



17 April 2026

Dear Planning Policy Team,

Housing Need in the New Forest National Park National Park

The New Forest National Park Authority intends to publish its Regulation 19 Submission draft Local Plan around mid-August / the start of September 2026.

Calculation of Housing Needs within the New Forest National Park

As you will be aware, the Government's standard method for calculating the 'policy off' housing need which forms the starting point for Local Plans is generated for local authority areas, rather than local planning authorities. In the majority of the country this distinction makes no difference. However, in National Parks this distinction is important. In the case of the New Forest, the designated National Park includes land within the local authorities of New Forest District, Test Valley Borough and Wiltshire; and the National Park is part of three wider Housing Market Areas – Southampton, Bournemouth (including Christchurch & Poole) and Salisbury/South Wiltshire.

This scenario is acknowledged within the NPPG guidance on 'Housing and Economic Needs Assessments' which states that:

"Where strategic policy-making authorities do not align with local authority boundaries (either individually or in combination), or the data required for the model are not available such as in National Parks, or local authority areas where the samples are too small, an alternative approach may have to be used.

Such authorities may continue to identify a housing need figure using a method determined locally. In doing so authorities should take into consideration the best available evidence on the amount of existing housing stock within their planning authority boundary, local house prices, earnings and housing affordability. In the absence of other robust affordability data, authorities should consider the implications of using the median workplace-based affordability ratio for the relevant wider local authority area(s)". Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 2a-014-20241212 Revised: 12-02-2024.

The majority of the New Forest National Park (circa 94%) is located within New Forest District and the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council jointly

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commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment from the consultants Icení - the Assessment (2025) is available at [Look Back at - Evidence - New Forest National Park Authority Local Plan](#). The Assessment takes the Government's standard method housing need figure for New Forest District and apportions it between the National Park and the rest of New Forest District outside the National Park. We consider this approach accords with the NPPG guidance referenced above and results in a 'policy off' need figure of circa 260 dwellings per year within the National Park (circa 4,940 over the Plan period to 2043).

Proposals to meet need and the scale of the likely shortfall

As part of the review of the New Forest National Park Local Plan we have considered a range of reasonable alternatives to meeting the identified housing need arising within the communities of the National Park. Our emerging Local Plan includes: (i) an extended settlement hierarchy; (ii) proposed greenfield and brownfield housing allocations on sites considered suitable, achievable and available in an expanded range of villages; and (iii) positive policies supporting tied Estate worker dwellings and rural exception sites. However, the delivery of new development in the New Forest National Park must be seen within the context of a nationally protected landscape and the framework for National Parks set out in national planning policy (e.g. paragraph 189 – 190 of the NPPF, 2024); extant Government guidance (including the National Parks Circular, 2010); and primary legislation (including the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the strengthened duty to seek to further National Park purposes in Section 245 of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023).

Heading towards the Regulation 19 publication, the draft New Forest National Park Local Plan makes provision for circa 950 new dwellings within the boundary of the National Park to 2043. This is an increased level of development compared to the adopted Local Plan (2019). However, with over 50% of the New Forest National Park designated as being of international importance for nature conservation (SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations), meeting the identified housing need in full is not considered feasible. There is therefore likely to be a shortfall of circa 4,000 new dwellings over the Plan period to 2043 (210 dwellings per annum). This scenario is envisaged in the NPPG guidance on the 'Natural Environment', which states that:

“The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that the scale and extent of development in these areas [National Parks and National Landscapes] should be limited, in view of the importance of conserving and enhancing their landscapes and scenic beauty. Its policies for protecting these areas may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs for development in full through the plan-making process, and they are unlikely to be suitable areas for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining (non-designated) areas. Effective joint working between planning authorities covering designated and adjoining areas, through the preparation and maintenance of statements of common ground, is particularly important in helping to identify how housing and other needs can best be accommodated. All development in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Beauty will need to be located and designed in a way that reflects their status as landscapes of the highest quality.” Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 8-041-20190721 Revised: 21-07-2019.

Formal request for assistance in meeting identified housing needs

The New Forest National Park Authority is now formally requesting assistance from your local authority in accommodating the unmet housing needs of the National Park, equating to circa 210 dwellings per annum. We have made this formal request in writing to local authorities within the three Housing Market Areas that cover the National Park (Southampton, Bournemouth and Salisbury/South Wilshire), noting the evidence that there is no distinct and separate New Forest Housing Market Area. In making this formal request we are very aware of the challenges neighbouring authorities have in meeting their own identified housing needs generated under the national standard method and the alternative options you are considering to meet these challenges.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

The New Forest Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (ORS) was received in January 2026. This concludes that there is a need for 12 additional Gypsy & Traveller pitches and 6 Travelling Showpeople plots within the New Forest National Park over the plan period to 2043.

The Authority itself owns no meaningful land within the National Park to meet these needs and there are no existing public sites within the Park which could be considered for expansion. We have carried out an open 'call for sites' process for Gypsy and Traveller sites but based on the lack of responses we will not be able to meet our identified needs. The National Park Authority is therefore formally requesting assistance from your local authority in helping to meet the unmet Gypsy and Traveller needs of the National Park. In the meantime, we intend to include positive, criteria-based policies within our Regulation 19 draft Plan to steer the consideration of applications coming forward from the Gypsy & Traveller community.

Conclusions

Following the initial 'duty to cooperate' correspondence and meetings we had with many neighbouring planning authorities in Winter 2025/26, the New Forest National Park Authority is looking to prepare draft statements of common ground and a 'Cooperation Statement' alongside our Submission draft Regulation 19 Local Plan. We have sought to take a positive approach to meeting the identified needs arising from communities within the National Park, but it is clear there will be a shortfall in both housing and Gypsy & Traveller provision. National policy recognises this scenario may arise within nationally protected landscapes and we are therefore looking to engage our neighbouring authorities to understand what may be possible.

The National Park Authority's planning policy team would be happy to meet you to discuss this formal written request if that would be helpful and they can be contacted at policy@newforestnpa.gov.uk. **We would ask for a response to this request by Friday 8 May 2026 to help feed into our plan-review timetable.**

Yours sincerely

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Interim Head of Planning & Place