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Report on the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan 2023 - 2036

An Examination undertaken for New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority with the support of Ringwood Town Council on the July 2023 Submission Draft of the Plan.

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/RNP) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body: Ringwood Town Council;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the designated area as identified on Plan A on page 6 of the Plan;
- The Plan identifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2023 – 2036; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan 2023 - 2036

- 1.1 The Parish of Ringwood lies in the south-west of Hampshire, and the western boundary is conterminous with the boundary of Dorset. Much of the Parish falls under the jurisdiction of New Forest District Council, with the south-eastern and eastern parts of the Parish lying within the New Forest National Park. The town sits on the River Avon and is surrounded by attractive areas of countryside which provide habitats for a wide range of plants and animals. To the north of the Parish are a number of lakes created by gravel extraction.
- 1.2 The town, whose market charter dates back to 1226, provides a very wide range of facilities and services, not only to residents but also to visitors, particularly in the summer months. Community facilities and services available in Ringwood include retail outlets, employment opportunities, places of worship, schools, meeting halls, allotments and recreation facilities. The town includes many listed buildings and the town centre, which I visited, was first designated a conservation area in 1970 (expanded in 1983).
- 1.3 The Consultation Statement (July 2023) confirms that the process of preparing this Neighbourhood Plan commenced in September 2018.

- 1.4 The Town Council (via the four Working Groups that were established) employed a number of initiatives, including surveys, workshops, presentations and drop-in sessions. It is particularly heartening to see the various efforts that were made to harness the enthusiasm of younger people, for example by attending a Ringwood School Assembly.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.5 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the RNP by New Forest District Council (NFDC) and the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA), with the agreement of the Ringwood Town Council (RTC).
- 1.6 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector, with extensive experience in the preparation, examination and implementation of development plans and other planning policy documents. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.7 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.8 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
 - Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;

- it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
- it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations').

1.9 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

1.10 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law)¹; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.11 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.²

¹ The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.

² This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 For planning purposes, the area covered by the RNP falls partly within the New Forest District and partly within the New Forest National Park. The Development Plan for the area³, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, are the adopted NFDC Local Plan Part 1 (2016-2036); the New Forest National Park Authority Local Plan 2016 – 2036; saved policies of the NFDC Core Strategy (2009) and the NFDC Local Plan Part 2 (2014).
- 2.2 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).⁴ The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented.

Submitted Documents

- 2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- the Submission Draft of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (July 2023);
 - the Map on page 6 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
 - the Consultation Statement (July 2023);
 - the Basic Conditions Statement (June 2023);
 - the Screening Statements (December 2022) from both NFDC and NFNPA, regarding the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitat Regulations Assessment;
 - the list of other RNP 'Core Documents' prepared, collected and reviewed in the process of preparing the Plan;
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
 - the responses to my questions dated 4 December 2023, from both New Forest District Council and Ringwood Town Council, received on 11 January 2024.⁵

³ As set out in paragraph 3.6 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

⁴ A revised version of the NPPF was published during the examination on 19 December 2023: all references in this report read across to the latest version (further updated on 20 December 2023).

⁵ View at: www.newforest.gov.uk/ringwoodplan

Site Visit

- 2.4 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 14 December 2023, to familiarise myself with the locality, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum.

Modifications

- 2.6 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The RNP has been prepared and submitted for examination by RTC as the qualifying body for an area that was originally designated by NFDC on 3 February 2021 and the NFNPA on 16 February 2021.
- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

- 3.3 The Plan specifies (on the front cover) the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2023 to 2036.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 The Consultation Statement summarises the approach to consultation undertaken by the Town Council.
- 3.5 Opportunities to contribute towards the preparation of the RNP have been available to all interested parties at the relevant stages, including at both the Regulation 14 stage (6 February 2023 to 19 March 2023) and the Regulation 16 stage (18 August 2023 to 29 September 2023). The Consultation Statement provides, on page 4, a table under the heading 'Dateline of Events' setting out a summary of the events that have taken

place. There is also a summary of the consultation undertaken with NFDC and NFNPA (page 7).

- 3.6 I consider that, overall, the approach towards the preparation of the RNP has been conducted in a fair and inclusive manner. I am satisfied sufficient regard has been had to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement and the process has been procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.7 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

- 3.8 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.⁶

Human Rights

- 3.9 I have seen no evidence that the Plan breaches Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998), and it is not a matter that has been raised by any of the respondents.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

- 4.1 Screening Statements on the Determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) were prepared by NFNPA and NFDC, both dated December 2022. The conclusion reached is that the RNP does not require a full SEA or HRA to be undertaken because the Plan would not have any significant adverse environmental effects and does not allocate 'new' sites for development. I am aware of no adverse comments by the statutory agencies and, having read the documentation, I am satisfied that the Plan is compatible with EU obligations under retained EU law.

Main Issues

- 4.2 I have approached the assessment of compliance with the Basic Conditions of the RNP as two main matters:
- General issues of compliance of the Plan, as a whole; and
 - Specific issues of compliance of the Plan policies.

⁶ See section 61K of the 1990 Act.

General Issues of Compliance of the Plan

National Policy, Sustainable Development and the Development Plan

- 4.3 There are six chapters in the RNP, which are Introduction and Background; The Neighbourhood Area; Planning Policy Context; Community Views on Planning Issues; Vision, Objectives and Land Use Policies; and Implementation and Monitoring.
- 4.4 It is clear to me that NFDC, NFNPA and RTC have co-operated in the preparation of the RNP⁷ and, subject to the detailed comments and modifications that I set out below, I conclude that the RNP has had proper regard to national policy and guidance. I also conclude that subject to the recommendations that I make:
- the RNP is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Development Plan for the area, and that overall, the document provides an appropriate framework that will enable the town of Ringwood to continue to evolve as a community whilst ensuring that the quality of life, particularly for residents, will be retained and enhanced; and
 - that the policies, as recommended to be modified, are supported by appropriate evidence, are sufficiently clear and unambiguous and that they can be applied with confidence.⁸

Specific Issues of Compliance of the Plan's Policies

Foreword (page 4)

- 4.5 The Foreword succinctly summarises why a Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared and the Vision on which the Plan is based.

Introduction and Background (page 6)

- 4.6 Chapter 1 describes the area to which the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) will apply and explains in more depth the approach towards the preparation and implementation of the Plan. This chapter will need to be up-dated before the Plan is 'made' (see paragraph 4.54).

The Neighbourhood Area (page 8)

- 4.7 A description of the Neighbourhood Area is given in Chapter 2. This provides the reader with a clear understanding of the character of the locality, including Ringwood town centre.

⁷ Reflecting, for example, the advice in PPG Reference IDs 41-040-20160211 and 41-009-20190509 and Paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act.

⁸ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

Planning Policy Context (page 10)

4.8 Chapter 3 summarises the relevant national planning policy but is out-of-date because a revised version of the NPPF was published in December 2023. Although changes to the NPPF (as they relate to the RNP) were minimal, it is nevertheless important that references to the NPPF reflect the contents of the most recent edition. This is particularly notable in paragraph 3.2 of the Plan as follows:

- Size, type and tenure of housing (NPPF paragraph 62 now 63);
- Networks of high quality open space and Local Green Spaces (paragraphs 98-103 now 102-107);
- Promoting active travel networks (paragraphs 104 & 106 now 108 & 110);
- Achieving well designed places (paragraphs 126-132 now 131-137);
- Protecting Green Belt land (paragraphs 137-151 now 142-156);
- Planning for climate change (paragraphs 153 & 154 now 158 & 159);
- Planning in designated landscapes (paragraph 176 now 182);
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity (paragraph 179 now 185); and
- Planning positively for heritage (paragraphs 190 & 203 now 196 & 209).

Other references I note include Plan paragraphs 3.3 (NPPF paragraphs 66 & 67 are now 67 & 68), 4.56 (paragraph 133 is now 138), and 5.50 (paragraphs 203 & 204 are now 209 & 210). The Glossary should also be updated in this regard. To that end, I recommend that all references to the NPPF in the RNP relate to the December 2023 version (**PM1**).

4.9 I observe that paragraph 3.10 (page 13) confirms that the indicative housing target for Ringwood can be met from existing allocations but that there may be a need for a review of the Neighbourhood Plan should housing allocations be required to address housing delivery.

4.10 With regard to the New Forest Development Plan, the text on pages 10 to 13 appropriately summarises the current position.

Community Views on Planning Issues (page 15)

4.11 Chapter 4 summarises the approaches taken by the Steering Group towards involving residents and other interested parties in the preparation of the RNP. A more detailed assessment is provided in the accompanying Consultation Statement.

Vision, Objectives and Land Use Policies (page 16)

4.12 The Vision for the area is clear and realistic and there is no reason to doubt that it can be successfully achieved. The stated key objectives reflect the 'Community Vision' behind the Plan, as referred to on page 4. I

did question how objective 4, ensuring that Ringwood does not become a dormitory town, will be achieved.⁹ The Town Council responded by emphasising its objective of making the town centre a destination in its own right – for employment, retail, education, leisure and other services. The Town Council considers that the provision of a wide range of services locally will contribute to preventing Ringwood from becoming a dormitory town and I do not disagree.

Policy R1: A Spatial Plan for Ringwood (page 18)

- 4.13 Policy R1 establishes the Town Council’s overall approach to development in the Parish, with the emphasis being placed on the use of brownfield land; the improvement of the town centre’s vitality and viability; the enhancement of the natural environment; and reducing the harmful effects of traffic congestion. This approach accords with advice in the NPPF regarding sustainability.¹⁰
- 4.14 Concerns were raised¹¹ with regard to transport infrastructure and the management of movement. However, I am satisfied that this issue is adequately addressed in other existing planning documents, including the NFDC Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy 2016-2036; the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036; the Ringwood Town Access Plan Supplementary Planning Document; and the NFDC Parking Standards SPD. I am also aware that the New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is currently being prepared.
- 4.15 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 (**PM2**).
- 4.16 I am satisfied that there is a reasonable expectation that brownfield land will become available for development later in the Plan period.¹²
- 4.17 The supporting text in 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 (**PM3**). Advice regarding development in the Green Belt can be found in other documentation, for example in Chapter 13 of the NPPF.
- 4.18 As proposed to be modified, I am satisfied that Policy R1, relating to the Spatial Plan, has regard to national policies and meets all the other Basic Conditions.

⁹ My Question 4 to the Town Council.

¹⁰ Chapter 2 of the NPPF.

¹¹ See representations 1 and 7 as set out in the summary of regulation 16 Consultation.

¹² See response from Town Council to my Question 7.

Policy R2: Maintaining a Successful and Prosperous Town Centre (page 19)

4.19 At the time of my visit, the town centre was relatively busy, and I noted the availability of a reasonable range of retail outlets. Chapter 7¹³ of the NPPF confirms that town centres play a key role at the heart of local communities, and I consider that Policy R2 appropriately reflects this national advice. The District Council suggests a strengthening of clause C iv) which I agree is necessary for clarity (**PM4**).

Policy R3: Making better use of Opportunity Areas in the Town Centre (page 21)

4.20 Eight opportunity areas are identified in the RNP 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 and I recommend accordingly in **PM5**.

4.21 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).

Policy R4: Shops and Parades within and outside defined centres (page 24)

4.22 Policy R4 supports the retention and improvement of the local centre at Butlers Lane, Poulner and sets out the approach to retail floorspace outside the defined centres. This approach 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.

4.23 Concern was expressed by the District Council over the term 'robust assessment' in Policy R4 C but I am satisfied that paragraph 5.29 adequately explains what is required.

4.24 Policies R2 to R4 relate to the Town and Local Centres and as modified they sit comfortably with the strategic policies for the area and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy R5: Smaller Housing (page 26)

4.25 Policy R5 establishes the Town Council's approach to smaller housing. However, the policy does not establish what is meant by 'a high proportion' of small dwellings. I note that the accompanying paragraph (5.33) 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 in Policy R5.

¹³ Ensuring the viability of town centres.

- 4.26 I raised a number of issues with the Town Council regarding this policy¹⁴ and I am satisfied that proper regard has been given to national policies and advice.
- 4.27 I note that there was a suggestion¹⁵ that there should be a policy relating to rural exception sites. However, I am satisfied that the issue is adequately addressed in Policy HOU5 of the New Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036 and Policy SP28 of the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036, and that there is no justification for repeating the policies in the RNP.¹⁶

Policy R6: First Homes (page 27)

- 4.28 Policy R6 clearly establishes the Town Council's approach to affordable housing and the provision of 'first homes'.
- 4.29 However, the supporting text to the policy, in paragraph 5.39, indicates that priority for first homes (for the first two months of marketing) will be given to people who have a local connection to Ringwood. Firstly, this 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 policies STR1, HOU1 and HOU3. I therefore recommend, in **PM10**, the deletion of paragraph 5.39.
- 4.30 Policies R5 and R6 relate to residential development, and I am satisfied that with the proposed modifications, these policies will meet all the Basic Conditions.

Policy R7: The Ringwood Design Code (page 28)

- 4.31 The quality of design is an important national objective¹⁷ and policy R7 seeks to ensure that new development is compatible (particularly in terms of appearance) with its surroundings. Appendix B to the RNP is the 'Ringwood Design Guidance and Codes' and Appendix C is the 'Ringwood Local Distinctiveness SPD'. These provide valuable background information and together with Policy R7, will ensure that Objective 2 of the RNP (to celebrate Ringwood's historic buildings and townscapes and encourage high quality and sustainable design of new development) will be achieved.

¹⁴ See Town Council's response to my Question 7.

¹⁵ Reg 16 Representation 15.

¹⁶ NPPF, paragraph 16 f).

¹⁷ NPPF Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed and beautiful places.

Policy R8: Building for a Healthy Life (page 30)

- 4.32 Policy R8 relates to the submission of a Building for a Healthy Life Assessment with all major development proposals. Bearing in mind the requirement to achieve well designed development, I consider such an approach to be appropriate and not unduly onerous.
- 4.33 The policy refers to 'major development'. 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 (**PM11**).
- 4.34 Policies R7 and R8 relate to issues of design. They have regard to national advice and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy R9: Conserving Local Heritage Assets (page 31)

- 4.35 There is a very extensive list of Local Heritage Assets (over 145) identified in Appendix D to the Plan. The NPPF (Chapter 16) seeks to ensure that they are afforded appropriate protection. Paragraph 198 of the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should maintain or have access to a historic environment record which would be used to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment.
- 4.36 I am told by the District Council¹⁸ that it does not have a local list of heritage assets or a procedure for assessing, maintaining or reviewing a local list. It is also clear that the NFNPA has its own independent process for the consideration of local list nominations.¹⁹ On that basis I conclude that there is a lack of consistency with regard to the consideration of heritage assets. I am also concerned that Appendix D includes little substantive evidence with regard to how the identification process has been undertaken with regard to the RNP. I note that the Town Council confirms that consultation with the owners of the listed assets has not happened and that it will not take place until after the RNP is made. This lack of consultation is contrary to the advice contained in Section 2.1 of Historic England's Advice Note 11 - Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment.²⁰
- 4.37 I am further mindful that the PPG (Reference ID: 18a-039-20190723) states that "A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets".

¹⁸ Regulation 16 response in relation to Policy R9.

¹⁹ Policy SP16 (the historic and built environment), New Forest National Park Authority Local Plan 2016 – 2036.

²⁰ View at: [Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment | Historic England](#) Also see advice at: [Local Listing | Historic England](#)

- 4.38 On that basis, I cannot be confident that all the assets listed in Appendix D are fully justified or that a consistent approach to the matter is being adopted across the New Forest. 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.²¹ I currently do not have that confidence and therefore I recommend, in **PM12**, the deletion of Policy R9, its supporting text in paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D.
- 4.39 Whilst I understand that this will be a disappointment to the Town Council, I am not satisfied that, at present, 'a positive strategy', as required in paragraph 196 of the NPPF, has been appropriately drawn up. I am, however, re-assured by the fact that Policy ENV3 of the NFDC Local Plan Part 1 (Design quality and local distinctiveness) and saved Policy DM1 (Heritage and Conservation) in the NFDC Local Plan Part 2 can both be applied as necessary, thus providing a level of protection to local heritage assets.
- 4.40 I also note that in the response to my Question 3 to NFDC, the Council confirms that 'a similar process (i.e. to that undertaken by the NFNPA) could be undertaken for the NFDC area of Ringwood Parish if there are concerns that the number of assets²² identified in Section 3 of Appendix D is too extensive for them to automatically be deemed local heritage assets'.
- 4.41 There will be consequential changes, for example to the paragraph and policy numbers and these can be considered to be minor and can be made in agreement with NFDC and the NFNPA.²³
- 4.42 Matters of Design and Heritage Assets are addressed in policies R7 to R9. As modified, they accord with national advice and meet all the other Basic Conditions.

Policy R10: Creating a Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Network (page 32)

- 4.43 Policy R10 establishes the approach of the Town Council to creating and maintaining the Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Network and I note that the issue has been progressed with the help of local wildlife experts and landowners. It is important that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural environment and I am confident that Policy R10 will ensure the successful achievement of that objective.

²¹ See Chapter 16 of the NPPF.

²² It should be noted that it is both the number of assets and also the quality of those assets that are of concern.

²³ See paragraph 4.54 below.

Policy R11: Zero Carbon Buildings (page 34)

4.44 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 recommend a focused change to the title of the Statement referred to at the start of clause E of the policy (**PM13**).

Policy R12: Encouraging Active and Healthy Travel (page 38)

4.45 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. I recommend accordingly in **PM14**.

4.46 In the interests of clarity a brief explanation of the Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework should be included in the Glossary, and I recommend accordingly in **PM15**. Although not essential to meet the Basic Conditions, the Town Council may like to consider including a reference to Government guidance on the provision of safe cycling infrastructure as contained within LTN 1/20.

4.47 National advice promotes sustainable transport²⁴ and I am satisfied that Policy R12 appropriately reflects that advice.

4.48 Matters relating to sustainability are covered by policies R10 to R12. Their implementation will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and the policies, as modified, will comply with all the other Basic Conditions.

Implementation and Monitoring (page 40)

4.49 The Implementation, Monitoring and Review of the RNP are very important components of the plan-making process and I am satisfied that Chapter 6 adequately establishes the approach to these matters that will be taken by the Town Council.

The Appendices

4.50 There are 5 appendices to the Plan:

- Appendix A: Ringwood Strategic Masterplan;
- Appendix B: Ringwood Design Guidance and Codes;
- Appendix C: Ringwood Local Distinctiveness SPD;
- Appendix D: Local Heritage Assets; and
- Appendix E: Zero Carbon Buildings Background Note.

²⁴ Chapter 9 of the NPPF.

- 4.51 I have already recommended the deletion of Appendix D in PM12. The remaining Appendices contain much valuable information, but NFDC²⁵ 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, and these are set out in **PM16** to **PM20**.

Maps and Plans

- 4.52 Some of the plans in the document lack clarity but the Town Council provided me with electronic versions of the Maps which were easier to interpret. If reliance is to be placed on the electronic versions, then it would be helpful if a reference to their significance and how they can be accessed should be included in Chapter 1 (**PM21**).
- 4.53 In the interests of accuracy the built up area boundary at Blashford should be removed from the Policy Map, as well as the strategic site allocation, as they both fall outside the boundary of the RNP (**PM22**).

Minor Amendments

- 4.54 Amendments to the text can be made consequential to the recommended modifications, alongside any other minor non-material changes²⁶, factual up-dates, or corrections if there is agreement between RTC, NFDC and NFNPA.²⁷ For example, there are a number of up-dates required regarding the stage in the evolution of the RNP that has now been reached and other contextual information that is no longer current (e.g. paragraph 3.5 of the Plan).
- 4.55 Hampshire County Council, as both the Highway Authority and landowner, and New Forest District Council, suggest a number of minor changes in their responses.²⁸ I note that NFDC makes a number of 'observations' and 'comments' but only submitted two objections (relating to Policy R6/paragraph 5.39 and to the Local Design Guidance and Code). I have addressed these two specific matters in paragraphs 4.29 and 4.51 above.
- 4.56 Whilst some of the suggested amendments are not necessary to ensure that the Basic Conditions are met, I note that the Town Council has accepted some of them in the interests of improved clarity.²⁹ These relate, for example, to additions to the Glossary; referring to the Healthy Streets approach; approval of schemes by the Highway Authority; reference to the fact that some development may justify a reduction of the 6m private drive width; street lighting; corner treatment; and permeable paving. These can all be treated as minor amendments and, whilst they are

²⁵ Regulation 16, Response 17.

²⁶ PPG Reference ID:41-106-20190509.

²⁷ See, for example, Representation References: SNPS:6 and SNPS:18.

²⁸ See Regulation 16, Responses 16 and 17.

²⁹ See Town Council's response to my Question 21.

beneficial in the interests of improving clarity, they are not essential to meet the Basic Conditions.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether or not the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies, thus ensuring that the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates, and I conclude that the Ringwood Neighbourhood Development Plan (as modified) has no policy or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond that boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Overview

- 5.4 The town of Ringwood enjoys an attractive setting and its character is enhanced by a range of valued features, including the River Avon that flows to the west of the town and the New Forest National Park, which primarily lies to the east and south of the town. There are a relatively high number of community facilities and services in Ringwood and I am confident that the local community will continue to support appropriate local initiatives to improve their quality of life.
- 5.5 Among the objectives of the Town Council is the desire to revitalise the town centre economy; the encouragement of high quality and sustainable design; the maximisation of opportunities for young people; and the regeneration of the town centre. I particularly commend the Town Council's Working Groups, alongside all those that have had an input into the preparation of the Plan. I therefore consider that there is an excellent prospect that the implementation of the policies within the RNP (when

'made') will ensure that all the stated objectives will be successfully achieved.

David Hogger

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications (22)

Notes:

Additions are shown in **bold** and deletions denoted with ~~strikethrough~~.

Page references are those in the submitted Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan.

In the interests of brevity, where whole paragraphs have been deleted, the modification refers to the deletion of all the text.

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./other reference	Modification
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).
PM2	Page 46	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.
PM3	Page 18 Paragraph 5.4	Delete: {Green Belt} .
PM4	Page 19 Policy R2	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.
PM5	Page 21 Policy R3	Add a sentence to clause B as follows: The opportunity areas are: Ringwood Market Place; Furlong Drove, Meeting House Lane, Rear of 56 High Street and

		<p>service yard, Northumberland Court;</p> <p>Bus Stops on Meeting House Lane and the Furlong Car Park;</p> <p>Properties to the north of The Close;</p> <p>Carvers Trading Estate;</p> <p>Pedlars Walk Court;</p> <p>Ringwood Trading Estate; and</p> <p>Lynes Lane Court.</p>
PM6	Page 21 Paragraph 5.19	<p>Add the following to paragraph 5.19:</p> <p>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>
PM7	Page 23 Paragraph 5.25	<p>Add the following to paragraph 5.25:</p> <p>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>
PM8	Page 24 Policy R4	<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>

PM9	Page 26 Policy R5	Modify Policy R5 to read: 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.
PM10	Page 27 Paragraph 5.39	Delete <u>all</u> of paragraph 5.39.
PM11	Page 30 Policy R8	Modify the first sentence of the policy to read: All major development with a residential component of 10 or more dwellings should apply the
PM12	Page 31 Policy R9, paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D	Delete <u>all</u> of Policy R9, paragraphs 5.50 and 5.51 and Appendix D.
PM13	Page 34 Policy R11	Modify the start of clause E to read: An Energy A Climate Change Statement will be submitted
PM14	Page 38 Policy R12	Modify the start of clause A to read: The Neighbourhood Plan Policy Map identifies the existing sustainable Travel Network and
PM15	Page 38 Paragraph 5.72	Add to the Glossary a definition of 'Sustainable Accessibility and Mobility (SAM) Framework' to read: A tool to help planners and designers prioritise interventions in the following order:

		<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.
PM16	Page 35 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code	<p>Modify start of guideline iii to read:</p> <p>Street design must incorporate opportunities for landscaping (street trees, gardens and green verges)</p> <p>Modify last part of guideline vi to read:</p> <p>... 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>
PM17	Page 37 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code	Modify guideline iii by inserting and car ports after garages in first sentence.
PM18	Page 39 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code	<p>Add a clause v to the guideline to read:</p> <p>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.</p>
PM19	Pages 39 and 40 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local Design Guidance and Code	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.
PM20	Page 56 of Appendix B: Ringwood Local	Delete the first sentence of the image caption:

	Design Guidance and Code	The average building height within the town is between 2-3 storeys
PM21	Page 9	Add a new paragraph 2.13 to read: 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 web-site at www.ringwoodnp.org.uk.
PM22	Page 41 Policy Map	Remove the built-up area boundary and the strategic site allocation boundary at Blashford.