process to ensure it is accessible to all.
- 4.7.4. Taking these considerations into account, the options identified above for the SA are viewed to provide an appropriate vehicle for robustly appraising the key variables that can be considered with regards to the Local Plan Review's spatial strategy, including within the context of the NFNPA's statutory purposes and duty.

¹⁴ Regulation 13 of the SEA Regulations

5. Appraisal of growth strategy options

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. Utilising the SA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SA, the appraisal has been presented through nine SA Themes, as follows:

- Air, Soil and Water Resources;
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Climatic Change;
- Communities, Health and Wellbeing;
- Economy and Employment;
- Historic Environment;
- Housing;
- Landscape; and
- Transport.

5.1.2. The appraisal considers the relative sustainability merits of each of the seven growth strategy options. Findings are presented as a commentary on effects. To support the appraisal findings, the options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SA Theme. It is anticipated that this will provide the reader with a likely indication of the relative performance of the seven growth strategy options in relation to each theme considered.

5.2. Appraisal

5.2.1. **Table 5-1** to **Table 5-9** below present the findings of the appraisal of the seven growth strategy options for each of the SA Themes.

5.2.2. **Table 5-10** summarises the rankings of the options with regards to their relative performance in relation to each SA Theme.

Table 5-1: Appraisal Findings (Air, Soil and Water Resources)

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	1	3	4	6	5	2	7

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A, which proposes the most restrained level of growth, focuses development around four existing defined villages. A more limited and focused approach helps to minimise land take and soil disturbance, as new housing would be located around existing settlement boundaries where some infrastructure is already in place. The limited scale of growth also reduces risks of water pollution (by avoiding more remote locations which may lack necessary infrastructure) and helps maintain air quality by limiting traffic.

Options B and C introduce a broader spatial footprint by including newly defined villages and smaller hamlets, respectively, while Option D proposes full dispersal without a settlement hierarchy. While housing increases are moderate, the wider distribution raises risks to soil and water resources. Development in sensitive or poorly connected areas will likely require additional infrastructure (such as roads and drainage systems) to deliver new housing. The deliver of this infrastructure and housing could disrupt soil profiles, increase sedimentation in watercourses, and reduce air quality through construction emissions and car use. Air quality could be affected by greater reliance on private vehicles, although directing growth to service-based settlements (for Options B and C) offers some mitigation.

Option E directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. The higher housing delivery amplifies risks compared to Options B and C.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option F focuses sites on the National Park's boundary, offering notable advantages. These locations are generally more accessible and benefit from existing transport links, helping limit air quality impacts from car dependency leading to increased traffic flows. Housing delivery is relatively low, reducing cumulative pressures. Most importantly, this approach avoids development within the National Park's most sensitive areas, reducing risks to soils and water systems. The combination of lower scale, better infrastructure, and avoidance of centrally located sensitive areas (including watercourses running through the New Forest Special Area of Conservation [SAC] and Special Protection Area [SPA]) makes this option one of the better-performing scenarios.

Option G, which proposes the highest level of housing growth, includes a major new or expanded settlement. This scale of development poses the greatest risk to air, soil, and water resources. Dispersed development throughout the National Park, and the creation of a new settlement would involve significant land clearance, increased impermeable surfaces, and substantial infrastructure development, all of which could disrupt hydrology and soil integrity. Air quality impacts would be pronounced due to construction emissions, long-term traffic generation, and concentration of development in one location.

Table 5-2: Appraisal Findings (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	2	3	4	6	5	1	7

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A concentrates development around four existing defined villages. While these settlements are adjacent to internationally designated sites such as New Forest SAC and SPA, the overall low level of growth proposed under this option helps to minimise ecological disturbance compared to other options (all of which, except Option F, also involve development near these designations). Focusing development in the main settlements only also reduces the need to allocate housing in smaller settlements that are more sensitive to change. The modest scale of growth helps limit land take and reduces risks of cumulative disturbance, including light and noise pollution and recreational pressure.

Options B and C expand the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages and smaller hamlets, increasing the spatial footprint and raising risks of edge effects and habitat fragmentation at the additional locations where growth would be delivered. The additional settlements are also close to sensitive habitats (including the SAC and SPA), and increased development could lead to greater recreational access and disturbance.

Option D disperses development across the National Park without a guiding settlement hierarchy, presenting significant risks to biodiversity and geodiversity. Scattered development could occur near designated sites or ecologically valuable landscapes, undermining ecological networks and increasing pressure on habitats already under stress. The dispersed nature of growth may also make it more challenging to deliver coordinated avoidance and mitigation measures, increasing the risk of cumulative impacts on sensitive environments.

Option E directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This option has the second highest rate of growth, increasing the potential for cumulative impacts on habitats and designated sites within and adjacent to the National Park.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option F focuses sites on the National Park's boundary and delivers relatively low housing numbers, reducing direct pressure on the National Park's most sensitive habitats and designated sites (including the Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area), though impacts on buffer zones and migratory routes remain possible.

Option G, which includes a major new or expanded settlement, poses the greatest risk. The scale of development could result in significant land clearance, habitat loss, and disruption of ecological networks. For example, Calshot (one potential location under consideration) is situated close to the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site, increasing the likelihood of impacts on internationally important habitats and species. Even if development avoids designated sites, the abundance of sensitive ecological designations and habitats across the New Forest mean that indirect impacts (such as increased traffic, recreational pressure, and pollution) could still be significant.

Table 5-3: Appraisal Findings (Climate Change [Including Flood Risk])

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	1	3	4	7	5	2	6

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A performs well in terms of climate mitigation. Concentrating development around existing villages supports compact growth, reduces the need for new infrastructure, and enables better access to public transport and active travel routes. The modest scale of development also limits the overall carbon footprint. Adaptation is more feasible in these locations due to existing flood risk mapping and infrastructure capacity.

Options B and C introduce a wider spatial spread, which may increase car dependency and reduce opportunities for low-carbon travel. Smaller settlements may lack the infrastructure needed to support climate-resilient development, and the cumulative impact of dispersed growth could increase emissions. However, if allocations are focused on service-based settlements and incorporate sustainable design, these options could still support climate objectives.

Option D, with no settlement hierarchy, performs least favourably. Dispersed development across the National Park increases reliance on private vehicles, complicates infrastructure delivery, and makes coordinated climate adaptation difficult. Development may occur in areas with limited resilience to flooding or heat stress, increasing long-term vulnerability.

Option E directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This increases the carbon footprint and complicates adaptation efforts, as infrastructure and energy planning would need to cover a larger area. Higher housing numbers amplify these risks, and strong mitigation measures would be essential.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option F focuses on sites close to the National Park's boundary and delivers relatively low housing numbers. This approach may allow for more strategic infrastructure planning. It also aligns with existing commuting patterns and benefits from good transport links, helping to limit emissions compared to dispersed growth. While commuting distances remain a concern, placing housing in these locations could reduce the overall need to travel for many residents.

Option G, which delivers the highest housing figures, presents both risks and opportunities. A new or expanded settlement could be designed to high environmental standards, incorporating renewable energy, sustainable drainage, and low-carbon transport. However, the overall scale of development, both with the new settlement area, and elsewhere across the National Park, carries a significant carbon cost, and poor siting could exacerbate climate vulnerabilities.

Table 5-4: Appraisal Findings (Communities, Health and Wellbeing)

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	6	3	2	7	1	5	4

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A focuses growth around existing defined villages, supporting community cohesion by reinforcing established settlement patterns. The modest scale of development is less likely to overwhelm local services and may help sustain village facilities such as shops, schools, and health centres. Concentrated growth also supports walkability and access to green space, contributing positively to physical and mental wellbeing. However, limited housing delivery may constrain opportunities for younger residents or those in housing need, potentially affecting long-term community sustainability.

Options B and C expand the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages and hamlets. This broader distribution may help address housing need across a wider area, supporting smaller communities and potentially revitalising underused services. However, increased development in smaller settlements could place strains on limited infrastructure, particularly if not accompanied by investment in community facilities. The spread of development may also reduce opportunities for active travel and increase car dependency, with implications for health and social inclusion.

Option D disperses development across the National Park without a guiding hierarchy. While this may offer flexibility and address housing need in smaller settlements, it risks undermining community cohesion and placing pressure on settlements with limited services. The lack of spatial focus may lead to inefficient infrastructure provision and reduced access to health, education, and social facilities. This could exacerbate inequalities and reduce overall wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Option E directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary, with the second-highest delivery figure. This has the potential to support both National Park and adjacent communities, helping to address housing need and improve access to services. However, the wider spread of development may dilute benefits, reducing opportunities for enhancing social inclusion.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option F focuses sites close to the National Park's boundary, which may reduce pressure on National Park communities while offering better access to transport and facilities outside the National Park. These advantages can support health and wellbeing by improving connectivity and reducing isolation. Housing delivery is relatively modest, limiting infrastructure strain, but careful planning is needed to ensure new development integrates with existing social networks.

Option G includes a major new or expanded settlement, offering potential to deliver significant new infrastructure such as schools, health centres, and community spaces. If well-designed, this could support high levels of wellbeing and social inclusion. However, concentrating higher levels of growth in these locations may also risk placing pressure on existing communities and infrastructure, for example, from increased traffic and pollution. A further consideration relates to the impact of significant growth on the special qualities of the National Park, and the associated impact on health and wellbeing and opportunities for recreation and enjoyment. This may undermine the National Park's role relating to the second statutory purpose of the National Park, including associated with the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

Table 5-5: Appraisal Findings (Economy and Employment)

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	6	3	2	7	1	5	4

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A supports the local economy by reinforcing existing settlements, helping sustain village centres, local services, and small businesses. Modest growth may help retain working-age residents and support employment in sectors such as retail, hospitality, and care. However, the limited scale of development may constrain opportunities for economic expansion or diversification, particularly if housing affordability remains a barrier for younger workers and families.

Options B and C extend development to additional villages and hamlets, potentially supporting a wider range of local economies. In addition to the benefits within the main settlements, these options may help revitalise the National Park’s smaller communities, enabling home-based businesses and supporting rural services. Employment benefits may still vary by location, depending on the capacity of smaller settlements to absorb and support growth.

Option D, with its fully dispersed approach, may offer flexibility for economic activity across the National Park, including in smaller settlements. However, the lack of spatial focus risks diluting investment and making it harder to support infrastructure improvements that underpin employment, such as broadband, transport, and workspace provision. This option may also increase commuting distances and reduce the viability of local services, undermining economic resilience.

Option E directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This approach could strengthen links to regional employment hubs while continuing to support economies within the National Park. By combining growth in main settlements and additional villages with sites near the boundary, Option E offers greater potential for infrastructure investment and economic diversification.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option F focuses on the National Park's boundary, which may strengthen links to regional employment hubs and improve access to jobs for residents. However, this approach risks disconnecting housing from the National Park's rural economy, limiting benefits for local businesses and services.

Option G includes a major new or expanded settlement, offering the greatest potential for economic growth and diversification. A new settlement could support significant employment opportunities, attract investment, and enable infrastructure provision at scale. If well-designed, it could include mixed-use development, workspace, and transport links. However, the scale of development also carries risks of overdevelopment, impacts on the National Park's special qualities, and disruption to the National Park's rural and visitor economy.

Table 5-6: Appraisal Findings (Historic Environment)

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	1	3	4	7	5	2	6

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A performs well in relation to the historic environment. The main settlements are generally well understood in terms of heritage constraints, and development can be guided by existing conservation policies. The modest scale of growth also limits cumulative impacts and allows for better integration with existing built form.

Option B expands development to additional villages, which are located near heritage assets. While the overall number of designated heritage features in the additional settlements is relatively low, there are specific sensitivities to consider (for example, Landford contains scheduled monuments, and Bartley lies adjacent to a conservation area). This increases the potential for adverse impacts on the setting of listed buildings, conservation areas, and archaeological sites.

Option C introduces smaller hamlets alongside defined villages, further increasing the spatial footprint and the risk of impacts on historic landscapes and undesignated heritage assets. Managing heritage sensitivities in these locations may be more challenging due to limited capacity for change.

Option D disperses development across the National Park without a guiding hierarchy, presenting the greatest risk to the historic environment. Scattered development increases the likelihood of affecting undesignated heritage assets and historic landscapes, particularly in areas not previously subject to detailed heritage assessment. The lack of spatial management makes it difficult to avoid sensitive locations and undermines the ability to manage cumulative impacts on historic character.

Option E directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This option has the second highest rate of growth, which, along with the dispersed nature of the option, increases the overall development footprint and adds complexity to heritage management.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Like Option A, Option F performs well in relation to the historic environment due to the low housing delivery number. Many areas on the National Park's also boundary benefit from conservation designations (including areas by Ringwood, Fordingbridge Lymington, and Totton), which provide strong safeguards against inappropriate development. While these areas may still contain historic features, the ability to plan strategically and apply robust heritage protections makes this option the least disruptive overall.

Option G includes a major new or expanded settlement, carrying significant risk to the historic environment. The scale of development could result in substantial change to the landscape setting of heritage assets, particularly if located near historic villages or within areas of archaeological interest. If located at Calshot, one potential location under consideration, development could affect the setting of Calshot Castle (a scheduled monument) and other heritage assets linked to the area's military history. While the area currently has a poor-quality public realm, there may be opportunities for heritage-led regeneration. Although heritage-sensitive design principles could be incorporated, the potential for harm (whether at Calshot or another location) remains considerable and would require detailed assessment and mitigation.

Table 5-7: Appraisal Findings (Housing)

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	6	5	3	7	2	4	1

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A delivers the lowest level of housing and focuses growth around existing defined villages. The limited scale of development may constrain opportunities for younger residents and those in housing need, potentially exacerbating demographic challenges and affordability pressures.

Option B increases housing delivery and expands the settlement hierarchy to include additional villages. This offers a more balanced approach, improving housing availability across a wider area and supporting demographic sustainability. However, the broader spatial footprint introduces risks of infrastructure strain, which must be managed to ensure delivery is effective and sustainable.

Option C builds on Option B by including smaller hamlets, further increasing housing delivery and spreading provision more widely. This could help meet local needs in smaller communities but may also introduce challenges for infrastructure and service access, particularly for specialist housing linked to health facilities.

Option D disperses development across the National Park without a guiding hierarchy, delivering a relatively high level of housing but lacking strategic focus. Homes may be located in areas poorly served by infrastructure or services, reducing the effectiveness of housing provision and risking unsustainable patterns of growth.

Option E directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary, delivering a higher level of housing and helping meet local demand. This approach could support affordable housing delivery at scale and improve access to services in adjacent urban areas, though careful integration is needed to ensure local needs are met.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option F focuses sites on the National Park's boundary, offering good connectivity to external services and employment hubs. While housing delivery is moderate compared to other options, this approach may reduce pressure on the National Park's main settlements and provide opportunities for affordable housing near accessible locations. Despite the relatively low overall delivery figures, this option has good potential to deliver larger allocations, which can unlock affordable housing and specialist provision near accessible services (which dispersed approached may lack).

Option G includes a major new or expanded settlement, delivering the highest level of housing. This option has the greatest potential to meet housing need comprehensively, including affordable and family housing, and could support infrastructure provision at scale.

Table 5-8: Appraisal Findings (Landscape)

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	1	3	4	6	5	2	7

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A performs most favourably. Focusing growth around existing defined villages avoids intrusion into open countryside and protects the National Park’s special qualities. The modest scale of growth helps preserve tranquillity and maintain the National Park’s rural character.

Option B 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..

Option C adds smaller hamlets, further increasing visibility and fragmentation of landscape character. Hamlets typically lack containment and have strong connections to open countryside, making integration challenging and eroding the sense of openness and remoteness that contributes to the National Park’s special qualities.

Option D disperses development without a guiding hierarchy, introducing built form into previously undeveloped areas. This risks significant harm to the special qualities of the National Park and makes it difficult to avoid sensitive views and cultural landscape features.

Option E directs higher levels of growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary, creating cumulative effects on both the National Park’s character and its setting. Areas on the National Park’s boundary often contribute to gateway views, so impacts may extend beyond the boundary and affect the experience of entering the National Park.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option F focuses new housing on the National Park's boundary, avoiding direct impacts on landscapes in the centre of the National Park. However, development at these locations may still heavily influence the National Park's setting and transitional views, requiring careful design and screening to maintain landscape integrity and protect its special qualities.

Option G performs least favourably. A major new or expanded settlement has the potential to cause significant visual change and loss of tranquillity, with indirect effects such as traffic, lighting, and urbanisation altering the National Park's character. In addition to the new settlement, Option G proposes the highest overall level of housing delivery, with potential sites distributed across the National Park. This wider pattern of growth extends the potential for landscape and visual impacts, including cumulative effects. It should be noted though that a well designed new settlement in an appropriate location has the potential to enhance existing areas of poor public realm, if done in a way that respects and reinforces the National Park's special qualities.

Table 5-9: Appraisal Findings (Transport)

Rank of Preference	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	1	3	4	7	5	2	6

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option A performs well in transport terms. Concentrating development around existing defined villages supports compact growth patterns that encourage walking, cycling, and public transport use. These settlements are generally served by existing transport infrastructure, reducing the need for new roads and limiting traffic growth. The modest scale of development also helps avoid significant congestion or pressure on sensitive routes.

Option B expands the hierarchy to include additional villages, some of which have reasonable service provision. This broader distribution may still allow for sustainable travel in certain locations, but smaller settlements often have weaker transport links, increasing reliance on private vehicles. While impacts can be mitigated where growth is directed to better-connected villages, overall car dependency is likely to rise.

Option C adds smaller hamlets, many of which lack public transport and active travel opportunities. This increases the spatial footprint and risk of traffic growth across the National Park, affecting tranquillity and contributing to emissions. The dispersed nature of these locations makes sustainable transport provision challenging.

Option D performs least favourably. Dispersing development without a guiding hierarchy undermines opportunities for public transport and active travel, creating reliance on private vehicles. This could lead to widespread traffic growth across sensitive areas.

Option E directs growth to a wider range of settlements within the National Park, including land around its periphery where neighbouring settlements adjoin the National Park boundary. This option has the second highest rate of growth, which increases overall traffic movements both within and around the National Park. Without strong sustainable transport measures, this option risks cumulative impacts on congestion and air quality.

Discussion of Potential Effects and Relative Merits of Options

Option F focuses new housing provision on the National Park's boundary. These locations generally have good transport links and access to regional networks (including via rail stations such as New Milton, Hinton Admiral, Lymington or Totton), reducing car dependency compared to dispersed growth. While the roads close to the National Park's boundaries may experience some congestion, the potential for sustainable travel is higher than most other options, and overall delivery numbers are relatively low.

Option G includes a major new or expanded settlement, presenting both risks and opportunities. If well-designed, it could incorporate sustainable transport infrastructure such as bus services and cycle routes, reducing car dependency. However, the scale of development carries a high risk of traffic growth if not appropriately located (for example, near to existing major road networks or public transport links), particularly during construction and early occupation phases.

Table 5-10: Appraisal Rankings (Compiled)

SA Theme		Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E	Option F	Option G
Air, Soil and Water Resources	Rank	1	3	4	6	5	2	7
	Significant?				-			-
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Rank	2	3	4	6	5	1	7
	Significant?				-			-
Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)	Rank	1	3	4	7	5	2	6
	Significant?				-			-
Communities, Health and Wellbeing	Rank	6	3	2	7	1	5	4
	Significant?			+	-	+		
Economy and Employment	Rank	6	3	2	7	1	5	4
	Significant?				-	+		
Historic Environment	Rank	1	3	4	7	5	2	6
	Significant?				-			

SA Theme		Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E	Option F	Option G
Housing	Rank	6	5	3	7	2	4	1
	Significant?				-	+		+
Landscape	Rank	1	3	4	6	5	2	7
	Significant?				-			-
Transport	Rank	1	3	4	7	5	2	6
	Significant?	+			-		+	

**Significant beneficial effects are denoted by a '+', while significant adverse effects are denoted by a '-'*

5.3. Summary of appraisal findings

Air, Soil and Water Resources

- 5.3.1. The most favourable option for the Air, Soil and Water Resources SA theme is Option A, which delivers the lowest level of growth and concentrates development around existing defined villages. This approach minimises land disturbance, reduces risks of water pollution, and helps maintain air quality by limiting traffic increases and avoiding sensitive or remote locations. Option F also performs well, focusing growth on the periphery of the National Park in accessible locations with existing infrastructure. Options B and C introduce a broader footprint, which increases risks but can be mitigated through careful site selection. In contrast, Option D and Option G perform least favourably. Option D disperses development across the National Park without spatial control, increasing risks to soil profiles, watercourses, and air quality. Option G, which includes a major new or expanded settlement, poses significant risks due to the scale of land clearance, infrastructure development, and long-term emissions.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 5.3.2. In relation to the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SA theme, the most favourable options are Option A and Option F, which deliver the lowest rates of housing growth. Option F avoids development within the central areas of the National Park and benefits from strategic planning near its periphery, while Option A limits land take and recreational pressure through a low delivery rate and delivering houses near to the main settlements. Options B, C, and E introduce greater housing numbers, and more spatial spread, increasing risks of habitat fragmentation and disturbance, particularly in the smaller settlements (associated with Options C and E) or ecologically linked areas. Option D and Option G perform least favourably. Option D disperses development without a guiding hierarchy, increasing the likelihood of encroachment into areas with significant biodiversity sensitivities. Option G, due to its scale and intensity, poses the greatest risk of harm to ecological networks and designated sites.

Climate Change (Including Flood Risk)

- 5.3.3. The most favourable option for the Climate Change (Including Flood Risk) SA theme is Option A, which supports compact growth, lower emissions, and better alignment with existing infrastructure and flood risk mapping. Option F also ranks favourably due to its strategic focus towards areas on the National Park's boundary and alignment with commuting patterns. Option B perform moderately, while Options C and E spread impacts more widely. Option G offers potential for climate-positive design but carries high risks due to its scale. Option D performs least favourably due to its lack of spatial control and reduced capacity for coordinated adaptation.

Communities, Health and Wellbeing

- 5.3.4. The most favourable option for the Communities, Health and Wellbeing SA theme is Option E, which supports both the National Park's communities and adjacent communities, whilst helping to deliver housing provision across a wider area. Option B offers moderate benefits by supporting housing in main settlements and additional villages. Option C delivers slightly more housing but faces challenges integrating development in hamlets, which may affect cohesion and access to services. Option F performs well in some respects, providing modest growth near the National Park boundary with good connectivity to external services, helping reduce isolation and improve access to facilities. Option G offers the highest level of housing delivery and the potential to support significant new infrastructure. However, the scale of growth proposed by the option has the potential to undermine health and wellbeing, including through undermining the second statutory purpose of the National Park. Option A, while reinforcing existing communities and supporting walkability, ranks lower due to its limited housing delivery and reduced capacity to meet future needs. Option D performs least favourably, with its dispersed approach risking inefficient service provision and weakening community cohesion.

Economy and Employment

- 5.3.5. The most favourable option for the Economy and Employment SA theme is Option E, which offers strong potential for economic growth by combining development in main settlements, additional villages, and sites near the National Park boundary. This approach supports local economies while improving access to regional employment hubs and enabling more efficient infrastructure investment. Options B and C also rank favourably, as they reinforce existing settlements and extend benefits to smaller communities. Option G performs well in terms of economic potential due to its scale and ability to deliver infrastructure and employment opportunities, but also has the potential for adverse effects on the rural and visitor economy through impacts on the National Park's special qualities. Option F performs moderately well by improving access to regional employment hubs but offers limited benefits to the main settlements in the National Park. Option A supports local services in main settlements but limits opportunities for broader economic expansion. Option D performs least favourably due to its lack of strategic focus and potential to undermine infrastructure investment.

Historic Environment

- 5.3.6. The most favourable option for the Historic Environment SA theme is Option A, which delivers the lowest growth and benefits from existing conservation protections in the main settlements where heritage constraints can be managed. Option F also ranks favourably, with a low rate of delivery, focused in areas by the National Park's boundary. Options B and C follow, introducing greater risk to historic assets from the higher levels of growth. Option D performs least favourably due to its lack of spatial control and increased likelihood of encroachment into sensitive historic landscapes. Option G carries significant risk due to its scale, although mitigation may be possible through sensitive design. In this respect Option G has the potential to enhance local historic assets, if designed and located appropriately.

Housing

- 5.3.7. The most favourable option for Housing SA theme is Option G, which delivers the highest level of housing and has the greatest potential to meet local needs, including affordable and family housing. Options E, C, and B also rank favourably, offering higher delivery and better access to services. Option F performs moderately, with good connectivity but lower overall delivery. Option A performs less well due to limited housing provision, and Option D ranks least favourably due to inefficiency and lack of strategic focus.

Landscape

- 5.3.8. The most favourable option for the Landscape SA theme is Option A, which concentrates development around existing settlements, minimising intrusion into open countryside and preserving the National Park's visual coherence. This approach helps safeguard the special qualities of the National Park, including its sense of tranquillity and scenic beauty. Option B also ranks favourably, though it introduces greater risks of visual intrusion. Options C and D increase fragmentation and loss of tranquillity due to their dispersed nature, with potential adverse effects on the National Park's special qualities. Option E creates cumulative impacts across broad areas of the National Park. Option F avoids direct impacts on central landscapes but requires careful design to protect transitional views and ensure the integrity of the National Park's special qualities is maintained. Option G performs least favourably due to its scale and transformative impacts on landscape character, which could significantly undermine the special qualities that define the National Park.

Transport

- 5.3.9. The most favourable option for the Transport SA theme is Option A, which supports compact growth and sustainable travel through proximity to existing infrastructure and services. Option F also ranks favourably, benefiting from good access to regional transport networks and reduced car dependency. Options B and C perform moderately, with increased reliance on private vehicles in smaller settlements. Option E spreads impacts more widely, increasing overall traffic movements. Option D performs least favourably due to its dispersed nature and lack of support for sustainable transport. While Option G is likely to result in the greatest increase in traffic flows due to its overall scale of growth, it also presents the greatest opportunity to deliver new transport infrastructure that could help manage movement and support more sustainable travel patterns.

5.4. Conclusions

- 5.4.1. Overall, the appraisal indicates that each spatial option presents a distinct set of strengths and weaknesses across the SA themes. Option A generally performs well for environmental themes, including air, soil, and water resources, due to its restrained level of growth and concentration around existing defined villages. However, its limited growth and distribution may constrain opportunities for meeting housing needs and supporting community vitality.
- 5.4.2. Option B offers a broader spatial footprint and performs moderately across most themes. While this approach introduces some additional risks to soil and water resources compared to Option A, its focus on service-based settlements helps support accessibility and infrastructure provision, which benefits social and economic objectives. Option C performs similarly but includes additional housing delivery in smaller hamlets, which may increase infrastructure requirements and reduce efficiency in service delivery.
- 5.4.3. Option D disperses development without a settlement hierarchy, which increases infrastructure demands and environmental risks while offering limited strategic benefits. Option D performs poorly across all the SA themes.
- 5.4.4. Option E extends development to a wider range of settlements, including peripheral areas adjoining the National Park boundary. This provides flexibility for housing delivery but amplifies environmental risks and may increase reliance on private vehicles.
- 5.4.5. Option F performs well for environmental protection by focusing growth on the National Park's boundary, where existing infrastructure reduces potential impacts. Development under this option would also avoid some key sensitive areas in the National Park; however, it would place additional

environmental pressures on the fringes of the National Park. In addition, more limited housing delivery through this option may limit economic benefits, including in key 'core' parts of the National Park.

- 5.4.6. Option G, which includes a major new or expanded settlement, and increases growth across the National Park, poses significant challenges due to the scale of land clearance, infrastructure development, and long-term emissions, although it could deliver substantial housing numbers and associated economic benefits. Overall taking forward the options would be likely to significantly undermine the purposes, duty and special qualities of the National Park.

5.5. Choice of approach taken forward for the Local Plan Review's growth strategy

- 5.5.1. The National Park Authority have chosen to proceed with Option B as the preferred spatial strategy for the Local Plan. This decision reflects a careful balance between meeting housing and community needs and protecting the New Forest's nationally important landscape and habitats.
- 5.5.2. Option B focuses the majority of planned new development around the larger villages of the National Park, allowing for modest, managed growth that respects the National Park's sensitive environment and reinforces established communities. This approach is considered the most appropriate in light of the National Park's statutory purposes and its responsibility to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage, while promoting public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. It also reflects the Authority's statutory duty to foster the socio-economic well-being of local communities within the National Park. Option B broadens the number of existing 'defined villages' from 4 villages to 7 and will allow more of the identified housing arising from communities within the National Park to be met, while ensuring that development is spatially focused towards the most sustainable villages.
- 5.5.3. By avoiding the options that includes more dispersed or larger-scale development, Option B helps minimise impacts on biodiversity, landscape character, tranquillity, and the historic environment. It also supports sustainable transport and infrastructure planning, while maintaining the integrity of the National Park's ecological networks and cultural traditions. Option B scores reasonably well across the broad range of SA themes, compared to other options that are less balanced in terms of impacts.
- 5.5.4. In choosing Option B, the Authority have prioritised a strategy that is locally responsive, environmentally responsible, and consistent with the long-term stewardship of the New Forest National Park. Option B reinforces the role of existing 'defined' settlements and extends the benefits to other villages

that have a basic range of services. The alternative option of more dispersed development would have greater landscape impacts; and the option of focusing development to the periphery of the National Park would not support the socio-economic well-being of communities within the National Park.

6. Appraisal of the Regulation 18 Version of the Local Plan Review

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the Regulation 18 version of the Local Plan Review. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version (i.e., the Regulation 18 version) of the Local Plan Review under the nine SA theme headings;
- Consideration of potential cumulative effects; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage.

6.2. Preferred Approach for the Local Plan Review

6.2.1. The preferred approach for the Local Plan Review has been developed through a multi-stage process. The Local Plan Review will look ahead to 2043 and is a key mechanism for delivering the two statutory National Park purposes and the related socio-economic duty. The first stage involved publication of a 'Direction of Travel' document, which identified areas considered to be in scope for review and those elements of the adopted Local Plan that remain consistent with national planning policy.¹⁵ This document was subject to public consultation in February and March 2025.

6.2.2. As part of the initial evidence-gathering, the Authority also undertook a Call for Sites, inviting local communities, landowners, and developers to submit sites for potential residential, employment, Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, and other uses, including environmental mitigation.

6.2.3. The Local Plan Review is currently at Regulation 18 stage, and work will continue on assessing the plan and supporting evidence base to inform the Regulation 19 version, which is scheduled for publication in Summer 2026. A timetable for the Local Plan Review and future consultation periods is set out in the Authority's Local Development Scheme.¹⁵

¹⁵ New Forest National Park Authority (2025). 'New Forest National Park Local Plan Review 2025' can be accessed through [this link](#).

- 6.2.4. Prior to sending across the final Local Plan Review Regulation 18 draft, New Forest National Park Authority provided a full set of draft policies for the SA to review. These policies formed the basis for an iterative appraisal process, through which initial assessments informed feedback on potential sustainability issues. This feedback supported the refinement of policies, ensuring that sustainability considerations were embedded throughout the preparation of the Local Plan Review.
- 6.2.5. A series of recommendations were suggested for the purposes of informing the ongoing development of the draft policies. These are summarised in **Table 6-1**.
- 6.2.6. Some recommendations may also support wider initiatives, including delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan, as they relate to matters that complement but are not solely addressed through land use planning.

Table 6-1: Recommendations for Consideration During the Implementation of the Local Plan Review

Recommendation	Relevant SA Topic
Support projects that improve the ecological status of rivers, streams, and wetlands in the National Park.	Air, Soil and Water; Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Promote water-sensitive urban design beyond SuDS. For example, consider greywater reuse.	Air, Soil and Water
Support landscape-scale initiatives to monitor, manage, and reduce Invasive Non-Native Species across the National Park.	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Encourage public awareness and responsible recreation to reduce INNS spread.	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Include references to the National Park’s geodiversity. For example, a policy could be included that requires development proposals to conserve and enhance geodiversity features, including important geological formations, landforms, and soil types.	Biodiversity and Geodiversity; Landscape
Promote campaigns on walking, cycling, public transport, and EV use (for residents and visitors).	Transport, Climatic Change
Promote shared transport options.	Transport; Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Consider support for mobility hubs, allowing for better connection of public transport and active transport infrastructure.	Transport; Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Support community energy schemes and battery storage.	Climate Change

Recommendation	Relevant SA Topic
Promote partnerships with local colleges, training providers, and employers to develop green apprenticeships, work experience, and career pathways.	Communities, Health and Wellbeing; Economy and Employment
Support improved digital connectivity to enable remote working, online retail, and digital services for rural businesses.	Communities, Health and Wellbeing; Economy and Employment; Transport
Promote adaptable housing, alongside accessible housing	Housing; Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Ensure that communities are consulted in the design of new projects, such as green infrastructure and new open spaces.	Communities, Health and Wellbeing

6.3. Policies in the Regulation 18 version of the Local Plan Review

- 6.3.1. To support the implementation of the vision statement for the Local Plan Review, the Regulation 18 version of the plan puts forward 63 policies under eight chapter themes to guide new development within the National Park. These are outlined in **Table 6-2**.
- 6.3.2. It should be noted that the Local Plan Review primarily involves minor edits to existing policies in the adopted Local Plan (2019) for clarity and updating, rather than substantial changes. A revised set of policy numbers and an indication of changes were presented to the Authority meeting on 16 October (see Schedule of Revised Policy Numbers).¹⁶
- 6.3.3. Regarding site selection, some of the identified development sites are allocations carried forward from the adopted Local Plan (2019). Several of these sites already have full planning permission and are under construction, including land at Whartons Lane in Ashurst, the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel site, and land at Church Lane in Sway. The gypsy and traveller site allocation at Forest View in Landford also has planning permission.

¹⁶ New Forest National Park Authority (2025). 'Revised Policy Numbers' can be accessed through [this link](#).

Table 6-2: Policies in the New Forest National Park Local Plan Review

Chapter Name	Policy Reference	Policy Name
Spatial Strategy and Development Principles	Policy SP1	Supporting sustainable development
	Policy DP2	General development principles
	Policy SP3	Spatial Strategy
	Policy SP4	Major development in the National Park
	Policy SP5	Land to north of Fawley Waterside
	Policy SP6	Infrastructure Provision and developer contributions
Climate Change	Policy SP7	Safeguarding and improving water resources
	Policy DP8	Flood risk
	Policy SP9	Sustainable Construction
	Policy SP10	Renewable Energy
Natural Environment	Policy SP11	Nature conservation sites of international importance
	Policy SP12	The natural environment - nationally, regionally and locally important sites
	Policy SP13	Biodiversity Net Gain

Chapter Name	Policy Reference	Policy Name
	Policy SP14	Landscape character
	Policy SP15	Green & Blue Infrastructure
	Policy DP16	Open space
	Policy DP17	Recreational horse keeping
	Policy DP18	Field shelters and stables
	Policy DP19	Maneges
	Policy DP20	Coastal Development
	Policy DP21	Coastal Change Management Area
	Policy SP22	Tranquillity and dark skies
Historic and Built Environment	Policy SP23	The historic and built environment
	Policy DP24	Heritage
	Policy SP25	Local Distinctiveness
	Policy DP26	Design Principles
	Policy DP27	Residential character of defined villages

Chapter Name	Policy Reference	Policy Name
Vibrant Communities	Policy SP28	New Residential development in the National Park
	Policy SP29	Specialist housing for older people (Use Class C2)
	Policy SP30	The size of new dwellings
	Policy SP31	Land at Whartons Lane, Ashurst
	Policy SP32	Land at Ashurst Hospital
	Policy SP33	Land at Knellers Lane, Ashurst
	Policy SP34	Land at the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel
	Policy SP35	Land at Calpe Avenue, Lyndhurst
	Policy SP36	Land south of Church Lane, Sway
	Policy SP37	Land to west of Brighton Road, Sway
	Policy SP38	Land to west of Winsor Road, Bartley
	Policy SP39	Land to the south of Hamptworth Road, Landford
	Policy SP40	Land to the east of The Ridge, Redlynch
Policy SP41	Affordable Housing provision within the defined villages and on allocated sites	

Chapter Name	Policy Reference	Policy Name
	Policy SP42	Rural Exception Sites
	Policy SP43	New Forest Commoners Dwellings
	Policy SP44	New dwellings for Estate, agricultural and forestry workers
	Policy DP45	Removal of agricultural occupancy conditions
	Policy SP46	Self and Custom Build
	Policy SP47	Land at Forest View, Landford, for gypsies and travellers
	Policy SP48	Gypsies, Travellers and travelling showpeople
	Policy DP49	Replacement dwellings
	Policy DP50	Extensions to dwellings
	Policy DP51	Residential outbuildings
	Policy SP52	Local Community facilities
Thriving Local Economy	Policy SP53	Maintaining and Improving Business Floorspace
	Policy DP54	Redevelopment and extension to existing employment buildings
	Policy SP55	The land-based economy

Chapter Name	Policy Reference	Policy Name
	Policy DP56	New Agricultural and forestry buildings
	Policy DP57	Re-use of farm buildings
	Policy DP58	Loss of local retail facilities
	Policy DP59	Retail development outside of the defined settlement boundaries
	Policy SP60	Sustainable tourism development
	Policy DP61	Holiday Parks and camp sites
Transport and Accessibility	Policy SP62	Transport Infrastructure
	Policy SP63	Sustainable transport and access

6.4. Approach to the Appraisal

- 6.4.1. For each SA theme, 'significant' effects of the Regulation 18 version of the Local Plan Review on the baseline are predicated and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. This includes, for example, consideration of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' will be described within the assessment, as appropriate.
- 6.4.2. Cumulative and in-combination effects are also considered. Cumulative effects refer to the combined impact of multiple policies or developments within the Local Plan Review over time, which may collectively influence conditions even if individual effects are limited. In-combination effects arise when the Local Plan Review's implementation interacts with other plans, programmes, or projects, potentially leading to additional or amplified impacts on the baseline environment.
- 6.4.3. Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the Local Plan Review. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 6.4.4. It should also be noted that the Local Plan Review is at Regulation 18 stage, and several policy areas remain subject to refinement.

6.5. Appraisal

Air, Soil and Water Resources

- 6.5.1. The Local Plan Review includes a strong policy framework for protecting water resources and managing flood risk. Policy SP7 requires development to avoid harm to water quality and availability, and the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). The emphasis on nature-based solutions, such as rain gardens, permeable paving, and green roofs, will deliver significant benefits for water management and biodiversity, particularly given the National Park's sensitive hydrology. The requirement for water efficiency standards for new homes is especially important in this area of 'serious water stress',¹⁷ helping to reduce pressure on local water supplies as new development comes forward.
- 6.5.2. Policy DP8 complements SP7 by addressing flood risk, requiring developments to comply with national guidance and adopt a catchment-based approach. This is important in the New Forest, where low-lying areas and coastal zones are vulnerable to fluvial and surface water flooding. The requirement for compatibility with Shoreline Management Plans and Catchment Management Plans ensures alignment with wider strategic objectives for flood resilience and water quality.
- 6.5.3. Coastal policies (DP20 and DP21) are relevant in the context of water resources and flood risk, as they seek to avoid adverse impacts on coastal processes and manage development within the Coastal Change Management Area. These measures are particularly important given the National Park's southern boundary along the Solent, where rising sea levels and erosion pose long-term risks to soil and water resources.
- 6.5.4. Air quality is addressed through DP2, which requires development to avoid unacceptable impacts from pollution, including on air, soil, and water. Indirect benefits for air quality will also arise from SP62 and SP63, which promote sustainable transport and active travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles and associated emissions.
- 6.5.5. Policies that safeguard and enhance green infrastructure, including SP11 to SP15, also contribute to air and water quality by supporting ecosystem services such as filtration, carbon sequestration, and soil stabilisation.

¹⁷ 'Serious water stress' is a designation used by the Environment Agency for areas where the water demand is high compared to supply, requiring careful management of water resources.

- 6.5.6. Soil resources are protected through SP1 and DP2, which promote sustainable development principles such as minimising soil erosion and contamination. Policy DP54 supports the redevelopment and extension of existing employment buildings, reducing pressure on greenfield sites a helping to safeguard soil quality.
- 6.5.7. Site allocation policies (including SP31 to SP33, and SP36) require flood risk assessments and sewerage infrastructure upgrades, which will be essential for protecting water quality and managing surface water. Although SP36 and SP37 fall within areas of good to moderate Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) land, SP36 already has planning permission and is under construction, and SP37 is a small site behind the existing cemetery and not in agricultural use. Consequently, the potential for permanent loss of agricultural land is considered negligible, and any adverse effects on soil resources are likely to be minor. More broadly, while additional development will inevitably increase pressure on air, soil, and water resources, these risks are mitigated through requirements for sustainable design (SP9), renewable energy (SP10), and infrastructure provision (SP6). Construction activities may cause short-term adverse effects, but these are likely to be limited through standard good practice and policy safeguards.
- 6.5.8. Overall, **mixed effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Air, Soil and Water Resources SA theme. **Moderate (significant) medium-to-long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated through integrated sustainable design principles, nature-based solutions, and strong environmental safeguards. However, there remains potential for **minor localised short-to-long-term adverse effects** where development increases pressure on sensitive water catchments or leads to increased emissions during construction and operation.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 6.5.9. Several policies in the Local Plan Review provide strong protection for designated nature conservation sites. Policy SP11 ensures compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, safeguarding internationally important sites within the National Park and requiring mitigation or compensation where necessary, including contributions to strategic schemes such as Bird Aware Solent. Policy SP12 extends protection to nationally and locally designated sites, including SSSIs and priority habitats, and promotes ecological enhancement in line with Local Nature Recovery Strategies. These measures are anticipated to deliver significant beneficial effects by preventing habitat loss and supporting ecological resilience.

- 6.5.10. Policy SP13 introduces the mandatory national requirement for a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain, prioritising on-site delivery and strategic off-site contributions aligned with nature recovery priorities. The nationally required 30-year management period provides long-term security, reinforcing the mitigation hierarchy and contributing to ecological connectivity across the National Park.
- 6.5.11. New green and blue infrastructure provision is supported through SP15, which promotes habitat connectivity, recreational access, and ecological enhancement. This is particularly important in the New Forest context, where recreational pressure can adversely affect sensitive habitats. Policies DP16 to DP21 further regulate activities such as open space provision, horse keeping, field shelters, maneges, and coastal development to avoid harm to biodiversity and geodiversity. Similarly, SP60 and DP61 support sustainable tourism and camping relocation schemes that relieve visitor pressure on ecologically sensitive areas, while enhancing opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities.
- 6.5.12. Landscape and tranquillity policies (SP14 and SP22, respectively), indirectly support biodiversity by maintaining natural features, reducing light pollution, and preserving habitats for nocturnal species. These measures contribute to the wider ecological network and help sustain the conditions necessary for species survival.
- 6.5.13. Strategic policies such as SP1, DP2, and SP3 guide development towards existing settlements, reducing pressure on ecologically sensitive areas. Policy SP4 further limits major development to exceptional circumstances and requires assessment and mitigation of environmental effects, helping to avoid significant harm to biodiversity and geodiversity. Design-based policies, including SP9 (sustainable construction) and SP10 (renewable energy), also encourage nature-based solutions such as swift bricks and restrict renewable energy schemes that could adversely affect wildlife.
- 6.5.14. While site allocations (SP31 to SP40; SP47) present risks during construction and operation, these are mitigated through requirements for habitat buffers, tree retention, ecological assessments, and measures to prevent the spread of invasive species. Policy SP5 (Land to north of Fawley Waterside) is anticipated to have mixed effects: while development could result in adverse impacts, the policy requires remediation of despoiled areas and provision of nature conservation measures, including tree belts, hedgerows, woodland, and new greenspace, coordinated through a site-wide masterplan.

- 6.5.15. While site allocations (SP5; SP31–SP40; SP47) present risks during construction and operation, these are mitigated through a range of policy safeguards. Most allocations require ecological assessments, habitat buffers, and tree retention, which will help reduce direct habitat loss and fragmentation. For example, allocations adjacent to designated sites include measures to maintain and strengthen green buffers, reducing edge effects and disturbance to sensitive habitats.
- 6.5.16. Several allocations also include site-specific mitigation requirements. For example, SP32 (Ashurst Hospital) requires the retention of a green buffer to protect adjacent protected habitats, alongside measures to enhance its role as a biodiversity corridor. SP47 (Land at Forest View, Landford, for gypsies and travellers) also includes a specific requirement to prevent the introduction of invasive non-native species (INNS), which can occur through fly-tipping of garden waste.
- 6.5.17. Despite these safeguards, residual risks remain. Construction activities may lead to short-term disturbance, soil compaction, and increased risk of invasive species, particularly near sensitive habitats. Recreational pressure from new residents could also have cumulative impacts on the New Forest and coastal habitats. These risks are partly addressed through strategic mitigation schemes such as the Habitat Mitigation Scheme and Bird Aware Solent, but ongoing monitoring will be important to ensure effectiveness.
- 6.5.18. Overall, **mixed effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SA theme. **Significant long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated through biodiversity net gain requirements, protection and enhancement of designated sites, and promotion of green infrastructure. Potential **minor localised short-to-long-term adverse effects** from development pressure and recreational impacts remain, but these are generally well mitigated through policy safeguards and strategic mitigation schemes.

Climate Change

- 6.5.19. The Local Plan Review embeds climate change considerations across its strategic framework. Policy SP1 defines sustainable development in the National Park as development that is resilient to climate change, supports energy efficiency, and incorporates small-scale renewables and SuDS. Policy DP2 complements this by requiring high-quality, energy-efficient design, minimisation of pollution, and promotion of active travel and access to green infrastructure. Together, these overarching policies will help ensure that climate change mitigation and adaptation are integrated into the design and delivery of development across the National Park.

- 6.5.20. Policy SP9 promotes sustainable construction, encouraging energy and water efficiency, passive solar design, and the use of locally sourced materials. These measures are likely to reduce the carbon footprint of new development and improve resilience to climate extremes. Policy SP10 supports small-scale renewable energy generation, provided it is sensitively designed and located. While the scale of renewable energy supported is small, the policy aligns with the National Park's Purposes and Duty and offers opportunities for community-scale solutions.
- 6.5.21. Design and heritage policies also contribute to climate objectives. Policy SP23 supports climate change mitigation by encouraging the reuse and, where appropriate, adaptation of historic buildings to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable development. DP26 also promotes sustainable design and construction across all new development, reinforcing the integration of climate-sensitive design and environmental best practice within the National Park.
- 6.5.22. Transport-related policies play an important role in reducing emissions. In this regard, Policy SP63 supports sustainable transport modes, including walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle charging, while SP62 promotes transport infrastructure that minimises visual and ecological impacts. These are complemented by the general development principles (DP2), spatial strategy (SP3), and infrastructure policy (SP6), which collectively encourage development in accessible locations and reduce reliance on private cars. In combination, these measures are expected to support low-carbon mobility and contribute to climate change mitigation.
- 6.5.23. Climate change adaptation is addressed through policies on flood risk and water management. Policies DP8, DP20, and DP21 restrict development in high-risk areas and require a catchment-based approach to flood management, which is particularly relevant given the National Park's low-lying coastal areas and network of rivers and wetlands. Policy SP7 complements this by safeguarding water resources and requiring SuDS that incorporate nature-based solutions. These measures are expected to have beneficial effects by reducing flood risk, protecting water quality, and enhancing ecological resilience.
- 6.5.24. Indirect benefits for climate adaptation also arise from policies that safeguard the National Park's ecological sites, habitats, and green infrastructure (SP11 to SP16), which provide regulating ecosystem services and natural buffers against climate extremes. Policies on landscape character (SP14) and tranquillity (SP22) further support adaptation by maintaining natural features and reducing pressures that could exacerbate climate vulnerability.

- 6.5.25. New development through site-specific allocations (SP5; SP31 to SP40) poses risks of localised adverse effects on climate change mitigation and adaptation, for example through increased emissions during construction and operation, and the introduction of impermeable surfaces. However, these risks are mitigated through embedded requirements for flood risk assessments, SuDS, habitat buffering, and sustainable design measures. Policy SP5 (Fawley Waterside) also requires a coordinated masterplan that integrates green infrastructure and remediation of despoiled land, which could deliver long-term climate resilience benefits.
- 6.5.26. Overall, mixed effects are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Climate Change SA theme. **Major (significant) long-term positive effects** are anticipated by supporting sustainable construction, provision of renewable energy, management of flood risk, and encouragement of sustainable transport. Some **minor localised short-to-long-term moderate adverse effects** may arise from new development; however, these are expected to be effectively managed through embedded mitigation measures and strategic policy safeguards.

Communities, Health and Wellbeing

- 6.5.27. The Local Plan Review places strong emphasis on supporting vibrant, inclusive, and healthy communities. This reflects the National Park Authority's statutory duty under Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 to foster the socio-economic well-being of local communities. This duty is considered in shaping policies that prioritise local needs within the constraints of the National Park designation.
- 6.5.28. Policy SP1 establishes the overarching commitment to sustainable development that delivers social and economic wellbeing for local communities. This principle underpins the housing strategy, infrastructure provision, and policies that promote access to services, green spaces, and sustainable transport. Policy DP2 reinforces this by requiring high-quality design and sustainable construction, which can improve living environments and contribute to healthier, safer places.
- 6.5.29. Regarding Housing, SP28 provides for 920 new dwellings over the plan period, helping to maintain population levels and support local services. Policies SP29 to SP44 address a wide range of housing needs, including specialist housing for older people, affordable housing, rural exception sites, and accommodation for commoners, estate workers, and agricultural workers. These policies are likely to have significant beneficial effects by supporting inclusive communities, reducing outmigration, and ensuring that housing provision reflects local needs and affordability. Policies SP47 and SP48, which address Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, also contribute to meeting diverse housing needs and promoting social inclusion.

- 6.5.30. Access to open space and recreational opportunities is supported through DP16, which sets standards for public open space provision and protects existing recreational land. Similarly, Policy SP15 promotes green and blue infrastructure, delivering multifunctional benefits such as recreation, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Other policies that safeguard and enhance the quality of the local environment, including SP11 to SP14, are also important for preserving the landscapes, habitats, and scenic qualities that underpin outdoor recreation and contribute to physical and mental wellbeing.
- 6.5.31. Policies such as SP20 on coastal development and SP22 on tranquillity and dark skies further help maintain the environmental qualities that make the New Forest an attractive place for residents and visitors. These measures protect the sense of peace, natural beauty, and access to unspoilt landscapes that are important for health and wellbeing.
- 6.5.32. Policies DP17 to DP19 regulate recreational horse keeping, field shelters, and maneges, ensuring that these activities are managed in a way that respects the landscape and avoids harm to biodiversity or amenity.
- 6.5.33. Traditional commoning practices, which are important to the cultural identity and ecological health of the New Forest, are supported through other policies such as SP43 (Commoners' dwellings), SP55 (land-based economy and back-up grazing), and DP56 to DP57 (agricultural infrastructure and farm diversification). Together, these measures help sustain rural traditions and community cohesion while balancing environmental safeguards.
- 6.5.34. Community facilities are protected and supported through SP52, which encourages the retention and development of essential services such as schools, shops, and healthcare facilities. This is particularly relevant in rural areas where such services are important for community sustainability. Policy SP32, which allocates land at Ashurst Hospital for mixed-use development including retained healthcare provision, is a good example of integrating health infrastructure into the spatial strategy. Policies DP58 and DP59 also contribute by supporting local retail provision, helping maintain access to everyday goods and services.
- 6.5.35. Transport and accessibility are addressed through DP62 and SP63, which promote sustainable transport modes and support local initiatives such as the New Forest Tour and community rail partnerships. These policies aim to improve access to services and reduce isolation, particularly for those without access to private vehicles. The safeguarding of disused railway lines and the promotion of walking and cycling infrastructure also contribute to healthier lifestyles and more connected communities. Policy SP6 on infrastructure provision supports this by ensuring that new development contributes to necessary transport and community improvements.

- 6.5.36. Transport is also supported by the spatial strategy (SP3), which ensures that development is focused in appropriate locations, supporting access to services and reducing travel needs.
- 6.5.37. Communities are also supported indirectly through SP60, which promotes sustainable tourism development that enhances understanding and enjoyment of the National Park. By encouraging small-scale visitor facilities and accommodation within appropriate locations, the policy supports local economies while providing opportunities for recreation and cultural engagement. However, careful management will be required to avoid cumulative visitor pressures on local communities and sensitive habitats.
- 6.5.38. Similarly, economic policies such as SP53 to SP55 indirectly support community resilience by sustaining local employment opportunities and the land-based economy, which helps maintain traditional practices and cultural identity. Policy SP5, which allocates land north of Fawley Waterside for employment, may also benefit communities by supporting local jobs.
- 6.5.39. Policies DP26 and DP27 promote high-quality design and ensure that development reflects the built heritage and distinctiveness of the Defined Villages. SP23 to SP25 also safeguard the historic environment and local distinctiveness, reinforcing cultural identity and supporting the visitor economy. These measures contribute to a strong sense of place and community cohesion.
- 6.5.40. Overall, **mixed effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Communities, Health, and Wellbeing SA theme. **Major (significant) long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated through the delivery of housing, transport infrastructure, green infrastructure, and community facility policies. However, there is **potential for minor adverse effects from cumulative pressures resulting from housing growth and tourism**, which will require careful monitoring and mitigation.

Economy and Employment

- 6.5.41. Policies SP53 and DP54 provide a clear framework for maintaining and improving business floorspace, particularly within the Defined Villages. These policies support small-scale employment development and the redevelopment or intensification of existing sites, provided that proposals are appropriate in scale, respect local character, and do not harm amenity or landscape quality. Outside the Defined Villages, employment development is encouraged through farm diversification schemes and the re-use of existing buildings, which helps sustain rural livelihoods and contributes to the local economy. These policies are likely to have beneficial effects by enabling economic activity that reflects the National Park's Purposes and Duty.

- 6.5.42. The land-based economy is specifically addressed through SP55, which supports commoning, farming, and forestry (activities that are linked to the cultural identity and ecological health of the New Forest). This includes enabling affordable housing for commoners and maintaining the supply of back-up grazing land. The policy also encourages farm diversification and the promotion of local produce, which can help sustain traditional practices and strengthen the cultural identity of the National Park. Policies DP56 and DP57 further support agricultural and forestry development, provided that proposals are appropriately scaled and do not result in adverse environmental impacts. This will support the vitality of an important component of the National Park's economy.
- 6.5.43. Retail and tourism are also important components of the New Forest economy. Policies DP58 and DP59 seek to retain valued local retail facilities and support small-scale retail development outside the Defined Villages, including farm shops. These policies help maintain access to services and support local producers. Policy SP60 supports sustainable tourism development, including small-scale visitor accommodation and facilities that enhance understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities. Policy DP61 allows for the relocation of holiday park pitches from sensitive areas, provided there are overall environmental benefits.
- 6.5.44. The spatial strategy (SP3) and overarching sustainable development policy (SP1) influence economic outcomes by guiding development to appropriate locations and ensuring infrastructure supports employment and service provision. While SP4 restricts major development to exceptional circumstances (limiting potential economic growth) it ensures that growth remains compatible with the statutory purposes of the National Park, as set out in paragraph 190 of the NPPF (2024). Policy SP5, which allocates land north of Fawley Waterside for mixed employment use, is likely to deliver economic benefits while incorporating landscape and ecological enhancements.
- 6.5.45. Infrastructure provision (SP6) will support economic activity by ensuring that new development contributes to necessary services and transport improvements. Policies SP7 to SP10 on water resources, flood risk, sustainable construction, and renewable energy also have indirect economic implications by reducing climate-related risks and promoting resource efficiency, which can lower long-term operational costs for businesses.

- 6.5.46. Indirectly, policies on housing (SP28 to SP44), transport (DP62 and SP63), and community facilities (SP52) support the local economy by enabling workforce retention, improving accessibility, and maintaining essential services. Design and heritage policies (SP23, DP24, DP26, and DP27) will also preserve the character of the New Forest's settlements, which is important for tourism and the visitor economy.
- 6.5.47. Overall, the Local Plan Review is expected to deliver **moderate (not significant) beneficial effects** in relation to the Economy and Employment SA theme. This is achieved by supporting a diverse and resilient rural economy through policies that enable appropriately scaled development, protect traditional land-based practices, and promote sustainable tourism and retail.

Historic Environment

- 6.5.48. Policies SP1 and DP2 together establish the overarching framework for sustainable development in the National Park and set out cross-cutting requirements for all proposals. Both policies explicitly recognise the need to conserve and enhance the historic environment as part of achieving sustainable outcomes. They require development to respect the character, appearance, and setting of heritage assets and demonstrate how proposals conserve or enhance the historic environment.
- 6.5.49. Policy SP23 establishes the approach to protecting nationally, regionally, and locally important heritage assets. It supports the sensitive reuse and adaptation of historic buildings, particularly where this contributes to climate change mitigation and sustainable development. This reflects a balanced strategy that recognises the cultural, environmental, and social value of historic buildings.
- 6.5.50. Policy DP24 sets out detailed criteria for assessing proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets, including listed buildings, conservation areas, and registered parks and gardens. It requires proportionate heritage impact assessments and, where appropriate, archaeological evaluations. This ensures that planning decisions are informed by a clear understanding of significance and potential impacts.
- 6.5.51. Design policies also play an important role in safeguarding the historic environment. Policy DP26 promotes high-quality design that enhances the built and historic character of the National Park. Policy DP27 ensures that development within Defined Villages reflects their locally distinctive character and built heritage. Policy SP25 reinforces this by requiring all development to respect local distinctiveness. Together, these policies guide development in a way that reinforces historic context and contributes positively to local identity.

- 6.5.52. Site-specific allocations (SP31 to SP40) could adversely affect historic sites; however, where appropriate, the Local Plan Review includes requirements to retain historic buildings or undertake heritage assessments. For example, the redevelopment of Ashurst Hospital (SP32) must retain the Victorian chapel, and proposals for the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel (SP34) must conserve the historic elements of the building and its contribution to the Lyndhurst Conservation Area.
- 6.5.53. In addition, several allocations (SP33, SP37, SP38 and SP39) require the consideration of design statements, which will ensure that the layout, scale, and design respond sensitively to historic context and setting.
- 6.5.54. Commoning practices form part of the cultural heritage of the New Forest and have influenced its historic landscape over many centuries. Policies SP43 (New Forest Commoners dwellings) and SP44 (New dwellings for Estate, agricultural and forestry workers) support the continuation of land-based activities, which can help maintain the landscape character and heritage features linked to commoning. Without these practices, changes in land management could alter the appearance and character of the historic environment.
- 6.5.55. Provision of transport infrastructure (DP62) and renewable energy (SP10) have the potential for adverse effects on the historic environment (either directly or indirectly); however, the policies require that any proposals avoid adverse impacts on the historic environment. Sustainable construction techniques (SP9), including the use of locally sourced materials, will support these requirements.
- 6.5.56. The National Park's historic environment will also benefit indirectly from policies that support landscape (such as SP14) and tranquillity and dark skies (SP22) by preserving the setting and character of heritage assets. The emphasis on avoiding visual intrusion and maintaining rural darkness is particularly relevant in the New Forest, where the historic landscape and sense of place is closely tied to its natural qualities.
- 6.5.57. Policies promoting sustainable tourism (SP60) and the reuse of existing buildings (SP53 and DP58) offer opportunities for beneficial effects on the historic environment (for example, contributing to the understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's cultural heritage), provided that adaptive reuse respects historic character. While these can deliver positive outcomes, careful implementation will be important to avoid adverse impacts on heritage significance.

- 6.5.58. Overall, **significant medium-to-long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Historic Environment SA theme. This is achieved through strong heritage and design policies, site-specific requirements, and measures supporting landscape and local distinctiveness.

Housing

- 6.5.59. Draft policy SP28 sets out the proposed overall housing requirement for the Local Plan Review period, with 920 additional new dwellings proposed between 2024 and 2043. This includes allocated sites, windfall development within Defined Villages, and rural exception sites. The spatial strategy (SP3 and SP4) directs most new housing to settlements with existing infrastructure, reducing the need for dispersed development in sensitive rural areas. This approach supports the objectives of SP1, which promotes sustainable development that conserves the National Park's special qualities while meeting community needs. By focusing housing growth in appropriate locations, the strategy helps maintain landscape character and biodiversity while supporting local services and community vitality.
- 6.5.60. The Local Plan Review includes targeted policies to address specific housing needs. Policy SP29 supports specialist housing for older people, while SP30 limits the size of new dwellings to 100 m², ensuring a supply of smaller homes that meet identified local demand and prevent the loss of smaller, more affordable units. Policies SP41 and SP42 secure affordable housing within Defined Villages and on rural exception sites, respectively, helping to meet local housing needs. These measures collectively ensure that type, size, and affordability are given appropriate consideration.
- 6.5.61. Given the National Park's unique context, the Local Plan Review includes housing policies linked to rural occupations. Policies SP43 and SP44 allow for dwellings for New Forest Commoners, estate workers, and agricultural and forestry workers, subject to strict occupancy conditions. These provisions are reinforced by SP55, which supports the land-based economy by maintaining commoning and farming practices. Together, these policies ensure that housing supports traditional livelihoods and cultural heritage. Policy DP45 provides a framework for removing agricultural occupancy conditions only where there is clear evidence of lack of need, preventing the unnecessary loss of rural worker housing.
- 6.5.62. The Local Plan Review also addresses the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople through SP48, which supports permanent and transit accommodation where there is an established local need and subject to criteria on landscape impact, access to services, and highway safety. This ensures that housing provision is inclusive and meets the needs of all sectors of the community.

- 6.5.63. Location-specific constraints are also given consideration in the Local Plan Review. Policy DP21 designates a Coastal Change Management Area where new residential development is generally not appropriate, reducing exposure to flood risk and coastal erosion. This reflects the Local Plan Review's consideration of climate resilience and sustainable housing locations.
- 6.5.64. Site-specific allocations (SP35-SP40) include detailed requirements to ensure development is sustainable and locally appropriate. For example:
- Policy SP35 (Calpe Avenue, Lyndhurst) supports redevelopment for around 50 extra care units (C2 use), subject to tree retention, conservation area sensitivity, and habitat mitigation;
 - Policy SP36 (Church Lane, Sway) allocates land for around 40 dwellings, requiring 50% affordable housing, and provision of informal greenspace to mitigate recreational pressure on protected habitats; and
 - Policies SP37-SP40 allocate smaller and medium-sized sites in Sway, Bartley, Landford, and Redlynch, each requiring 50% affordable housing, landscape-led design, and measures to protect biodiversity and local character.
- 6.5.65. These allocations demonstrate a strong emphasis on affordability, design quality, and environmental protection, consistent with SP1 and DP2.
- 6.5.66. Housing design and quality are addressed in SP7, SP9 and SP10, alongside DP2, DP26 and DP27, which require new dwellings to achieve high standards of design, reflect local distinctiveness, and incorporate sustainable construction techniques. These policies ensure that housing growth respects the built heritage of Defined Villages and the wider landscape, while also contributing to climate change mitigation through energy efficiency and renewable energy integration.
- 6.5.67. Policy SP46 supports self-build and custom housebuilding, provided that occupants have a local connection, offering further opportunities to address local housing need. Policies DP49 and DP50 control replacement dwellings and extensions, limiting floorspace to prevent incremental suburbanisation and protect the rural character of the National Park. Policy DP51 similarly restricts outbuildings to ensure they remain incidental to the main dwelling and do not create additional habitable space. These controls ensure that housing change over time remains compatible with the National Park's special qualities.

- 6.5.68. It is acknowledged that the draft Local Plan Review does not meet the full ‘policy-off’ housing need figure derived from the New Forest District Council standard method (approximately 260 dwellings per annum for the National Park area), with the proposed requirement equating to around 50 dwellings per annum. This shortfall reflects the statutory purposes of National Parks and the extensive environmental designations within the New Forest, which significantly constrain development capacity. While this approach is justified, it represents a notable gap between identified need and planned provision, which is a relevant consideration for the SA.
- 6.5.69. Overall, **major (significant) long-term beneficial effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Housing SA theme. This is achieved by providing dwellings that address local housing needs (including affordable and specialist provision), while ensuring high-quality design and sustainable construction. Policies also direct housing to appropriate locations, avoid areas at risk, and apply strict controls on size and extensions, helping to safeguard the National Park’s special qualities.

Landscape

- 6.5.70. National Parks are nationally designated landscapes, and the conservation and enhancement of landscape character is therefore a core objective of the Local Plan Review. This reflects the statutory purposes of National Parks and aligns with paragraphs 189-190 of the NPPF (2024), which require great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in these areas.
- 6.5.71. Policy SP14 provides the principal framework for landscape protection in the Local Plan Review. It requires development proposals to be informed by the New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment and to demonstrate compatibility with the distinct features and type of landscape in which they are located. The policy prioritises conserving the scenic beauty of the National Park and protecting open and undeveloped areas between and within settlements. This objective is reinforced by SP1, which sets out the overarching approach to sustainable development, requiring proposals to enhance and protect the unique landscape of the New Forest through high-quality design and local distinctiveness.
- 6.5.72. The spatial strategy (SP3) supports landscape protection by focusing new development within Defined Villages, thereby reducing pressure for dispersed development in the open countryside and helping to maintain the integrity of rural landscapes. Policy DP16 complements this by safeguarding open space and resisting its loss unless appropriate justification is provided.

- 6.5.73. Several design-related policies contribute to beneficial effects on the New Forest's landscapes and townscapes. Policy DP2 sets general development principles requiring proposals to respect landscape character, protect trees and hedgerows, and use appropriate materials and boundary treatments. Policies DP26 and DP27 promote contextually appropriate design and ensure that development within Defined Villages reflects their built heritage and landscape setting. Policy SP25 seeks to prevent suburbanising effects that would erode local character, while SP9 and SP30 promote sustainable construction, use of local materials, and limit dwelling sizes to reduce visual impact. Policies DP49 to DP51 provide additional safeguards by controlling the scale and siting of replacement dwellings, extensions, and outbuildings, ensuring that incremental changes do not cumulatively harm the landscape.
- 6.5.74. Several policies in the Local Plan Review address specific types of development that could affect landscape character. Policies DP17 to DP19 regulate recreational horse keeping, field shelters, and maneges, requiring proposals to avoid adverse effects on the landscape. Policy SP10 complements this by ensuring that renewable energy proposals are small-scale and designed to avoid visual intrusion. The policy supports appropriate small-scale renewable energy proposals that do not have an adverse impact on landscape character, in recognition of the New Forest's status as one of only 10 National Parks in the country. This approach balances the need for sustainable energy generation with the protection of the National Park's distinctive qualities.
- 6.5.75. The coastal landscape of the National Park is protected through DP20, which ensures that development does not harm seaward or landward views or consolidate scattered development. Policy DP21 proposes a Coastal Change Management Area and restricts new residential development in vulnerable coastal zones, helping to preserve the coastal landscape.
- 6.5.76. Tranquillity and dark skies, identified as special qualities of the National Park, are protected through SP22, which seeks to minimise noise, visual intrusion, and light pollution from new developments. This includes support for the removal of visually intrusive structures. Policy SP4 provides additional safeguards by strictly limiting major development to exceptional circumstances and requiring consideration of detrimental effects on landscape, tranquillity, and cumulative impacts.

- 6.5.77. Site-specific housing allocations (SP31 to SP40) may result in localised adverse landscape effects. However, these impacts are mitigated through requirements for landscape buffers, tree retention, and design that reflects local character. Policy SP5, which allocates land north of Fawley Waterside for employment and nature conservation, includes strong landscape enhancement measures such as tree belts, hedgerows, and greenspace, supported by a comprehensive masterplan.
- 6.5.78. Policies SP28 to SP30, SP42 to SP44, SP46, and SP47 to SP48 allow for housing and traveller accommodation outside Defined Villages, but apply strict criteria on scale, siting, and local need to minimise landscape harm. Similarly, SP52 supports community facilities only where proportionate and sensitively designed, while SP60 supports sustainable tourism that enhances the National Park's special qualities. Policy DP61 ensures changes to holiday parks or campsites deliver environmental benefits and restore sensitive areas.
- 6.5.79. Policies supporting the land-based economy and rural diversification (including SP53 to DP57) permit small-scale employment and farm diversification, with safeguards to ensure buildings are appropriate in scale, design, and location. Policies DP58 and DP59 allow small-scale retail in rural areas where it serves local needs, provided it does not extend into open countryside or harm landscape character.
- 6.5.80. Indirect beneficial effects on the landscape are anticipated from policies related to biodiversity (SP11 to SP13; SP15), water management (SP7 and DP8), and transport (DP62 and SP63). These policies promote green infrastructure, nature-based solutions such as SuDS, and sustainable transport, which can enhance landscape quality and reduce fragmentation.
- 6.5.81. 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.

Transport

- 6.5.82. The Local Plan Review includes two dedicated transport policies: Policies SP62 (Transport Infrastructure) and SP63 (Sustainable Transport and Access). These promote reduced car dependency, support walking, cycling, and public transport, and encourage the transition to electric vehicles through provision of small-scale charging facilities. The safeguarding of disused railway lines and enhancement of active travel infrastructure under Policy SP63 are particularly relevant in the New Forest context, where recreational opportunities are a protected special quality. Through Policy DP21 (Coastal Change Management Area), the Local Plan Review also supports essential coastal infrastructure, including the potential re-routing of the England Coast Path in response to coastal erosion.
- 6.5.83. The aims of the transport policies are reinforced by strategic policies. Policies SP1 (Supporting Sustainable Development) and DP2 (General Development Principles) include provisions for reducing the need to travel, enabling active travel, and improving access to public transport. Policy SP6 (Infrastructure Provision and Developer Contributions) further strengthens this approach by ensuring that development proposals make provision for necessary infrastructure, including sustainable transport measures.
- 6.5.84. The spatial strategy (SP3) and housing policies (SP28 and site allocations SP31 to SP40) will deliver 920 dwellings between 2024 and 2043, primarily within Defined Villages and allocated sites. This concentration of development is likely to have beneficial effects by supporting public transport viability and reducing car dependency. However, it also brings risks of increased traffic and parking pressures in some settlements. These risks are mitigated through requirements for transport assessments for developments with significant transport implications, as reflected in site-specific policies such as SP34 which requires a transport assessment, and SP35 which requires adequate parking provision.
- 6.5.85. Several other policies indirectly support sustainable transport. Policy SP48 (Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople) requires good highway access and proximity to public transport for permanent sites. Policy SP52 (Local Community Facilities) encourages retention and development of facilities within villages, reducing the need for longer car journeys. DP58 and DP59 also help protect and enable local retail, supporting shorter travel distances and reducing reliance on private vehicles.

- 6.5.86. Policies such as DP57 (Re-use of Farm Buildings) may result in new residential or tourism uses in rural areas, which could increase car dependency if sites are remote. However, re-using existing buildings avoids the need for new development in more sensitive locations. Integration of sustainable transport measures, such as EV charging and active travel links, could help mitigate potential adverse effects.
- 6.5.87. Similarly, other tourism-related policies, including SP60 (Sustainable Tourism Development) and DP61 (Holiday Parks and Campsites), may increase visitor numbers and associated vehicle movements. However, the emphasis on sustainable tourism under SP60 (including the re-use of existing buildings and providing facilities outside the busiest areas) will help reduce traffic pressures in sensitive locations.
- 6.5.88. Policy SP4 (Major Development in the National Park) also requires that proposals for major development, including the enlargement or diversification of major tourist attractions, demonstrate how they maximise sustainable transport opportunities. This will help mitigate potential adverse effects from large-scale proposals by encouraging active travel and reducing reliance on private vehicles.
- 6.5.89. Overall, **mixed effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review in relation to the Transport SA theme. **Major (significant) medium-to-long-term beneficial effects** on transport in the National Park through the promotion of active travel, public transport, and appropriately locating development close to existing transport links. Some **minor medium-to-long-term adverse effects** are also anticipated, particularly where development may increase traffic in sensitive areas, although these are expected to be mitigated through transport assessments, sustainable design measures, and limits on the scale of development.

6.6. Cumulative and In-Combination Effects

- 6.6.1. Cumulative and in-combination effects refer to the combined impacts of multiple policies, proposals, or developments - either within the National Park or alongside other plans and activities in the wider area:
- Cumulative effects arise when several policies or developments affect the same environmental receptor or issue over time; and
 - In-combination effects occur when the Local Plan Review's impacts interact with those from other plans or projects, potentially leading to greater overall effects.

Cumulative Effects

- 6.6.2. The Local Plan Review's emphasis on sustainable development (through policies such as SP1, DP2, and SP9) will contribute to improved energy efficiency, reduced carbon emissions, and enhanced climate resilience across multiple sites. Similarly, policies supporting biodiversity net gain (SP13), green infrastructure (SP15), and landscape character (SP14) are likely to strengthen ecological networks and improve the National Park's visual and environmental quality.
- 6.6.3. Housing delivery through SP28 and site allocations (SP31 to SP40) will meet local needs, but cumulatively may increase pressure on infrastructure, air quality, and sensitive habitats, particularly near designated sites. Tourism-related policies (SP60, DP61) also present cumulative challenges, as increased visitor numbers could intensify recreational and transport pressures. However, these risks are mitigated through design-led policies, strategic mitigation schemes, and requirements for transport assessments and habitat buffers.
- 6.6.4. In addition, the cumulative impact of policies supporting the land-based economy, rural diversification, and small-scale employment (SP53 to SP55) is likely to reinforce the resilience of local communities and sustain traditional practices. When combined with policies that safeguard cultural heritage and promote high-quality design, these measures contribute to a coherent strategy that protects the National Park's special qualities while enabling appropriate growth.
- 6.6.5. Policy DP25 provides an additional safeguard by stating that '*built development and changes of use which would individually or cumulatively erode the Park's local character, or result in a gradual suburbanising effect within the National Park will not be permitted*'. This policy strengthens the protection against adverse cumulative effects by ensuring that incremental changes do not undermine the National Park's distinctive character.
- 6.6.6. Overall, the **cumulative effects of the Local Plan Review are mostly beneficial**, with long-term benefits expected across all SA themes. **Localised adverse cumulative effects** may arise, but these are likely to be effectively managed through embedded safeguards and monitoring.

In-Combination Effects

- 6.6.7. Cross-boundary effects are particularly relevant in relation to water and biodiversity. The National Park shares hydrological catchments and ecological networks with neighbouring areas, and development within its boundaries can have wider hydrological impacts. Such effects are mitigated by requiring developments to align with regional plans in Policy DP8.

- 6.6.8. Recreational pressures on internationally designated sites (SACs, SPAs, Ramsar) also require strategic mitigation. Through SP11, the Local Plan Review aligns with the New Forest Habitat Mitigation Scheme and Bird Aware Solent, which will ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations and help to manage cumulative visitor impacts.
- 6.6.9. The Local Plan Review also complements the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan, particularly in its focus on tranquillity, landscape character, and sustainable tourism. Sub-regional transport strategies and national frameworks such as the NPPF and Environment Act 2021 further reinforce the Local Plan Review's direction, especially in relation to climate change and biodiversity net gain.
- 6.6.10. In the wider area surrounding the National Park, neighbouring authorities such as New Forest District Council are progressing new Local Plans that include higher levels of housing growth than those proposed in the Local Plan Review. The adopted Local Plan (2016-2036) for the New Forest District (outside the National Park) sets a target of 10,420 dwellings, with stepped delivery increasing to 700 dwellings per annum from 2026 onwards. However, recent updates to national planning policy have increased the standard method housing need to 1,511 dwellings per annum, indicating that delivery figures for the district will rise in future.
- 6.6.11. These proposals, alongside other strategic plans such as neighbourhood plans and infrastructure improvements, have the potential to interact with development in the National Park. In particular, cross-boundary pressures may arise in relation to water resources, biodiversity, transport, and recreational impacts. The Local Plan Review addresses these through alignment with regional strategies (for example, DP8), strategic mitigation (for example, SP11), and cooperation with neighbouring authorities.
- 6.6.12. Local Plans currently being prepared by councils bordering the National Park (including Test Valley, Wiltshire, Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and Southampton) are expected to propose significant levels of housing and employment growth. These plans may interact with development in the National Park, particularly through shared ecological networks, transport corridors, and recreational destinations.
- 6.6.13. Strategic infrastructure projects in the wider region also have potential in-combination effects. These include the New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which proposes expanded active travel networks across the National Park and surrounding areas.
- 6.6.14. Ongoing cooperation with neighbouring authorities will be important to manage housing need, infrastructure, and ecological networks. Provided these relationships are maintained, **no significant adverse in-combination effects** are anticipated from the Local Plan Review.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1.1. This SA Report accompanies the current Regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan Review (*'New Forest National Park Local Plan Review 2024 - 2043: Regulation 18 (Part 2) Consultation'*).
- 7.1.2. Following the receipt of responses on this Regulation 18 consultation, the Local Plan Review will be updated and released by the New Forest National Park Authority for Regulation 19 consultation with a full SA Report.
- 7.1.3. Regulation 19 consultation on the proposed submission version of the Local Plan Review is anticipated to take place in Summer 2026.
- 7.1.4. Once the period for representations on the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan Review document / SA Report has finished, the main issues raised will be identified and summarised by the National Park Authority, which will then consider whether, in light of representations received, the plan can still be deemed 'sound'. If this is the case, the Local Plan Review will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination, alongside a statement setting out the main issues raised during the consultation. The National Park Authority will also submit the SA Report alongside it. This is anticipated to take place in December 2026.
- 7.1.5. At Examination, the Inspector(s) will consider representations (alongside the SA Report) before then reporting back. If the Inspector identifies the need for modifications to the Local Plan, these will be prepared (and undergo SA) and will then be subject to consultation (with an SA Report Addendum published alongside).
- 7.1.6. Once found to be 'sound', the Local Plan Review will be formally adopted by the New Forest National Park Authority. At the time of adoption, an SA 'Adoption Statement' must be published that sets out (amongst other elements) 'the measures decided concerning monitoring the Plan'.

Appendix A : Scoping Report Consultation Responses

Consultee	Response	How the Response was Considered and Addressed
Historic England	Amendments were suggested for the following elements of the Scoping Report:	
G.R., Historic Environment Planning Adviser Response received on 11 September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded policy and strategy review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added reference to the emerging Hurst Spit to Lymington Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) Strategy Added references to Historic Environment Advice Notes and Good Practice Advice documents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved baseline information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added text to reflect the effect of climate change on heritage assets and the importance of sensitive retrofitting on historic buildings Added text to the Archaeological Significance sub-chapter Added sub-chapters on coastal erosion and settlement surveys
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refinements to key issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor amendments to key issues for the Climate Change and Historic Environment chapters Addition of one key issue for the Historic Environment chapter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancements to the SA Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor amendments to supporting questions

Consultee	Response	How the Response was Considered and Addressed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other minor in-text amendments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed
<p>Natural England E.F., Higher Officer Response received on 10 September 2025</p>	<p>NE welcomed the key issues and SA objectives contained within the Scoping Report, confirming they adequately reflect natural environment interests, and had no further comments.</p>	n/a
<p>Environment Agency</p>	<p>Amendments were suggested for the following elements of the Scoping Report:</p>	
<p>A.R., Sustainable Places Technical Specialist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancements to the SA Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included two supporting SA framework questions related to groundwater and biodiversity net gain, respectively
<p>Response received on 9 September 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded Policy and Strategy Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added reference to the emerging Hurst Spit to Lymington Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) Strategy

