

Meeting Minutes



Duty to Cooperate: New Forest District Council & Winchester City Council

Purpose Duty to Cooperate	Date & Time 19/02/26 - 09:00
Location MS Teams	

Attendees

Name	Organisation	Email
James Smith (JS)	Planning Policy Team Leader / New Forest District Council	[REDACTED]
Peter McGowan (PM)	Senior Policy Planner / New Forest District Council	[REDACTED]
Jessica Heredge (JH)	Planning Policy Officer / New Forest District Council	[REDACTED]
Katherine Dove (KD)	Principal Planning Policy Officer / Winchester City Council	[REDACTED]

Menuka Bastians (MB)	Planning Officer / Winchester City Council	
-------------------------	--	--

Items Discussed

1. Introductions

- a. Brief introductions from all attendees; KD and MB attending the DtC meetings for the first time, in place of previous colleagues who have now left WCC. KD notes she is new in post.

2. Update on NFDC Local Plan

- a. JS gave an overview of work on NFDC's Local Plan review to date, noting that Cabinet approval was obtained on 4th February for a Regulation 18 consultation. This consultation covers Spatial Options and Policy Direction and runs from Friday 6th February 2026 to Friday 20th March 2026. JS stated that NFDC intend to progress at pace towards a Regulation 19 consultation in Autumn 2026, aiming to submit to PINS by end of December 2026 to enable examination under the current NPPF.
- b. JS acknowledged that the timeline was tight, noting several challenges including LGR, conflicting advice from MHCLG and PINS, and the fact that NFDC's current Local Plan is now out of date.

3. Update on NFDC housing need and distribution

- a. JS gave an overview of NFDC's housing need, noting the new Standard Method need figure of 1,511 dpa across the District (including the National Park). Excluding the National Park, this figure reduces to 1,254 dpa, totalling ~22,500 dwellings over the 18-year plan period 2025-2043. JS notes that the current Local Plan target is approximately is an average of 500 dpa on a stepped trajectory, whereas current delivery rates are around 250dpa, highlighting the significant increase in assessed housing need and challenges surrounding delivery rates.

- b. JS noted existing commitments, permissions and allocations, which total ~6700 dwellings. JS introduced the Strategic Development Growth Options (SDGOs) that are currently being consulted on, which could see further supply of around ~6,800 dwellings. JS confirmed that the SDGOs represent larger growth areas, and indicative capacities for each site are included in the consultation documents.
- c. JS acknowledged a shortfall against need of nearly 9,000 dwellings across the plan period to 2043, adding that if some SDGOs are ruled out following consultation, the unmet need could increase.
- d. JS briefly outlined the constraints faced by NFDC which affect housing delivery, noting that the New Forest National Park covers approximately 80% of the District, and of the remaining land outside the National Park – the Plan Area – 57% of this land is further constrained (e.g. flood risk, nature designations, existing built up areas, etc.). JS further noted that significant portions of the Plan Area are designated Green Belt.
- e. Re: Green Belt, JS noted that an update to the 2016 Green Belt study is underway (undertaken by LUC). The Stage 1 report has been published, identifying areas for further assessment and potential release. JS noted concern that full release of SDGO areas could undermine the overall Green Belt function, and that this is something that LUC are assessing. JS acknowledged that significant release of Green Belt land is likely but this is to be approached carefully.

- f. KD noted Gypsy and Traveller Need, and enquired as to how this had changed. JS confirmed that the updated GTAA shows significant increase in pitch need, however confirmed that no new sites had been promoted to NFDC through the various Calls for Sites. JS also noted that NFDC has very few unauthorised sites capable of regularisation. JS continued that NFDC has reopened the call for sites with explicit reference to traveller need. JS outlined possible future work in this area that could see reconfiguration of existing sites to increase capacity (as suggested by GTAA consultants ROS) as well as potential allocations within SDGOs, subject to evidence of deliverability.

4. Approach to Unmet Need

- a. KD asked what NFDC's approach will be to addressing unmet need. JS confirmed that NFDC will need to cast the net widely to explore unmet housing need, and are likely to engage with all South Hampshire neighbours including Winchester City Council. JS noted NFDC's recent PINs advisory visit which reinforced the importance of robust evidence and "no stone unturned" in showing attempts to meet need.
- b. KD enquired as to the best place for WCC to submit their comments regarding DtC matters. PM confirmed that the consultation questionnaire has several questions on the general development strategy, and that this would be the most relevant place for such comments.

5. Employment need/provision

- a. PM gave an overview of NFDCs employment need, noting that an Economic Need Assessment was jointly undertaken with National Park Authority by consultants Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners. The ENA identified a need to 2043 of approx. 116,000–142,000 sqm floorspace, split approx. 25,000 sqm office and approx. 117,000 sqm industrial.

- b. PM confirmed that NFDC are likely able to meet their need in full, through a combination of rolling forward existing developable employment sites; employment land within SDGOs; and/or potential strategic employment at M27 Junction 2 (logistics opportunities for wider South Hampshire).
- c. PM noted that current supply of employment land is unbalanced, with the majority primarily in east. Future allocations will aim to provide a more balanced distribution across each of the three sub-areas of the Plan Area.

6. Update on WCC Local Plan

- a. KD gave a brief update on WCC's Local Plan, stating that the Plan has now been examined and is nearing adoption. KD noted that the Main Modifications have been consulted on, and WCC are now awaiting the Inspector's final report. KD stated that WCC aim to adopt before April 2026, dependent on Inspector's timetables.
- b. KD outlined that WCC's new Local Plan is in its early stages, and will be prepared under the new regulations. WCC are awaiting secondary legislation / plan-making guidance from Government before they can progress too much.
- c. MB outlined that WCC did a Call for Sites in November, the results from which are currently being processed. KD noted that WCC are also facing high unmet need for housing and Gypsy & Traveller pitches. The Call for sites produced very few Traveller site submissions; work is ongoing.
- d. KD noted that WCC are in the process of commissioning a wealth of evidence base studies, including a Retail study; Employment land review; Sustainability Appraisal scoping and Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- e. WCC are preparing their new Local Plan (2026-2044) timetable currently, with the intention to publish this later in 2026 subject to clarification by regulations.

7. Environmental Mitigation

- a. JS noted that NFDC are continuing engagement with Solent Mitigation Partnership, which includes nitrate credit schemes and catchment based mitigation. JS acknowledged that national legislative changes may alter the required approach.

8. Date for next meeting

- a. Next meeting proposed for April 2026, once NFDC consultation closes and updated housing need / SDGO picture is clearer.

Post Meeting Note

WCC has now received the Inspector's Report and are going to Full Council to adopt the Local Plan 2040 on Tuesday 24th March 2026.

Agreed Actions & Priorities

1. NFDC to schedule next meeting and circulate agenda.

Next Meeting

Next meeting proposed for April 2026; NFDC to schedule and circulate agenda.