



Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan – NPA Decision Statement (21 May 2024)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The New Forest National Park Authority has a statutory duty to assist local communities in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders. As the planning authority for the National Park area, the Authority is also required to support draft Neighbourhood Plans through the Examination process towards local referendum.
- 1.2 The draft Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan was submitted for independent Examination in November 2023 and the final Examiner's Report was issued on 22 February 2024. Under the requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the National Park Authority must: (i) decide what action to take in response to each recommendation made in the Examiner's Report; and (ii) publish their decision and the reasons for it in a 'Decision Statement'.
- 1.3 This statement confirms that the modifications proposed by the Examiner's report have been accepted, the draft Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan has been altered as a result of it; and that this plan may now proceed to referendum.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan relates to the area that was designated by the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council in February 2021. This 'Neighbourhood Area' corresponds with the Ringwood Town Council boundary and includes land within the planning remit of both the New Forest National Park Authority and New Forest District Council.
- 2.2 Following the submission of the draft New Milton Neighbourhood Plan to the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council, the Plan was publicised and representations were invited for a 6-week period, closing on 29 September 2023.

- 2.3 David Hogger BA MSc MRTPI MCIHT was appointed by the New Forest National Park Authority and New Forest District Council – with the agreement of Ringwood Town Council - to undertake the examination of the draft Neighbourhood Plan and to prepare a report of the independent examination.
- 2.4 The Examiner's Report (22 February 2024) concludes that subject to the policy modifications set out, the draft Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions. The Examiner recommends that the Plan, once modified, should proceed to Referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements. The Examiner also concluded that the Referendum area does not need to be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates.

3. Decision

- 3.1 As outlined above, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) require the National Park Authority to outline what action to take in response to the recommendations made in the Examiner's Report.
- 3.2 The National Park Authority, New Forest District Council and Ringwood Town Council have considered each of the recommendations made in the Examiner's Report. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the planning authorities to decide what modifications should be made to the Neighbourhood Plan. Having considered each of the recommendations made by the Examiner's report (and the reasons for them), the New Forest National Park Authority has decided to accept the modifications to the draft Plan. Table 1 on the following pages outline the alterations made to the draft Plan under paragraph 12(6) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act (as applied by Section 38A of 2004 Act) in response to each of the Examiner's recommendations.

Table 1

Report Ref.	Examiner's recommended modification	Examiner's Justification	NPA Decision
GENERAL			
PM1	Throughout the document. Refer to the December 2023 version of the NPPF and update paragraph references where they have changed (see paragraph 4.8 my report for an indication in this regard).	The references to NPPF paragraphs are now out-of-date because a revised version of the NPPF was published in December 2023. It is important that references to the NPPF reflect the contents of the most recent edition. recommend that all references to the NPPF in the RNP relate to the December 2023 version.	Accept modification – provides accuracy.
PM2	Include in the Glossary: Gentle Densification – increasing the density of a proposed housing development to meet housing needs, whilst guarding against detracting from the character of the particular area.	There are two references in the policy to 'gentle densification' but it may not be clear to the reader exactly what this means. I therefore recommend that an appropriate explanation is given in the Glossary	Accept modification. This provides a useful explanation of the term.
SECTION 5 – VISION, OBJECTIVES AND LAND USE POLICIES			
PM3	Page 18 Delete: (Green Belt)	Paragraph 5.4 refers to Green Belt but not all the countryside that surrounds the town is in the Green Belt. This is misleading and therefore I recommend that the reference to Green Belt should be deleted.	Accept modification. Reflects the factual position
PM4	Policy R2, Page 19 Modify clause C iv) to read: The proposed use and associated works would not harm the historic interest and or character of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.	The District Council suggests a strengthening of clause C iv) which I agree is necessary for clarity.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.

PM5	<p>Policy R3, Page 21</p> <p>Add a sentence to clause B as follows:</p> <p>The opportunity areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ringwood Market Place; • Furlong Drove, Meeting House Lane, Rear of 56 High Street and service yard, Northumberland Court; • Bus Stops on Meeting House Lane and the Furlong Car Park; • Properties to the north of The Close; • Carvers Trading Estate; • Pedlars Walk Court; • Ringwood Trading Estate; and • Lynes Lane Court. 	<p>Eight opportunity areas are identified in the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan and having visited them I consider them all to be justified. In the interests of clarity, however, it would be beneficial to actually name the areas in the policy itself.</p>	<p>Accept modification. Strengthens the policy and provides clarity.</p>
PM6	<p>Page 21 Paragraph 5.19</p> <p>Add the following to paragraph 5.19: The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and as such, a Flood Risk Assessment may be required as part of the planning process for any development coming forward. To be clear, the policy does not allocate this site. Applicants will therefore also need to demonstrate that the sequential test, and where relevant the exception test, has been met.</p>	<p>There is currently no reference to the issue of flood risk in the Town Centre Opportunity Areas. This is an important issue in the town and therefore I recommend in PM6 and PM7, that a reference to flood risk is included in relation to Opportunity Area A (Ringwood Market Place) and Opportunity Area G (Ringwood Trading Estate).</p>	<p>Accept modification. Aids effectiveness of the plan.</p>
PM7	<p>Page 23 Paragraph 5.25</p> <p>Add the following to paragraph 5.19: The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and as such, a Flood Risk Assessment may be required as part of the planning process for any development coming forward. To be clear, the policy does not allocate</p>	<p>There is currently no reference to the issue of flood risk in the Town Centre Opportunity Areas. This is an important issue in the town and therefore I recommend in PM6 and PM7, that a reference to flood risk is included in relation to Opportunity Area A (Ringwood</p>	<p>Accept modification. Aids effectiveness of the plan.</p>

	this site. Applicants will therefore also need to demonstrate that the sequential test, and where relevant the exception test, has been met.	Market Place) and Opportunity Area G (Ringwood Trading Estate).	
PM8	<p>Page 24, Policy R4</p> <p>Modify the start of clause D to read:</p> <p>'Where evidence suggests clearly demonstrates that a shop does not fulfil a function...'</p>	The approach in policy R4 accords with advice in the NPPF. However, in order to strengthen the policy and provide clarity for the decision maker, I recommend, in PM8, a modification to clause D.	Accept modification. Strengthens policy.
PM9	<p>Page 26 Policy R5</p> <p>Modify Policy R5 to read:</p> <p>Provision should be made for a high proportion of small dwellings, particularly those with one and two bedrooms, in schemes of residential development where this can be achieved without detriment to the amenities and character of the surrounding area and neighbouring properties. The number of small dwellings should be greater than 50% of the total in schemes of five or more dwellings.</p>	The policy does not establish what is meant by 'a high proportion' of small dwellings. The accompanying paragraph (5.33) to Policy R5 states that the figure is 'greater than 50% of schemes of five or more dwellings'. I consider that this is not helpful to the decision maker and that the policy itself should clearly establish what is required. On that basis I recommend, in PM9, that additional clarity is provided	Accept modification. Strengthens the policy and provides clarity.
PM10	<p>Page 27 Paragraph 5.39:</p> <p>Delete all of paragraph 5.39</p>	The paragraph reads to me as a 'policy' and its inclusion in the supporting text may cause confusion to the decision maker, with regard to its status. As supporting text, it would carry comparatively little weight in the decision-making process. Secondly, there is no 'strategic' policy' in the New Forest District Local Plan on which to 'hang' this 'requirement' and the Town Council's approach is not consistent with the aims of New Forest District Local Plan.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.

PM11	<p>Modify the first sentence of the policy to read:</p> <p>“All major development with a residential component of 10 or more dwellings should apply the...”</p>	In the interests of clarity for the decision maker, I consider a reference should be made in the policy to the fact that this relates to development of 10 or more dwellings.	Accept modification. Provides clarity
PM12	<p>Page 31 Policy R9, paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D:</p> <p>Delete all of Policy R9, paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D.</p>	In order to meet the Basic Conditions, I need to be confident that the policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan and that it has regard to national policies and advice. I currently do not have that confidence and therefore I recommend the deletion of Policy R9, its supporting text in paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D.	Accept modification to meet Basic Conditions tests.
PM13	<p>Page 34 Policy R11:</p> <p>Modify the start of clause E to read: An Energy A Climate Change Statement will be submitted</p>	The need to achieve sustainable and energy efficient development is embedded in national policy, and I am satisfied that Policy R11 appropriately reflects current advice on the issue. For the purpose of accuracy, I commend a focused change to the title of the Statement referred to at the start of clause E of the policy.	Accept modification. For greater clarity.
PM14	<p>Page 38 Policy R12</p> <p>Modify the start of clause A to read: ‘The Neighbourhood Plan Policy Map identifies the existing sustainable Travel Network and...’</p>	A Sustainable Travel Network has been identified and opportunities for improvements are shown on the Active Travel Policy Map. However, clause A of the policy does not refer specifically to the Policy Map and I consider it would assist the decision maker if such a reference was included.	Accept modification. Strengthens the policy and provides clarity.
PM15	<p>Page 38 Paragraph 5.72</p> <p>Add to the Glossary a definition of ‘Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework’ to read: A</p>	In the interests of clarity a brief explanation of the Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework should be included in the Glossary.	Accept modification for improved clarity.

	<p>tool to help planners and designers prioritise interventions in the following order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute Trips: Replace the need to travel beyond your community; • Shift Modes: For longer trips, use active public and shared forms of transport; • Switch Fuels: For trips that must be made by car, ensure the vehicle is zero emission.' 		
APPENDIX B – RINGWOOD LOCAL DESIGN GUIDANCE AND CODE			
PM16	<p>Page 35 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code</p> <p>Modify start of guideline iii to read: 'Street design must incorporate opportunities for landscaping (street trees, gardens and green verges).'</p> <p>Modify last part of guideline vi to read: '...whilst traffic calming measures which might include like raised tables or crossings, should be introduced along the carriageway an integral part of street design.'</p>	The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.
PM17	<p>Page 37 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code:</p> <p>Modify guideline iii by inserting and car ports after garages in first sentence.</p>	The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.
PM18	<p>Page 39 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code:</p>	The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read	Accept modification. Provides clarity.

	Add a clause v to the guideline to read: Space to the sides of car parking spaces is often needed for access to rear gardens and/or to outbuildings and for cycle and bin access.	the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.	
PM19	<p>Pages 39 and 40 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code:</p> <p>Figures 23 (page 39) and 26 (page 40) should be modified because currently they indicate a sub-standard access, impractical planting and inadequate space in front of the garage.</p>	The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.
PM20	<p>Page 56 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code :</p> <p>Delete the first sentence of the image caption: 'The average building height within the town is between 2-3 storeys.'</p>	The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.
PM21	<p>Page 9: Add a new paragraph 2.13 to read:</p> <p>Some of the Plans in this document may be difficult to decipher because of their scale but they are all available electronically on the Town Council's website at https://www.ringwood.gov.uk/</p>	The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.
PM22	<p>Page 41 Policy Map:</p> <p>Remove the built-up area boundary and the strategic site allocation boundary at Blashford.</p>	The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC highlight a small number of instances where the wording of the advice should be clarified. Having read the Appendices, I agree that a small number of modifications are required.	Accept modification. Provides clarity.

- 3.3 In addition to the modifications recommended in the Examiner's Report (February 2024), the National Park Authority, New Forest District Council and Ringwood Town Council have identified further minor amendments required to the version of the Neighbourhood Plan submitted for independent examination. These do not affect the 'Basic Condition' assessment but help to improve the clarity of the Neighbourhood Plan. For clarity this 'Decision Statement' also sets out these amendments below.

Examiner's Report Extract	Commentary	NPA Decision
<p>Minor Amendments:</p> <p>Amendments to the text can be made consequential to the recommended modifications, alongside any other minor non-material changes, factual up-dates, or corrections if there is agreement between Ringwood Town Council, NFDC and NFNPA. For example, there are a number of up-dates required regarding the stage in the evolution of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan that has now been reached and other contextual information that is no longer current (e.g. paragraph 3.5 of the Plan).</p>	<p>Amendments to:</p> <p>Front cover: minor amendments to reflect the fact this is the referendum version of the Plan.</p> <p>Page 2: factual updates will be required to reflect the fact the Plan is now in its final version.</p> <p>Page 3: Contents page: Deletion of reference to Appendix D Local Heritage Assessment, and rename Appendix E to Appendix D</p> <p>Page 5: List of Policies: Delete reference to Policy R9 and policy numbering of the remaining policies (currently R10 – R12) will need to be moved one digit forward.</p> <p>Page 7 - Paras 1.6–1.7: Revised text as follows:</p> <p>1.6 In addition, the Town Council has demonstrated to an independent examiner that it has successfully engaged with the local community in preparing the Plan.</p> <p>1.7 A revised version of the plan reflecting the recommendations from the</p>	<p>Factual updates required to reflect the changes to the document and the latest position/status of the Plan.</p>

	<p>independent examiner will be the subject of a public referendum on the proposed date of 4th July 2023. This version of the plan, the policy maps and its evidence base can be found on the Ringwood Town Council website https://www.ringwood.gov.uk/</p> <p>Page 7 - Para 1.10: Delete “The Next Steps” and Paragraph 1.10.</p> <p>Page 7 - Para 1.11: Delete “Consultation” and Paragraph 1.11</p> <p>Page 10 - Para 3.5: Delete the whole paragraph</p> <p>Page 13 - Para 3.11: update to reflect the fact that NFDC has now decided to proceed with a full Local Plan Review, and delete reference to para 3.5 which is proposed to be deleted.</p> <p>Page 33: Para 5.55: updates to reflect and reference the latest legal requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>Page 43: Remove reference to Appendix D.</p>	
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