

**Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan
Examination in Public**

Statement of Common Ground

between

Wiltshire Council

New Forest National Park Authority

and

New Forest District Council

April 2019

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Introduction

1. Wiltshire Council (the Council), New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) and New Forest District Council (NFDC) work collaboratively on matters relating to the protection of the New Forest National Park¹. Over 50% of the New Forest National Park is designated as being of international importance for nature conservation. It is common ground between all parties that development in the National Park and in adjacent areas, including south Wiltshire, has the potential for harmful impacts on the integrity of the New Forest's Natura 2000 sites.
2. One of the interests' common to all parties relates to the objective of ensuring that the designated importance of the New Forest is appropriately protected from impacts associated with increased recreation pressure arising from new development.
3. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared to demonstrate that common ground has been reached by the Council, NFNPA and NFDC (the parties) in relation to the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (the Plan) on the issue of protecting the designated features of the New Forest from increased recreation pressure. The SoCG therefore addresses representations submitted by the NFNPA and NFDC through the preparation of the Plan. A separate SoCG has been prepared between the parties, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Wessex Water Services Ltd in relation to managing nutrients in the Hampshire Avon Special Area of Conservation.

Purpose of the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan and links to the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy

4. The Plan is being prepared to support the delivery of the Spatial Strategy set out within the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) (adopted January 2015). The Plan will, once adopted, form part of the Development Plan for Wiltshire.

Preparation of the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan

5. Wiltshire Council published the Plan, along with accompanying evidence reports, for formal consultation from 14th July 2017 to 22nd September 2017.
6. In responding to the consultation, the NFNPA² and NFDC³ submitted comments relating to impacts associated with planned development in the South Wiltshire Community Area, as established within the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS). Such impacts included the risk of increased recreation pressure linked to the anticipated delivery of housing planned for locations such as Downton.
7. In July 2018, the Council submitted the Plan, along with a Schedule of Proposed Changes and supporting evidence, to the Secretary of State, for independent examination. Further rounds of focused consultation on the Council's Schedule of Proposed Changes were then undertaken.
8. Through these further rounds of consultation, the NFNPA and NFDC reiterated concerns regarding the anticipated delivery of housing in the Southern Wiltshire

¹ New Forest National Park SAC, SPA, RAMSAR (collectively known as Natura 2000 sites)

² Representer ID: 382305, Comment ID: 2643

³ Representer ID: 97508, Comment ID: 2893 and 2894

Community Area and risks associated with increased recreational pressure on the New Forest Natura 2000 sites.

Matters agreed in respect of the evidence base that supports the submitted Plan

9. It is agreed by the parties that the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan does not identify specific housing allocations in the Southern Wiltshire Community Area. The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA/01) identifies that only locations within the visitor catchment of 8km radius of the New Forest National Park Special Protection Area (SPA) could have a likely significant effect (page 15), which relates to the Southern Wiltshire Community Area. As there are no site specific housing allocations made in this Plan in relation to this area (CATP/14a) there is no likely significant effect arising from site specific housing allocations of the plan, as confirmed on page 27 of the HRA.
10. In the light of available evidence prepared to date it is agreed that the Plan's housing land allocations will not unilaterally increase recreation pressure on the New Forest and that that matter has been soundly assessed through the HRA work undertaken to date by Wiltshire Council.
11. All parties are currently working with other authorities including Natural England to develop a strategic approach to deliver planned and future housing in the area around the New Forest while protecting the integrity of its habitats. Following a successful bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in early 2018, the parties are committed to ongoing work in partnership with other authorities and Natural England to develop and ultimately implement a co-ordinated, cross-boundary approach to avoidance and mitigation of recreation pressure on the New Forest's protected habitats.
12. In the interim period and in line with the representations made by the NFNPA and NFDC regarding the impacts of planned development contained within the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Council recognises and is committed to delivering on its obligations to ensure any housing development (e.g. arising from windfall development or neighbourhood plans in accordance with the WCS) in the Southern Wiltshire Community Area are assessed in line with the duties imposed by the Habitats Regulations Assessment and where necessary appropriate mitigation measures will be required to enable development to proceed.

Conclusion

13. All parties acknowledge the international importance of the New Forest Natura 2000 sites and the need to ensure that development will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. In this regard, it is agreed by all parties that the HRA undertaken to support Wiltshire Council's Housing Site Allocation's Plan has appropriately considered and concluded on the degree to which the Plan's policies will lead to recreation pressures impacting on protected New Forest sites. The parties are also positively engaged with wider research to inform the preparation of a strategic, cross-boundary habitat mitigation framework for the New Forest's Natura 2000 sites.

Signed:

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Wiltshire Council

Date: 1 April 2019

Signed:

David Illsley
Policy Manager
New Forest National Park Authority

Date: 01.0.19

Signed:

Louise Evans
Service Manager Policy and Strategy
New Forest District Council

Date: 1st April 2019