

Planning Guidance Note – applications for temporary camping uses

Updated April 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2022 a Park-wide Article 4 Direction was introduced to protect the environment of the New Forest National Park by requiring planning permission for:
 - All new temporary campsites established since 1 March 2020 (irrespective of their size); and
 - All existing temporary campsites established prior to 1 March 2020 with more than 50 pitches.
- 1.2 In July 2023, the Government introduced a new stand-alone permitted development right to allow campsites to be used for up to 50 pitches for up to 60 days in any calendar year (Class BC of Part 4, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development) (England) Order). This right applies across the country and includes National Parks. In response, the National Park Authority made a new immediate Park-wide [Article 4 Direction](#) on 27 October 2023 withdrawing this new permitted development right unless both of the following apply:
 - the land was first used as a temporary recreational campsite before 1 March 2020; and
 - the use of the land as a temporary recreational campsite is for not more than 28 days in total in any calendar year.
- 1.3 In other words, all campsites established after 1 March 2020 will continue to require planning permission, as will pre-existing sites with 51 pitches or more and/or operating for more than 28 days in any calendar year.
- 1.4 This guidance note has been updated to take account of the new Article 4 Direction to help applicants when applying for planning permission for temporary camping uses caught by the Article 4 Direction. It has also been updated to reflect the fact that temporary camping uses are now required to address their recreational impacts on the Solent's designated sites (previously these impacts were 'screened out' under the Habitats Regulations). It sets out the relevant planning considerations that the Authority will take into account when assessing related planning applications. This note has been approved by the National Park Authority and is a material consideration when determining planning applications for such camping uses.
- 1.5 Smaller 28 day campsites (50 pitches or less) that have been operating since before 1 March 2020 do not need planning permission and still benefit from permitted development rights - subject to meeting the other limitations set out in [Class BC of Part 4, Schedule 2 of the GPDO](#). These include site operators notifying the Authority in writing of the dates they intend to open annually and providing a site plan showing the location of toilets and waste disposal facilities (before the site opens). All sites need to meet requirements of the Habitat Regulations (see separate guidance note updated April 2025).

2. Applying for Planning Permission

2.1 The New Forest is one of the most visited National Parks in England and has the highest proportion of designated land of international value for nature conservation in the country. Holiday parks and campsites are already well provided for in the National Park. For these reasons Policy DP47 of the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036 only permits new campsites where they would enable the removal of pitches from sensitive areas.

2.2 The Article 4 Direction was made in response to the recent increase in the number of 28 day 'pop up' campsites operating in the National Park and the associated concerns regarding their impact on the landscape, the designated sites and local communities.

2.3 Information on how to apply for planning permission can be found on the Authority's website.

3. Relevant Planning Considerations

Number of days and supporting infrastructure

3.1 The Authority will only consider the grant of planning permission for up to 50 pitches for up to 60 days per calendar year. Proposals for camping uses above 50 pitches / 60 days will continue to be assessed under Policy DP47 of the Local Plan. As with the previous national permitted development rights, each day that tents and motorhomes are on the land will count towards the total number of days. Similarly, having facilities on the land (e.g. temporary toilets) will also be included in the total number of days, even if the site is unoccupied.

3.2 National permitted development rights do not allow permanent works to support temporary uses. This is logical and the Planning Inspectorate has supported the Authority's position at appeal that temporary camping uses do not require permanent infrastructure. There is therefore a presumption against any associated permanent infrastructure (e.g. tracks, toilets, hardstanding) on sites granted temporary planning permission through the Article 4 Direction. The only exception would be a standpipe / water supply and the temporary toilet and shower facilities required by the new national permitted development right. This is consistent with the position set out in paragraph 8.28 of the Local Plan (2019).

Site Location

3.3 The New Forest's National Park status affords it the highest level of protection in the planning system in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. All proposals will be carefully assessed for their landscape impact (having regard to Policy SP7 of the Local Plan). Proposals which fail to conserve the landscape, scenic beauty and cultural heritage of the National Park will not be supported.

3.4 In addition to this strong landscape protection, over 50% of the New Forest National Park is designated as being of international importance for nature conservation. These designations – which include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Ramsar sites in the New Forest and Solent Coast – are legally protected and new development (including camping uses) must not have a detrimental impact on the site integrity.

3.5 As with other forms of planned development in the New Forest, new temporary camping uses will not be supported within the national (SSSI) or international (SAC, SPA, Ramsar) nature conservations designations of the National Park and this is consistent with Local Plan policy SP5. It should also be noted that national permitted development right for temporary campsite use do not apply within Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

3.6 In addition, the Habitat Regulations require consideration to be given to the impacts of development outside the designated sites on the integrity of these sites. There is considerable evidence showing that development around heathlands (such as the New Forest) has an adverse effect on the quality of heathland interest features underlying the designation of the European sites, Ramsar site and SSSIs. This includes the loss of functionally linked habitat, increased fire risk, changes in hydrology, and increased recreational use.

3.7 The Habitats Regulations Assessment of the adopted National Park Local Plan (2019) highlighted a range of potential ‘urban edge’ effects. It is important to note that urban edge effects are cumulative and therefore the scope for continuing to increase development within 400 metres of the designated New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites is limited. Natural England support the Authority’s position that development within the 400-metre zone should be restricted. Consequently, the National Park Authority will not support any new temporary campsites (established post 1 March 2020) or extensions to existing sites (i.e. 28 days to 60 days) within 400 metres of the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar designated sites due to concerns over impacts on site integrity.

3.8 All 26 miles of coastline within the New Forest National Park are designated as being of international importance for nature conservation. Recent monitoring and updated evidence highlights potential impacts on the summer breeding birds of the Solent Special Protection Areas from increasing recreational disturbance from new development. From 1 April 2025, summer temporary camping uses within the 5.6km ‘zone of influence’ of the Solent’s internationally designated sites must therefore address their recreational impacts on the Solent coast in addition to addressing impacts on the New Forest’s designated sites.

Meeting the requirements of the Habitats Regulations

3.9 The Habitats Regulations protect rare wildlife and habitats in designated nature conservation sites. As outlined above, over half of the land in the New Forest National Park benefits from this legal protection and development must

demonstrate it will not impact on site integrity for it to proceed. Given the range and scale of internationally protected nature conservation sites in the New Forest and on the Solent coast, these legal considerations are particularly important in the National Park.

3.10 The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the New Forest National Park Local Plan (2019) concluded that it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects from either recreational pressures or from changes to water quality on the designated sites from new housing or any form of overnight visitor accommodation (including campsites). Impacts must therefore be addressed through the planning application process to ensure legal compliance. The Authority can only approve development if it is ascertained it will not adversely affect the integrity of the designated sites following Appropriate Assessment.

(i) Recreational impacts on the designated sites of the New Forest and Solent

3.11 The Authority has devised a package of appropriate mitigation measures in a revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD (2020) that will allow most visitor accommodation proposals to mitigate their recreational impacts on the New Forest SAC, SPA and Ramsar designated sites. Financial contributions to this Scheme will be used to implement a range of measures that will mitigate the recreational impacts on the designated sites. This approach is supported by Natural England and includes funding from development to support ranger provision within the designated sites, interpretative material and wider awareness raising. Key messages set out in the New Forest Code should be available on-site.

3.12 With regard to financial contributions to the New Forest recreation mitigation scheme, applicants will need to calculate the amount payable in accordance with the formula, using the number of pitches and number of days open during the year. As outlined in Section 2 of this guidance note, the National Park Authority will consider granting temporary planning permission for new campsites for up to 60 days per annum. A worked example of the financial contribution towards mitigating recreational impacts on the New Forest's internationally designated sites from new campsite use is shown below.

3.13 The Revised [Bird Aware Solent Revised Strategy September 2024 - Bird Aware Solent](#) – sets out an agreed package of mitigation measures to address recreational impacts arising from new development. This includes a contribution figure for temporary camping uses which only operate between 1 April and 30 September each year, with a worked example set out below.

Worked example of a contribution towards mitigating recreational impacts on the New Forest's designated sites

- £1,557 contribution to fund mitigation during the Local Plan period to 2036
- This equates to £77.85 per annum
- £77.85 is 'discounted' by the proportion of the year the campsite will be open $\text{£77.85} \times (\text{number of days open}) / 365 = \text{£ per pitch for each year of operation.}$

- For example, a 50-pitch campsite open for 60 days per annum would trigger a financial contribution of £640 for measures designed to mitigate recreational impacts. If planning permission was granted for a 3-year time limited period the contribution for the lifespan of the permission would be £1,920.

Worked example of a contribution towards mitigating recreational impacts on the Solent's designated sites

- £193 contribution to fund recreational mitigation measures for the Solent coast sites from campsites operating between 1 April and 30 September.
- This contribution is for an 80-year period, equating to £2.41 per annum.
- A 50-pitch campsite open for 60 days per annum would trigger a financial contribution of £120.50 per annum for measures designed to mitigate recreational impacts on the Solent coast. If planning permission was granted for a 3-year time limited period the contribution for the lifespan of the permission would be £361.60.

(ii) Water quality

3.14 Natural England has advised that there is a likely significant effect on the Solent's designated sites due to the increase in wastewater from new housing and any development providing overnight accommodation which would discharge into the Solent would also be likely to cause a significant effect. Similar issues affect the River Avon to the west of the National Park, with evidence that elevated levels of phosphates are impacting the River Avon Special Area of Conservation. Therefore, mitigation is required to enable compliance with the Regulations.

3.15 Applications for new temporary campsites will need to demonstrate effective mitigation for either nitrates entering the Solent designated sites catchment; or phosphates in the River Avon catchment to the west of the National Park and further details can be found on our website. The requirement for nutrient neutrality in new development applies across the whole of the National Park and landowners should prepare a site-specific 'nutrient budget' setting out how the nutrients arising from the planned development will be managed. Applicants should use the nutrient budget calculator for either the Solent or River Avon available on our website to determine the amount of mitigation required and to read Natural England's advice on achieving nutrient neutrality.

Supporting the land-based economy

3.16 Taking the principle established in the Local Plan, applications for temporary campsites will be expected to show how they support the local economy, contribute to farm diversification and maintain the landscape character of the National Park (as required by Policy SP48). As per paragraph 8.33 of the Local Plan (2019), diversification of a scale or extent which is likely to reduce the long-term agricultural operation of the landholding will not be supported. Planning permission will not be granted if the proposal would result in the loss of back-up grazing land.

4 Use of planning conditions

4.1 The Article 4 Direction enables the Authority to protect the designated nature conservation sites, the landscape character of the New Forest National Park, local amenity and the well-being of the area through ensuring proposals for new campsites are considered in more detail.

4.2 In the event that planning permission is granted for temporary campsite use, standard conditions are likely to include:

- A time limit on the permission. This is considered appropriate for a temporary use that under normal permitted development rights is limited to a calendar year. The Authority is not looking to introduce a more permissive regime, or to grant planning permission for the permanent change of use of land for camping uses. The 3-year period provides certainty for applicants and local communities.
- Restrictions on barbeques and wildfires, unless provided in approved areas agreed in writing by the Authority. The New Forest is under extreme fire risk in the summer months and barbeques and fires are banned on the Open Forest due to the risks they pose to the designated sites. Restrictions are also justified to protect neighbouring properties (which include thatched properties) and their amenity. This is consistent with Policy DP2 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) which confirms development should not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on amenity.
- No amplified music. The tranquillity of the National Park is one of its most valued 'special qualities' and the planning policies for the National Park seek to protect it. In order to retain this special quality and allow people to enjoy it, planning policies seek to control the potential impacts of noise and light pollution. Conditions will be applied so that applications will be consistent with Policy SP15, which sets out more detail. The use of amplified music on campsites is contrary to the statutory Park purposes.
- No external lighting. As outlined above, the tranquillity of the New Forest National Park is valued by residents and visitors alike. People's enjoyment of the tranquillity of the area is damaged by poorly designed lighting and so appropriate planning conditions will apply so that applications will be consistent with Policy SP15, to ensure that these concerns are addressed.
- A requirement to display the New Forest Code on site (appropriate material will be provided by the Authority).
- Toilet and waste disposal facilities. Conditions will be applied in regard to siting, appearance and operation.
- Compliance with the requirements of the Habitat Regulations (see Section 3).

5. Review of guidance

5.1 The Authority will continue to monitor and assess the impact of temporary 28 days campsites and will in turn will keep this guidance under review.

April 2025