

Appendix 1 - The Policy Map

National

In the 'National Planning Policy Framework, July 2021' (NPPF)¹⁷, it states on page 51:

"Habitats and biodiversity

179. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and*
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."*

Reference 62 also on page 51 states *"Where areas that are part of the Nature Recovery Network are identified in plans, it may be appropriate to specify the types of development that may be suitable within them."* Wildlife Corridors are defined in Annex 2 as *"Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations"*.

On page 52, it states:

"180. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate."*

The reference to 'wholly exceptional reasons' refers to, e.g., major infrastructure projects. It continues:

“181. The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;

b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and

c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

182. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.”

On ‘non-strategic policies’, the NPPF states *“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies”* and *“Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently”*. Further, *“Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area”*.

In the glossary, ‘Habitats sites’ refers to internationally designated sites - Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites.

Environment Act 2021

‘Part 6 Nature and biodiversity’ in the Environment Act 2021¹⁸ requires biodiversity net gain to be a condition of planning permission in England becoming a mandatory requirement in November 2023 at a level of >10%¹⁹. Where biodiversity increase cannot be achieved on site, mitigation can be implemented elsewhere. The policy is a significant change from the previous ‘no net loss’ policy. For larger developments, the so-called Defra Metric²⁰ (developed by Natural England, currently on version 3.1) is used to calculate ‘before and after’ figures. Where impacts on irreplaceable habitats are not adequately measured by the Metric, separate consideration is required, which must comply with relevant policy and legislation²¹.

The establishment of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a major commitment in the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan²², is part of the forthcoming Nature Strategy and builds on Natural England’s Nature Networks concept²³. It states *“The NRN will help us deal with three of the biggest challenges we face: biodiversity loss, climate change and wellbeing. Establishing the NRN will: enhance sites designated for nature conservation and other wildlife-rich places - newly created and restored wildlife-rich habitats, corridors and stepping stones will help wildlife populations to grow and move; improve the landscape’s resilience to*

climate change, providing natural solutions to reduce carbon and manage flood risk, and sustaining vital ecosystems such as improved soil, clean water and clean air; reinforce the natural and cultural diversity of our landscapes, and protect our historic natural environment; and enable us to enjoy and connect with nature where we live, work and play - benefiting our health and wellbeing". To achieve this, NRN Delivery Partnerships will be created with Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Hampshire County Council (HCC)

HCC declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. A part of the 'Strategic Framework of Programmes' is to "encourage local planning authorities to create an evidence base of existing green corridors"²⁴. One specific project area identified was a 'cut and collect trial of grass verges' which is hoped will lead to more diversity in flora and therefore fauna on road verges²⁵. Road verges can be effective wildlife corridors.

In response to the Environment Act 2021 requiring local nature recovery strategies, HCC will be the lead authority on the preparation of the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and have issued a Decision Report²⁶ which 'seeks to demonstrate the importance that the County Council places on protecting the natural environment and the fundamental part that this plays in its commitment to tackling climate change'. HCC are therefore a key consultee.

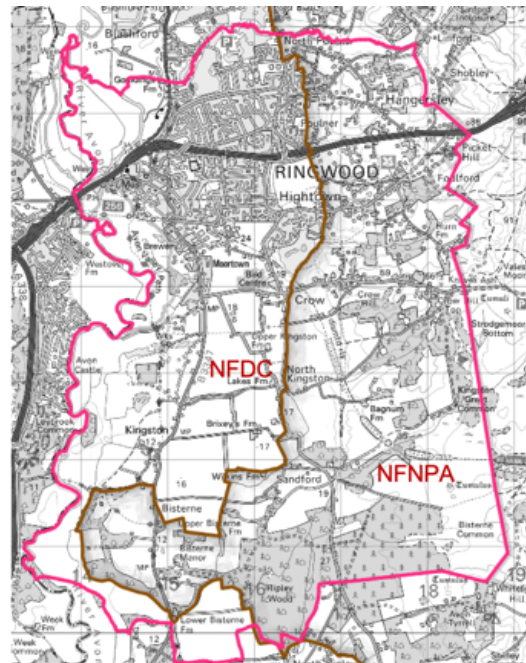
New Forest District Council (NFDC)

Section 5 of the NFDC Local Plan Part One²⁷, including Policy ENV1, addresses mitigation of impacts on International Nature Conservation sites, mitigations such as ANRG provision. Reference is made to the 'Mitigation for Recreational Impacts' SPD²⁸, adopted in 2021, which contains a simple summary of the adopted local plan policy in Appendix 1 and states:

"Saved Policy DM2: Nature conservation, biodiversity and geodiversity

Development proposals which would be likely to adversely affect the integrity of a designated or candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC), classified or potential Special Protection Area (SPA), or listed Ramsar site will not be permitted unless there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest which would justify the development.

Development proposals within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which would be likely to adversely affect the site will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development outweigh both the adverse impacts on the site and any adverse impacts on the wider network of SSSIs.



Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity or geological value of regional or local importance (including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGGS), and habitats of species of principal importance for biodiversity) will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the site, and the loss can be mitigated to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity.

Development proposals will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity and retain and, where possible, enhance existing features of nature conservation value within the site. Existing ecological networks should be identified and maintained to avoid habitat fragmentation, and ecological corridors should form an essential component of green infrastructure provision in association with new development to ensure habitat connectivity.

Where development is permitted, the local planning authority will use conditions and/or planning obligations to minimise the damage, provide mitigation and site management measures and, where appropriate, compensatory and enhancement measures.

Development will not be permitted which would adversely affect species of fauna or flora that are protected under national or international law, or their habitats, unless their protection can be adequately secured through conditions and/or planning obligations.”

“Policy ENV1: Mitigating the impacts of development on International Nature Conservation sites

1. Except as provided for in the first paragraph of Saved Policy DM2: Nature Conservation, Biodiversity and Geodiversity, development will only be permitted where the Council is satisfied that any necessary mitigation, management or monitoring measures are secured in perpetuity as part of the proposal and will be implemented in a timely manner, such that, in combination with other plans and development proposals, there will not be adverse effects on the integrity of any of the following International Nature Conservation sites:

- The New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and the New Forest Ramsar site;*
- The Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC, the Solent and Southampton Water SPA, and the Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site;*
- The River Avon SAC, Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar site; and*
- The River Itchen SAC.*

2. For residential development and the provision of overnight visitor accommodation adverse effects can be adequately mitigated by implementing approved measures relevant to the site location, including as set out in the Mitigation for Recreational Impacts SPD and in the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy, and in supplementary guidance on nutrient management.

3. For non-residential developments, the requirement for mitigation will be considered on case-by-case basis with regard to the nature, scale and location of the proposed use.

4. The approved mitigation measures for residential developments currently include:

i. For developments providing 49 or fewer net additional units of residential accommodation, financial contributions towards the provision of recreational mitigation measures as set out below and in the Mitigation for Recreational Impacts SPD:

(a) Projects for the provision of alternative natural recreational green spaces and recreational routes: new or improved open space and recreational routes of a quality and type suitable to attract residents of new development within the Plan Area who might otherwise visit the International Nature Conservation sites for recreation; and

(b) Access and Visitor Management: measures to manage the number of recreational visits to the New Forest and Solent Coast International Nature Conservation sites; and to modify visitor behaviour within those sites so as to reduce the potential for harmful recreational impacts; and

(c) Monitoring of the impacts of new development on the International Nature Conservation sites and establishing a better evidence base: to reduce uncertainty and inform future refinement of mitigation measures.

ii. For developments of 50 or more net additional residential dwellings:

(a) Direct provision by the developer of at least eight hectares of natural recreational greenspace per 1,000 population located on the development site or directly adjoining and well connected to it; and

(b) A financial contribution towards Access and Visitor Management and Monitoring as set out above at i(b) and i(c).

iii. Additionally for all residential developments within 5.6km of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA, as shown on Figure 5.1, a financial contribution is required towards a Solent-wide programme of visitor management, monitoring and development mitigation projects.

iv. Additionally for residential developments and the provision of overnight visitor accommodation draining or discharging wastewater to the River Avon in relation to phosphate neutrality or to the Solent and Southampton Water in relation to nitrogen neutrality, a financial contribution or other appropriate mechanisms to achieve nutrient-neutral development.

v. Additionally for all residential developments, a financial contribution towards monitoring and, if necessary (based on future monitoring outcomes) managing or mitigating air quality effects within the New Forest SPA, SAC and Ramsar site."

Policy ENV1 is specifically referred to in 'Planning Guidance for Developers'²⁹.

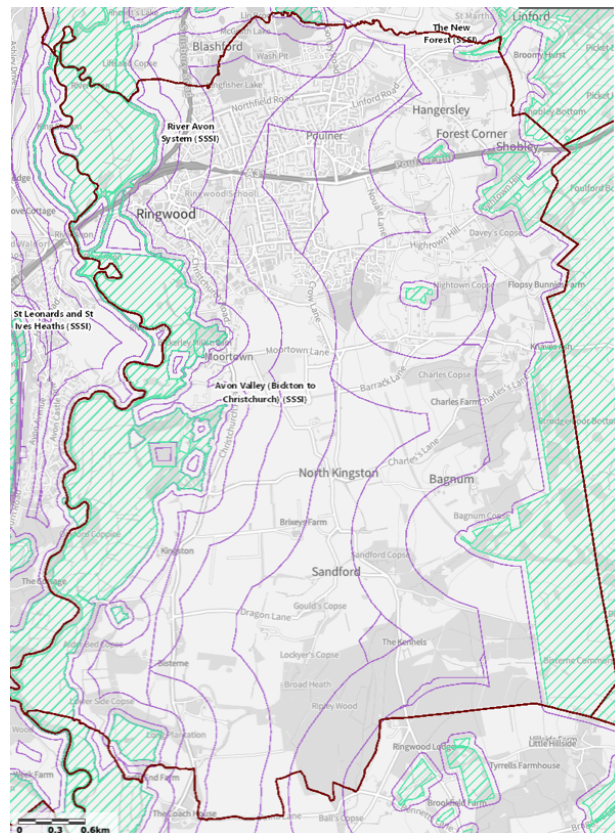
Not referenced in the 'Mitigation for Recreational Impacts' SPD, but is in NFDC Local Plan Part Two, Policy DM9 Section 2.32 states "The Mitigation Strategy SPD will be followed by a second SPD which will give further consideration to identifying important neighbourhood-level green infrastructure features (as identified in Policy DM9) and give further guidance on enhancement projects." 'Policy DM9: Green Infrastructure linkages' states "Development proposals should maintain, and where possible enhance, the integrity of the network of green infrastructure within settlements. In designing new development, even where the loss of some trees and hedgerows or other existing green infrastructure is unavoidable, developers should seek to: retain identified 'Landscape features'; minimise the loss of

existing ‘green’ features on a site; maximise the potential to create links with adjoining green infrastructure; provide natural green spaces within a development; and maintain or create wildlife corridors through a site. The following green infrastructure linkage features, which have an important role in providing connectivity between other green infrastructure and open spaces, will be identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy Supplementary Planning Document: (i) ‘green links’ between green spaces within the settlements and between the built-up area and the countryside; (ii) ‘green buffers’ between development and major transport routes; (iii) tree-lined streets and streets with spacious verges; (iv) watercourses and their banks. The presence of these features should be taken into account and influence the design of development proposals.” The Green Infrastructure Strategy SPD has not yet been published³⁰ (September 2022).

On the ‘checklists’ for planning applications, the Full Applications checklist asks whether the application lies within 2km of a SAC, SPA or Ramsar site or within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone or within 100m of potential priority habitats, such as SINCs. The Defra Magic Map application showing the parish SSSI IRZs is shown on the map³¹. For Householder Applications (such as permission for extensions), the checklist asks whether the application would be within 50m of potential priority habitats, including SSSI, SAC, SPA or Ramsar sites, as well as SINC, native hedgerow and other priority habitat areas³².

New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA)

NFNPA are actively looking for partnerships ‘to enable wildlife to thrive, both within and beyond the National Park’ as part of their Nature Recovery objective³³. Along with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the NPA monitor biodiversity³⁴. The NPA also seeks to protect conservation areas (within 2km from a SAC, SPA or Ramsar site; within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone; 100m from SINCs) from adverse effects of development³⁵.



In addition, via the Green Halo Partnership, the NFNPA is reaching out beyond its boundaries: “the Authority believes that it is important to consider landscapes on a wider scale. The Authority is delivering, together with 10 partner organisations, the Our Past, Our Future Partnership scheme for the New Forest, which undertakes projects to restore lost habitats. The Authority has also brought together public, private and third sector organisations into the Green Halo Partnership to recognise the economic and social value of the natural environment – its natural capital and the ecosystem services it provides – and ensure this guides decision about how we manage or develop our area. This will include exploring opportunities for new green infrastructure”³⁶.

Dorset Heathlands

For Neighbourhood Plan purposes, the fact that Dorset is adjacent to Ringwood Parish is irrelevant as it has no direct influence on planning policies. However, nature does not respect county boundaries and as this document is about helping nature recovery, a mention of their Heathlands Planning Framework SPD³⁷ that was adopted in 2020 is included here. It seeks to protect heathland species such as ground nesting birds from disturbance and predation associated with housing development nearby. Within 400m of heathland, additional housing is prohibited and increases in residential development within 5km is restricted. The SPD requires Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) for which an addition to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is made of about £400 per house. These contributions *“secure the day to day costs of helping local people to alter harmful behaviour through raising awareness of the issues and value of the protected sites, which includes (i) employing wardens to manage visitor pressures on the heathland; and (ii) delivering education programmes in local schools. SAMMs also pay for the ongoing monitoring of a sample of heathlands and the effects of new development and crucially whether this strategy is effective.”* It is recognised that in the New Forest, Natural England advice does not preclude all new development within 400m of the New Forest SPA³⁸.

Local differences

It is noted that there are differences in the approaches of the two Local Planning Authorities. The approach of NFDC appears to be built on the principle of ‘doing no harm’ with regard to the effects of development on international nature conservation sites plus the addition of >10% biodiversity net gain required by the Environment Act. Section 2.14 in the NFDC Local Plan Part Two addresses locally designated sites and states *“Locally designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are not shown on the Policies Map as the areas subject to this designation may change, or be added to over the Plan period”*. The approach of the NFNPA appears to be aimed at repairing harm already suffered within the national park rather than mitigation alone.