

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AM 716/25

AUTHORITY MEETING – 24 JULY 2025

ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT COPYTHORNE PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT

Report by: David Illsley, Interim Head of Planning & Place

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Since the designation of the New Forest National Park in 2005 and the transfer of the statutory planning functions to the National Park Authority in 2006, the Authority has supported local communities in the preparation of local design guidance. There are currently 7 extant parish or village design statements for the National Park area (Ashurst & Colbury, Boldre, Hordle, Hyde, Landford, Sway and Wellow), all of which have been subject to public consultation before being formally adopted by the Authority as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
- 1.2 In January 2022 the Authority adopted an updated National Park Design Guide SPD, which provides Park-wide design guidance (as well as incorporating a design code). The updated Design Guide ensures the National Park is covered by up-to-date design guidance, reflecting the importance national policy places on high quality design (particularly within a nationally protected landscape).
- 1.3 Although the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 includes enabling provisions to remove the role of Supplementary Planning Documents, these provisions have not been taken forward to date and therefore SPDs can still perform a function as material planning considerations in the current planning system.

2 Copythorne Parish Design Statement

- 2.1 The parish of Copythorne is located almost entirely within the National Park for planning purposes and is home to circa 3,000 residents. It is one of the larger, more populated parishes in the National Park and this is reflected in the number of planning applications received by the National Park Authority from local residents, businesses and landowners in the parish each year.
- 2.2 Last year Copythorne Parish Council resolved to prepare a Parish Design Statement to provide local design guidelines for future development to assist residents and developers in preparing their proposals. The role of the draft Design Statement is not to prevent new development, but instead to enable development to make a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness of the parish.
- 2.3 Copythorne Parish Council established a steering group comprising local residents and representatives from the parish council to take the work forward. Information has been gathered through articles in the monthly parish newsletter, agenda items at parish council meetings and a briefing given at the Annual Parish meeting. Officers from the National Park Authority's policy & conservation team have also been engaged in the process, provided feedback where appropriate.

2.4 The Parish Council and Steering Group have consciously prepared a succinct document focusing on local matters within the parish. This is in recognition that the majority of the parish is already covered by the adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019), the National Park Design Guide SPD (2022) and the respective Conservation Area Character Appraisals for the Forest Central North and Forest North East Conservation Areas (insofar as they relate to the areas of the parish of Copythorne that lies within the Conservation Areas).

2.5 The main elements of the Copythorne Parish Design Statement include:

- A brief history of the parish, with the document highlighting the evolution of the six main settlements in the parish (Bartley, Cadnam, Copythorne, Newbridge, Ower and Winsor), all of which have their own identity and origins.
- Section 4 of the draft Parish Design Statement provides an overview of the 28 nationally listed buildings/assets in the parish.
- The Statement sets out a series of recommendations to be taken into account when proposals in the parish are being considered (for example, encouraging a 'rooftop first' approach to solar panels for both residential and business properties). These recommendations have been discussed with Authority officers, with revisions made where necessary to ensure they are in general conformity with the higher order planning policies for the National Park area.
- Section 9 of the draft Statement highlights factors outside the scope of local design guidelines, in recognition of the fact that the design statement cannot set new planning policies (which require independent examination); and can typically only address matters where planning permission is required.

3. Consultation on the draft Copythorne Parish Design Statement

3.1 To be afforded weight as material planning considerations, supplementary planning documents (SPDs) are required to be subject to a period of consultation with statutory and other consultees. National planning regulations prescribe a minimum 4-week consultation period on draft SPDs and within the New Forest National Park the Authority is committed to a 6-week consultation period (which provides more of an opportunity for interested parties to respond).

3.2 At the Authority's Planning Committee meeting in April 2025 members approved the draft Copythorne Parish Design Statement for public consultation (report PC 487/25). The 6-week consultation ran from 23 April to 4 June 2025 and was co-ordinated by the Authority's Policy team, liaising with Copythorne Parish Council.

3.3 Further detail on the consultation undertaken between April and June are set out in the 'Consultation Statement' in Annex 2 to this report. Consultation included:

- Over 200 statutory and general consultees were directly notified of the consultation. This included neighbouring town and parish councils, local stakeholder groups, statutory consultees and local planning agents.

- The draft Copythorne Parish Design Statement was made available on the Authority's website and for inspection at Lymington Town Hall.
- A press release was issued to local media outlets, summarising the role of the draft Statement, the consultation period, how comments could be made and where the document could be viewed. A formal press notice was also issued.
- The consultation was actively promoted through the Authority's social media channels, including Facebook (49,000 followers) and X (16,500 followers).
- The consultation on the draft Copythorne Parish Design Statement was also publicised by the Parish Council.

4. Summary of the main issues raised and how they have been addressed

4.1 During the consultation on the draft Parish Design Statement responses were submitted by Historic England, Natural England and local residents. The level of response is low, but perhaps not overly surprising given the tight geographical focus of the Statement on the parish of Copythorne (circa 3,000 residents).

4.2 The Consultation Statement (Annex 2) provides more detail on the main points raised in the responses and how they have been addressed in the document now presented for adoption. It should be noted that the Authority is not required to list every single point raised during the consultation, only the main issues raised.

Summary of the main issues raised and subsequent amendments

- Historic England: Welcome the production of a Design Statement to guide change in the parish. Recommend that the Design Statement distinguishes between designated (e.g. listed buildings and Conservation Areas) and non-designated heritage assets (e.g. locally listed buildings). Other detailed comments on the terminology used, the structure of the document, and ensuring the 'local list' of heritage assets in the parish available online is up to date. Historic England's feedback comments have been taken on board and amendments made accordingly in line with their recommendations.
- Natural England: Welcome the preparation of local design guidelines that respect, and where possible, enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding natural and built environment. Several detailed comments made recommending the signposting of further information, including the New Forest Landscape Character Assessment and the National Character Areas. Natural England's feedback is reflected in the final document presented for adoption in Annex 1, with additional links included within the main document and also at section 11.2 on 'Other documents'.
- Local Residents: Detailed comments regarding the references to the public rights of way network in the parish; a recommendation that the locally listed assets in the parish are given a higher profile in the document; and references to flood risk within the parish. Where these matters fall within the scope of local design guidelines amendments have been made to the document.

5. Adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document

5.1 The formal adoption of the Copythorne Parish Design Statement as a supplementary planning document is a decision for the full National Park Authority. As set in section 4 of this report and the accompanying Consultation Statement (Annex 2), although the level of responses to the draft Statement was low, the comments received have helped to improve the document now presented for adoption. In particular, the positive response from Historic England is noted.

5.2 The document at Annex 1 has been updated in response to the consultation responses received and follows liaison between National Park Authority officers and the Copythorne Parish Council steering group who are content with the revisions. Members are therefore asked to formally adopt the Copythorne Parish Design Statement (Annex 1) as a supplementary planning document and bring it into immediate effect as a material consideration in the delivery of our statutory planning functions in the parish of Copythorne.

5.3 Part 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets out the legal requirements that must be fulfilled on the adoption of a supplementary planning document. These include making copies of the document and 'Adoption Statement' available as soon as reasonably practicable; and sending a copy of the Adoption Statement to any person who has asked to be notified. Planning policy officers will ensure that these legal requirements are met.

Recommendation:

Members:

- (i) **Formally adopt the Copythorne Parish Design Statement (Annex 1) and bring it into immediate effect from 24 July 2025 as material consideration in planning decision-making; and**
- (ii) **Delegate authority to the Interim Head of Planning & Place to make any final, minor amendments to the formatting of the SPD prior to publication.**

Papers:

AM 716/25 – Cover report

Annex 1 – Copythorne Parish Design Statement for adoption

Annex 2 – Consultation Statement

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report.

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