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## Draft Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study

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## **1.0 Structure of the Study**

The Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study comprises two main parts:

### **1.1 A Set of Field Record Sheets**

These record the intrinsic landscape and visual attributes; the relationship between the site and the existing settlement edge and the wider landscape; and evidence of landscape value. These field record sheets are working documents and their contents are set out in the site reports. A description of the methodology can be found at chapter 6.

### **1.2 A Set of Site Reports**

Covering groups of sites at a landscape scale within the parishes of the District, usually located on the edge of existing settlements. Generally the sites have been broken down further to represent sites of a suitable area to become a strategic allocation, i.e. over 100 houses, using logical existing landscape features to provide boundaries.

- 1.2.1 The site reports set out the process of analysis of the landscape sensitivity and capacity of each site, identifying key elements that support the conclusions. Each report includes a location plan showing the sites boundaries, together with some constraints mapping.
- 1.2.2 Each report describes the site: its landscape and visual qualities, its landscape or settlement setting and heritage, ecological and cultural assets, and is supported by photographs illustrating particular features, general character and the influence of existing settlement edges.
- 1.2.3 A plan is included showing photographic viewpoints and the overall capacity of the site area. The capacity is shown as a gradient, indicating areas of low capacity or high sensitivity, and reflected in the conclusion. In some cases where a site is assessed as having no or low capacity due to its sensitivity the recommendation suggests that these sites are not suitable for new residential development.
- 1.2.4 The results of the sensitivity assessment for each site are shown in table form in each site report.



## **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.0.1** The current Local Plan for New Forest District outside the National Park (the Core Strategy, adopted 2009, and the Part 2 Sites and Development Management document, adopted 2014) plans for the period up to 2026. An early review of the adopted Local Plan is necessary to bring planning policies for the area fully in-line with national government planning policies (the National Planning Policy Framework).
- 2.0.2** The Local Plan Review is looking at the development needs and opportunities in the area up to 2036. Evidence suggests that for the longer time period covered by the Review there will be a need for the new plan to identify more sites for future housing and employment development.
- 2.0.3** This Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study forms part of the evidence base in selecting sites for new residential development in the local plan area.
- 2.0.4** Although this local plan area sits outside of the New Forest National Park, there are areas of high landscape quality, with the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the north of the District, areas identified as locally significant and Green Belt in the south of the District, it is therefore important that the allocation of greenfield sites for new residential development is informed by a landscape capacity assessment.
- 2.0.5** This work is not considered in isolation, as a technical study it will be used in conjunction with other evidence, such as a sustainability appraisal and Green Belt review, to inform potential residential development and settlement expansion.
- 2.0.6** The aim of this study is to assess the landscape capacity of broad areas of green field land, identified through a 'call for sites', however it should be noted that the assessed area are not based on ownership or current use, but on a logical 'bundling up' of sites at a landscape scale, using existing features such as road, hedges and trees and woodland as natural boundaries.
- 2.0.7** The assessment will help identify a site's suitability for new residential development, what the capacity might be and a general indication of potential landscape enhancement or mitigation that may be required if development should come forward. Each strategic allocation will be required to provide the Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space mitigation strategy for European sites (SANGS).
- 2.0.8** Existing Landscape Character Assessments have been used as a starting point; however, it is evident that in order to undertake a comparative sensitivity and capacity study, a more detailed assessment of each site is

required, individually and in comparison with each other in order to ensure a consistent approach.

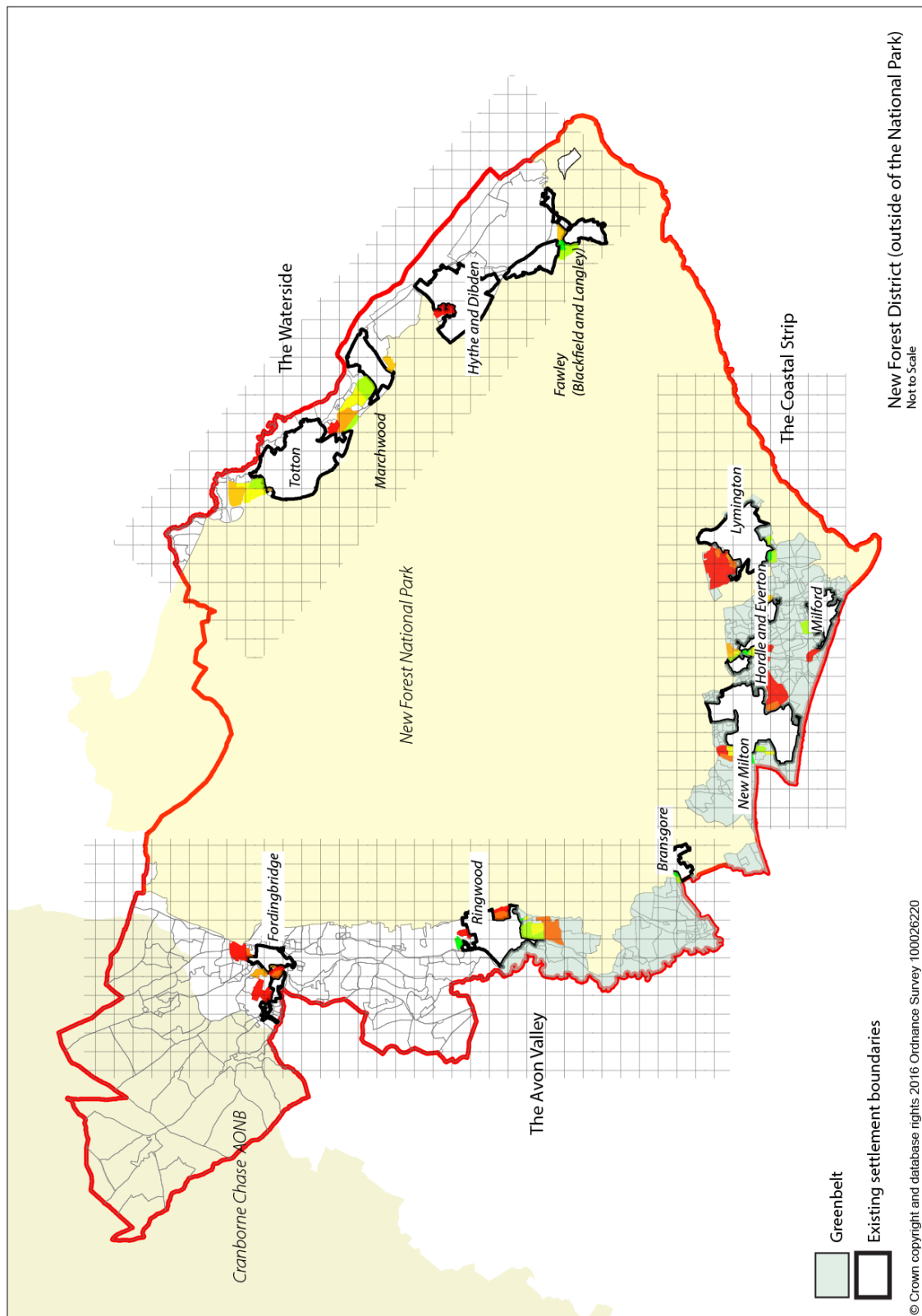


Figure 1 Study Area and Context

### **3.0 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this assessment is to establish the relative landscape sensitivity of broad areas of land that have been previously subject to a sustainability appraisal to identify areas potentially suitable for residential development in the New Forest District (outside of the National Park). Stage 1 of this process applied a 'critical constraints' filter to identify land that is not:

- in Flood Risk zones 2 or 3 or an area at high risk of coastal erosion
- Within the inner (high risk) HSE consultation zone
- A European designated habitat (Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), RAMSAR) or a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

3.0.1 Further stages of the sustainability appraisal process will assess sites against a wide range of social, economic and environmental criteria to identify land appropriate (if available) to allocate for residential development. It will also inform the preparation of policy and design guidelines for development on allocated sites.

3.0.2 Landscape capacity and visual impact assessment is an important part of the site sustainability appraisal and policy development process. This landscape capacity assessment seeks to further examine the landscape sensitivity of areas of land and to draw conclusions about the capacity of these landscapes to accept residential development without adverse effects on landscape character or negative impacts on visual amenity.

3.0.3 For this assessment the proposals are **residential** development on green field land, including associated infrastructure such as access, public open space, and habitat mitigation. It is assumed that residential development will fully comply with the design and density requirements of Local Plan Review policies, responding appropriately to its context. In the first instance the assessment considers land around the main towns and larger villages in the district that are not affected by 'stage 1' critical constraints. As the site sustainability appraisal process progresses, it will identify additional sites with development potential for landscape assessment, similarly it has excluded sites that have been assessed as part of this study.

3.0.4 The study makes broad recommendations, where appropriate, where it is considered that development should specifically seek to enhance landscape character or settlement boundaries, for example. Further work to devise development briefs for the future allocated sites will use the study to inform site constraints and opportunities, access, building mass, circulation, informal open space and SANGS mitigation.

3.0.5 This assessment will not negate the requirement for site specific Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments against specific development proposals, or override the findings of a range of associated assessments such as

ecological, hydrological, arboriculture, archaeology, etc. as required by individual development proposals.

#### **4.0 Baseline Information**

The following documents and data sets have informed the study:

- GIS data from New Forest District Council
- New Forest District Council Landscape Character Assessment, 2000
- New Forest National Park Landscape Assessment, 20
- Hampshire County Integrated Landscape Assessment, 2012
- National Character Assessments
- Village Design Statements
- Conservation Area Appraisals
- Local Distinctiveness Documents, for New Milton, Lymington and Ringwood
- Register of Historic Parks and Gardens
- OS Historic maps 1867-93, 1893-98, 1908-10, 1924-47

4.0.1 It is important that this study reflects the existing adopted landscape character assessments. The New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment 2000, while providing baseline information, is now long in the tooth and no longer conforms to current guidelines, although the baseline data remains valid. However, the New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment has more recently updated those Landscape Character Areas where they fall into the National Park Boundary, and therefore have superseded The New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment adopted in 2000.

4.0.2 Hampshire County Integrated Landscape Assessment, 2012, provides a detailed approach although the landscape character areas are necessarily on a slightly larger scale, however, this document includes up to date seascape assessment for the Coastal Strip and the Waterside, and has therefore been a useful resource. The National Character Areas have also been considered.

4.0.3 In addition, detailed Townscape assessment contained in the New Forest District Local Distinctiveness documents (adopted SPD) has provided detailed information about the existing settlement patterns and characters of the three major settlements in the District.

4.0.4 Village Design statements and Conservation Area Appraisals have been used to help identify landscape value.

4.0.5 The key landscape, visual and settlement characteristics and landscape strategies have been recorded on the Site Reports.

4.0.6 There are no sites under consideration within the Cranborne Chase AONB.

4.0.7 The relevant parts of all landscape character assessments can be found at appendix A: Internet links have been provided where available, others as reproductions of the relevant extracts.

## **5.0 Relevant Planning Policy**

### **5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The NPPF sets out a number of key requirements for the open landscape outside of settlements:

- The environmental role means contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment (7)
- Environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously with economic and social gains in order to achieve sustainable development (8)
- A core principle is the need to take account of the different roles and character of different areas,... and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; allocation of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value (17)
- Conserving and enhancing the natural and local environment (109 – 125)
- Conserving and enhancing the landscape setting of the historic environment (128, 129, 131-135).

This Study is undertaken in the light of these principles.

5.1.1 This study does not consider the Green Belt Policies, a Green Belt review has been carried out in tandem to this study to identify how the Green Belt is performing against the key Green Belt criteria.

5.1.2 It is important to understand that Green Belt Policy is simply a spatial planning policy and does not relate to the landscape or visual quality and sensitivity of green belt land.

### **5.2 The Local Plan for New Forest District outside the National Park**

The current Local Plan for New Forest District outside the National Park (Part 1 the Core Strategy, adopted 2009, and the Part 2 Sites and Development Management document, adopted 2014) contains the following policies that are relevant to new residential development. The Local Plan Review, to which this study will form part of the evidence base, is expected to maintain (with amendments to meet the NPPF requirements) the current level of protection and **enhancement** of the natural and built environment, and is therefore relevant to inform this study.

### **5.2.1 Core Strategy Policies:**

#### **Policy CS1 Sustainable development principles**

All new development will be expected to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protecting, and where possible enhancing, the environment within the Plan Area by:

- (a) meeting most development needs within existing communities and, where appropriate to meet Core Strategy objectives, providing for some small developments adjoining the main towns and villages;
- (b) ensuring a balanced mix of uses where development takes place in environmentally, socially and economically sustainable locations with a good range of services and facilities and is accessible by both car and other transport modes in order that reliance on the private car is minimised (as further developed in Policies CS10 and CS24);
- (c) minimising the risk of damage to areas of importance for nature conservation and/or landscape value, both directly and indirectly (as further developed in Policy CS3);
- (d) ensuring building construction and other forms of development adheres to high environmental standards with particular regard to energy efficiency, water efficiency, use of sustainable materials and the minimisation of waste (as further developed in Policy CS4);
- (e) ensuring communities are safe and feel safe, are well served by emergency services and the risks from potential hazards are minimised (as further developed in Policy CS5);
- (f) following a sequential approach to flood risk, in line with the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk (PPS 25), avoiding the development of previously undeveloped land which is, or will be, at risk from flooding, and managing and reducing flood risk for development on previously developed land where continuing development has wider sustainability benefits to the community, or where there is no reasonable alternative site compatible with other sustainability considerations (as further developed in Policy CS6);
- (g) ensuring accessibility to a good range of services and facilities, and not putting an unreasonable burden on existing infrastructure and services (as further developed in Policies CS7 and CS8).

In order to enable required development to take place, in some cases mitigation measures will be needed to address the impacts of new development on existing infrastructure and on nearby sensitive areas (e.g. international nature conservation designations.)

#### **Policy CS2 Design quality**

New development will be required to be well designed to respect the character, identity, and context of the area's towns, villages and countryside. All new development will be required to contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place, being appropriate and sympathetic to its

setting in terms of scale, height, density, layout, appearance, materials, and its relationship to adjoining buildings and landscape features, and shall not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shading, noise, light pollution or other adverse impact on local character and amenities.

New development will be required to:

- (a) provide public and private spaces that are well-designed, safe, attractive, and complement the built form;
- (b) be accessible to those with disabilities, and designed to minimise opportunities for anti-social and criminal behaviour;
- (c) incorporate well integrated car parking, and pedestrian routes and, where appropriate, cycle routes and facilities; and
- (d) provide appropriate green spaces and landscaping (see Policy CS7 below).

New buildings should be flexible to respond to future social, technological and economic needs.

All new buildings should be designed to meet sustainable building standards and utilise Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDS) wherever practical. New homes should be built to a standard capable of adaptation to enable people to remain in their homes in old age. All new homes constructed after 1st January 2013 (2011 for affordable housing) should be built to Lifetime Homes Standard.

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### **Policy CS3 Protecting and enhancing our special environment (Heritage and Nature Conservation)**

Development proposals must protect and, where possible, enhance sites of recognised importance for nature and heritage conservation.

Working with local communities, features of local heritage value which contribute to local distinctiveness will be identified. New development proposals should maintain local distinctiveness and where possible enhance the character of identified features.

Measures will be taken, working with other partners, to secure the enhancement, restoration and creation of biodiversity, including measures to adapt to the

consequences of climate change, so as to assist in achieving national, county and local biodiversity targets as set out in the Hampshire and New Forest Biodiversity Action Plans.

The special characteristics of the Plan Area's natural and built environment will be protected and enhanced through:

- (a) applying relevant national and regional policies;
- (b) ensuring that new development protects and enhances local distinctiveness (see Policy CS2);
- (c) a review of Areas of Special Character and landscape features through subsequent Local Development Framework Documents;
- (d) using the development management process to positively bring about development which enhances local character and identity and which retains, protects and enhances features of biological or geological interest, and provides for the appropriate management of these features;
- (e) producing Conservation Area appraisals and management plans, including enhancements such as environmental improvements, traffic management etc.;
- (f) supporting an ongoing programme of survey of habitats and species, and designation of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation;
- (g) encouraging and developing public understanding of biodiversity, e.g. through the New Forest Biodiversity Action Plan, and enabling public access to designated sites for the purpose of interpretation and understanding where feasible without harm to nature conservation interests;
- (h) encouraging land management practices that restore or enhance sites of biodiversity value and which create new sites;
- (i) working with landowners and developers to ensure land management practices protect and enhance valued landscapes, and to restore landscapes where valued features and habitats have been lost or degraded;
- (j) protecting networks of natural habitats identified through the local Biodiversity Action Plan, where appropriate including them in access routes and areas of natural green space;
- (k) extending specific protection to important trees and hedgerows including those not currently included within designated sites;

- (l) ensuring development contributes, where possible, to biodiversity by designing in wildlife, and ensuring any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for (including on sensitive areas outside the Plan Area including the international nature conservation designations in the National Park); and
- (m) retaining and enhancing the green infrastructure networks within settlements.

### **Policy CS9 Settlement hierarchy**

The settlement hierarchy is defined as follows:

- Level 1** - Larger towns and service centres - Totton & Eling, Hythe & Dibden, Lymington and Pennington, New Milton and Barton on Sea, and Ringwood are the main towns with a wide range of employment, facilities and services. These are the most sustainable locations for most new development (consistent with maintaining and enhancing their character) in terms of access to local services and facilities.
- Level 2** - Small towns and employment centres - Fordingbridge is a smaller town with a limited range of services, and Marchwood has a significant employment base. Both settlements would be suitable locations to accommodate some new development, consistent with maintaining and enhancing their character.
- Level 3** – Defined villages - Ashford, Blackfield & Langley, Bransgore, Everton, Fawley, Hardley and Holbury, Hordle, Milford and Sandleheath provide a limited range of local services and may be appropriate for limited local development. These villages have been defined previously through Local Plans as “built-up areas” primarily because the nature and extent of built development suggests the potential for some further small scale development within them provided it is consistent with maintaining and enhancing their character. Most have access to local facilities and workplaces.
- Level 4** - Breamore, Damerham, Ellingham, Harbridge, Ibsley, Martin, Rockbourne, Sopley and Whitsbury are rural villages of a dispersed, rural nature, with limited access to facilities and workplaces. In these villages, which are not defined as “built-up areas”, but rather in terms of planning policy are considered as ‘countryside’ in this strategy, development will be limited to that which is appropriate to rural areas.

### **Policy CS21 Rural economy**

The strategy for the rural economy is to:

- (a) encourage agricultural, horticultural and forestry enterprises and farm diversification projects where this would be consistent with maintaining and enhancing the environment, and contribute to local distinctiveness;
- (b) keep existing employment sites, and encourage improvements and redevelopments that will help maintain and enhance the environment, and contribute to local distinctiveness;
- (c) allow small-scale built development for employment purposes in rural settlements (CS9, Level 3 settlements);

- (d) support local business development through the conversion of existing buildings, with particular encouragement of enterprises that have little adverse environmental impacts (e.g. design/research activities);
- (e) support the local delivery of services and the retention of local shops and pubs;
- (f) work with the New Forest National Park Authority and other neighbouring authorities to protect essential back-up grazing land to support commoning; and
- (g) allow developments essential to support a rural workforce, including agricultural workers dwellings and rural community facilities.

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## **5.2.2 Part 2, Development Management Policies**

Designed to support the Policies of the Core Strategy, and comply with the NPPF:

### **Policy DM1: Heritage and Conservation**

a.) Development proposals and other initiatives should conserve and seek to enhance the historic environment and heritage assets, with particular regard to local character, setting, management and the historic significance and context of heritage assets.

In particular:

- All heritage assets will be protected in proportion to their significance. The more significant the heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation.
- Development proposals should conserve or enhance the significance, character and appearance of heritage assets.
- Any development that may affect archaeological remains should demonstrate the likely impact upon the remains and where appropriate include mitigation measures to reduce that impact. Any information gained as a result of the investigation should be publicly available.
- Development proposals should respect historic road, street and footpath patterns that contribute to the character and quality of an area.

b.) In assessing the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, account will be taken of:

- the impact of the proposal on the heritage asset and its significance, with regard to the nature of the significance of the
- heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations
- the impact of the proposal on the setting of the heritage asset
- the impact of the proposal on public access to, and enjoyment and
- appreciation of, the heritage asset.

If there would be harm to the heritage asset, account will be taken of:

- how any conflict between climate change objectives and the conservation of the heritage asset is addressed and mitigated
- whether the public benefits of a proposal outweigh any harm caused to the heritage asset. Exceptions to the principle of safeguarding heritage assets from inappropriate development will only be considered where substantial harm is avoided and where the public benefits of a proposed development can be clearly demonstrated to outweigh the level of harm to the significance of the heritage asset.

c.) Where appropriate and necessary to secure the long term future of a heritage asset, in particular where it is in a poor condition or at risk, an exception may be made to other local plan policies, providing:

- the nature of the heritage asset means it is not suitable for all reasonable uses of the site which accord with local plan policies
- the proposal will not materially harm the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, and is sympathetic to its conservation
- any variance in, or departure from, other policies is minimised to that necessary to secure the heritage asset, and the benefits of securing the long term conservation of the heritage asset outweigh the disbenefits.

d.) The local planning authority will work with others, and in particular with local communities, to identify, record and give appropriate recognition to heritage assets not subject to a national designation, but which are of local significance.

### **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 DM3: Mitigation of impacts on European nature**

European nature conservation sites for recreation. These will be delivered by:

- Additional areas of publicly accessible natural green space (30 to 40 ha) of SANGS quality
- Enhancing the character and accessibility of existing public open spaces to provide additional areas of publicly accessible natural green space of SANGS quality;
- Improvements to walking routes and the connectivity between local green spaces, to be more attractive to local visitors who might otherwise visit the European nature conservation sites.

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

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

To achieve these mitigation measures, all residential developments that result in additional dwellings will be required to provide for appropriate mitigation and/or financial contributions towards off-site mitigation. This will need to be agreed and secured prior to approval of the development. The required level of contributions (to be set out in more detail in the Mitigation Strategy Supplementary Planning Document) will be based on  $x/y$  where:  
 $x$  = the assessed overall cost of the package of mitigation measures set out in (a) and (b) above needed to offset potentially harmful visits to the European nature conservation sites, and  
 $y$  = the number of contributing dwellings (having regard also to the size of the dwellings).

On sites of 50 or more dwellings, the full mitigation requirements should be met by provision of SANGS on-site or close to the site, based on a standard of 8ha of SANGS per 1,000 population. The details of the SANGS will need to be agreed with Natural England as part of the planning application process. This provision should be available for new occupants of the development at the time of first occupation.

Informal open space required by Policy CS7 will be accepted as a part of the mitigation contribution where it is demonstrated as contributing towards SANGS requirements.

In addition, all residential developments will be required to contribute towards monitoring [measure (c)].

**Policy DM8: Protection of public open space, private recreation land and school playing fields**

Development will not be permitted on public open spaces, private recreation land/playing fields/sports grounds and school playing fields, as shown on the Policies Map, or on open space provided as a requirement of a development scheme. In appropriate circumstances, small-scale development of ancillary facilities to enhance the recreational use of these areas may be permitted. An exception to this policy may be made where the loss of existing open space (public open spaces, private recreation land/playing fields/sports grounds and school playing fields) resulting from a proposed development will be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, in a suitable location.

**Policy DM9: Green Infrastructure linkages**

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:

- 'green links' between green spaces within the settlements and between the built-up area and the countryside;
- 'green buffers' between development and major transport routes;
- tree-lined streets and streets with spacious verges;
- watercourses and their banks.

The presence of these features should be taken into account and influence the design of development proposals.

**Policy DM20: Residential development in the countryside**

Residential development in the countryside will only be permitted where it is:

- a limited extension to an existing dwelling<sup>5</sup>; or
- the replacement of an existing dwelling, except where it:
- is the result of a temporary permission(s); and/or
- is an unauthorised use; and/or

- it has been abandoned; or
- affordable housing to meet a local need, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS22; or
- an agricultural worker's or forestry worker's dwelling in accordance with Policy DM21.

In all cases, development should be of an appropriate design, scale and appearance in keeping with the rural character of the area, and should not be harmful to the rural character of the area by reason of traffic and other activity generated or other impacts.

Replacement dwellings and dwelling extensions should not normally provide for an increase in floorspace<sup>6</sup> of more than 30%. A dwelling may be permitted to exceed the 30% limit provided the increased floorspace will not result in a dwelling in excess of 100 sq. metres floorspace. In all cases proposals should be designed to respect the character and scale of the existing dwelling, and not significantly alter the impact of built development on the site within its setting.

#### **Policy DM25: Recreational uses in the countryside – including horse-keeping/riding**

Development associated with recreational uses will be permitted where it:

- will help meet a local recreational need; and/or
- will assist in the diversification of an agricultural enterprise; and/or
- will assist in relieving harmful pressures on a sensitive part of the New Forest National Park;

provided that there will not be unacceptable impacts on the amenities of local residents, the rural character of the area, local roads or other environmental or agricultural interests (including nearby parts of the New Forest National Park and coast).

Development related to recreational horse keeping and riding will be permitted provided the scale is appropriate to the rural setting and character and it will not result in harmful increases in riding pressures on sensitive parts of the New Forest (in particular those subject to international nature conservation designations) or otherwise have unacceptable impacts on neighbouring uses, the rural landscape, local roads or on road safety.

5.2.3 See Chapter 10 for the links to the full accompanying text.

## 6.0 Methodology

This methodology has been devised to formulate a transparent method of analysing existing data, and confirmed by field work, taking a cumulative approach. However, it must be noted that whilst scoring has been used to express the findings, professional judgment has also been applied to determine the score in the first instance, through a rigorous use of field record sheets that require a combination of observations recorded as text and notation on plan, and selection from standard criteria. Each assessment is tested through desk based study to ensure a consistent approach is taken.

**6.1 Landscape Sensitivity** is derived through a staged assessment, considering landscape value and visual value separately, in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (GLVIA3), using a scale from high to negligible sensitivity, which are then combined to find the landscape character sensitivity:

### 6.2 Stage 1 Determining Visual Sensitivity

The assessment considers types of views, nature and number of the receptor (viewers) and ability to mitigate potential visual impacts, where the potential mitigation supports or enhances key landscape characteristics.

6.2.1 In accordance with GLVIA3, the more viewpoints, the more exposed the site, the greater sensitivity of the viewer and the greater difficulties in implementing mitigation planted without harm to the visual or landscape characteristics of the site, the higher the sensitivity.

6.2.2 The findings, using the notes below, can be expressed as a matrix where:

Red = High sensitivity  
Orange = Moderate sensitivity  
Yellow = Minor sensitivity  
Green = Low sensitivity

*Matrix 1 Visual Sensitivity*

Type of View	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red
People	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red
Mitigation	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red
<b>Overall Visual Sensitivity</b>	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red

### 6.2.3 Notes on Visual Sensitivity Assessment

	Low sensitivity	High sensitivity
<b>Type of view</b>	Some of the site area visible	Most of the site area visible
	No landmarks	Includes prominent landmarks
	Is part of or incidental in wider views	Is a focus in wider views
	Not part of skyline	Is prominent on the skyline
	Fleeting or limited views	Sequential and open views of the site area
	No vistas	Important vista in/out of site area
<b>People</b>	No sensitive receptors	Largest extent of sensitive receptors
	Few receptors (people or viewers) see site	Large numbers see site
	Views of site are not significant	Key view from sensitive receptor
	Not part of valued view	Site forms part of recognised view
	Not part of settlement setting	Key part of settlement setting
<b>Mitigation</b>	Mitigation possible	Mitigation not very feasible
	Would not interrupt views	Mitigation would interrupt key views
	Mitigation would not harm local character	Mitigation would harm local character

6.2.3 The sensitivity of receptors (people or viewers) have been weighted, using GLVIA3 , according to the activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations, the number of people experiencing the views and the extent to which their focus is on the views or visual amenity. The receptors are shown below on a scale of most sensitive to least:

- Communities where views into, across and out of contribute to landscape setting or sense of place
- Residents at home
- Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions where views of the surroundings are a significant contributor to the experience
- PROW and Access land users where focus is on landscape and views
- Transport corridors where views are experienced sequentially or are transitional
- Places of recreational activity or sports, where activity does not depend on or involve appreciation of views
- Places of work where attention is focused on work activity, not on their surroundings

### 6.3 Stage 2 Determining Landscape Sensitivity

The assessment considers natural, cultural and perceptual qualities (using existing LCAs and assessing the site against key characteristics as previously defined). The greater the incidence of landscape interest and diversity, historically important features and strong landscape pattern, and the greater the level of public access and perceived tranquility the greater the sensitivity, using the notes below:

#### 6.3.1 Notes on Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

	Low sensitivity	High sensitivity
<b>Natural</b>	Non designated landscape	Designated landscape
	Plantation	Native woodland
	Lost heath	High quality heath
	Arable field	High quality species rich grassland
	Poorly drained area	Significant wetland or meadow habitats
	None	Presence of valued habitats/species
	Simple and robust landcover	Complex and/or vulnerable landcover
	Weak structure with no trees	Strong hedgerow structure with trees
	No geological features	Pronounced geology
	Lack of topological features	Distinctive land form
	No significant contribution	Soils significantly contribute to landscape features
<b>Cultural</b>	No Conservation Area	Important to setting of Conservation Area
	No listed buildings	Important to setting listed buildings
	Generic boundary features	Distinctive good quality boundary features
	No evidence	Evidence of historic landscape features
	No evidence or record	Complex historic landscape pattern with good time depth
	No evidence	Evidence of historic park
	Generic or eroded settlement pattern	Distinctive strong settlement pattern
	Poorly maintained erodes character	Locally significant private gardens
	No associations	Social cultural association evidence
<b>Perceptual</b>	Noise intrusion	Very tranquil (CPRE mapping)
	Light spill	Dark skies
	Presence of intrusive elements	Lack of intrusive elements
	Enclosed, visually contained	Open exposed landscape

	Fragmented or featureless landscape pattern	Unified strong landscape pattern
	None	Important PROW
	No public access	Important area for recreation
	No public access	Open Access land

6.3.2 The findings can be expressed as a matrix where:

Red = High sensitivity

Orange= Moderate sensitivity

Yellow= Minor sensitivity

Green = Low or negligible sensitivity

*Matrix 2 Landscape Sensitivity*

Natural				
Cultural				
Perceptual				
<b>Overall Landscape Sensitivity</b>				

#### 6.4 Stage 3: Determining Landscape Character Sensitivity

Combines the findings of the visual sensitivity and landscape sensitivity to determine the Landscape Character sensitivity, as below

*Matrix 3 Landscape Character Sensitivity*

<b>Visual Sensitivity (stage 1)</b>	High				
	Moderate				
	Minor				
	Negligible				
		Negligible	Minor	Moderate	High
<b>Landscape Sensitivity (stage 2)</b>					

#### 6.5 Stage 4: Landscape Context Sensitivity

The assessment so far has identified the intrinsic landscape character sensitivity of the land parcels themselves, however the sensitivity of each land

parcel should also be assessed in terms of their contribution to the wider landscape context: the contribution and importance to the adjacent rural landscape and influence on and pattern of use within the settlement edge. The landscape context sensitivity is assessed as follows:

*Table 1 Landscape Context Criteria*

Negligible	The site is heavily influenced by the adjacent (urban) settlement and not an important part of the wider rural landscape
Minor	The site is influenced by urban fringe use and has some views to some parts of the adjacent settlement but displays similar characteristics of the wider landscape context
Moderate	The site has strong physical and visual links to the adjacent landscape context and the adjacent settlement has little impact on the site
High	The site is an important part of the wider landscape context with strong physical and visual links and is not influenced by the adjacent settlement

## 6.6 Stage 5 Determining Overall Landscape Sensitivity

The overall landscape sensitivity is determined by combining the Landscape Character Sensitivity (stage 3) with the Landscape Context Sensitivity (stage 4), as shown below

*Matrix 4 Overall Landscape Sensitivity*

<b>Landscape Character Sensitivity (stage 3)</b>	High				
	Moderate				
	Minor				
	Negligible				
		Negligible	Minor	Moderate	High
		<b>Landscape Context Sensitivity (stage 4)</b>			

## 6.7 Stage 6 Landscape value

Landscape value is usually assessed simply on whether or not the land parcels have a particular scale of designation, a site designated as an SAC, for example, being of the highest value, whilst non designated land being the lowest value. However, for this assessment, designated landscapes have already been excluded as part of the sifting process as they are recognised as an important measure of the value afforded landscapes by society. Therefore the criteria for basing judgements about landscape value are a reflection of the **local** landscape value and **condition** of the land parcels defined as:

*Table 2 Landscape Value Criteria*

Value	Typical Criteria	Typical Example
Negligible	Area does not display any of the key characteristics of the defined landscape character area or type	Area not valued and identified for improvement
Minor	Area displays the key defined landscape characteristics, but these are in decline	unmanaged hedgerows, for example
Moderate	Area displays the key defined landscape character attributes in good condition	well managed and typical hedgerows, for example and valued for local associations
High	Area displays key defined landscape characteristics and is locally valued	Undesignated but value expressed through Village Design Statement's, Conservation Area Appraisals, etc

## 6.8 Stage 7 Determining Landscape Capacity

Landscape capacity is determined by combining the overall landscape sensitivity with landscape value, and tested against the following classifications of landscape capacity for each level:

*Table 3 Landscape Capacity Criteria*

<b>Low Capacity-</b>	The landscape character area or landscape type could not accommodate new development without a significant and adverse impact on landscape character. Small scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement, and the character and sensitivity of the adjacent landscape.
<b>Minor Capacity</b>	A low amount of development could be accommodated in limited situations, providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement, and the character and sensitivity of the adjacent landscape.
<b>Moderate Capacity</b>	The area could accommodate new development in some parts, providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement, and the character and sensitivity of the adjacent

	landscape. There are landscape constraints and therefore the key landscape and visual characteristics must be retained and enhanced, together with protection of certain landscape and visual features.
<b>High Capacity</b>	The area is able to accommodate new development at a significant scale, providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement, and the character and sensitivity of the adjacent landscape.

- 6.8.1 The classifications have been devised using a variety of examples of existing landscape capacity studies and reflect national and local planning policy expectations for new residential development.

*Matrix 5 Landscape Capacity*

<b>Overall Landscape Sensitivity (stage 5)</b>	High				
	Moderate				
	Minor				
	Negligible				
		Negligible	Minor	Moderate	High
<b>Landscape Value (stage 6)</b>					

## 6.9 Determining Landscape Capacity within each site

Each site has been assessed in detail to determine the potential area for development in the light of the landscape capacity, and landscape and visual constraints. In some cases the whole site has been assessed as having no or very low capacity, often based on its location in open countryside and lack of physical and visual connection to an existing settlement.

- 6.9.1 Where sites are determined to have development capacity, the results are shown as a graded approach, as a method of showing graphically those parts of the site that is more or less sensitive, for a variety of reasons. Those reasons may be based on conserving views, for example or acknowledgement of the relationship of the site to an existing settlement.

- 6.9.2 Given that the sites will be allocated as strategic opportunities, with capacity for at least 100 dwellings, they will necessarily include SANGS mitigation which provides an opportunity to determine appropriate locations for natural greenspace and associated green infrastructure enhancements.
- 6.9.3 It has been assumed that existing landscape features, such as woodland, groups of and individual trees, hedges and ecological habitats are considered to be constraints, together with the setting of Conservation Areas, and heritage assets, and existing settlement patterns. These assumptions are based on the policy requirements to conserve and enhance the key landscape and visual characteristics of the site and it's setting. The policy constraints affecting Green Belt have not been considered, due to the side-by-side review of the Green Belt.

## **7.0 Study Constraints**

- 7.01 The sites have been assessed from publically accessible viewpoints including the local road network, public rights of way (PROW), and public open space. Views from private houses and private land are noted where obvious, but were not visited.
- 7.02 Site photographs included in the site reports are representative of key views of the site. The majority of photographs were taken in March and April, before leaf break. There are three sites that were photographed in June, in full, early summer, vegetation.:
- Kings Farm, Hordle
  - Manor Road, Milford on Sea
  - Brockhills lane, New Milton
- 7.03 Views of the surrounding countryside or semi rural/built up areas have been assessed by noting intervisibility from within or adjacent to the site, the study does not assess the potential zone of influence of any development on each site, although potential cumulative impacts have been considered.
- 7.04 There has been no public consultation during the study period.
- 7.05 The mapping and illustrations in the site reports are based on various scaled OS maps, although they do not reproduce to scale, a scale bar has been provided for clarity.

## **7.1 Photography**

All of the photographs included in the site reports have been taken on a Nikon D800 with a fixed 50mm lense, in accordance with LI guidelines<sup>1</sup> Most have been shot using manual focus and automatic exposure, aperture priority, in order to maintain a consistency of approach. Original files are saved as high resolution Jpeg, but have necessarily been reduced to allow inclusion in this report.

Images have been stitched together using Adobe Photoshop Photomerge®, with automatic exposure, contrast and brightness adjustments.

All photographs have been archived in their original form, and as manipulated files.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Institute Advice Note 1/11 Photography and Photomontage

## **8.0 Site Reports**

The site reports are grouped into three sections, reflecting the various parts of the District:

- **The Waterside**
- Totton
- Marchwood
- Hythe and Dibden
- Fawley (Blackfield and Langley)
- **The Coastal Strip**
- New Milton
- Hordle and Everton
- Milford on Sea
- Lymington
- **The Avon Valley**
- Bransgore
- Ringwood
- Fordingbridge

8.1 Each report covers several sites, shown on figure 1 of each, together with mapped constraints. Each site within the area is assessed individually and is accompanied by figure 2, the site area, showing the assessed capacity result and photographic viewpoints. The sites are described in text, key landscape planning factors identified and a conclusion drawn. The assessment, based on the field records, is shown as a table recording the findings.

8.1.1 The landscape capacity for the site to accept new residential development is discussed briefly. It is expected that each strategic housing allocation will be accompanied by a detailed briefing document, describing how development may be brought forward successfully, in the context of landscape and urban design.

## **9.0 Glossary**

**LCA** Landscape character area, a single unique area that can consist of a number of different landscape character types

**LCT** Landscape character type, these are distinct types of landscape that are homogenous in character. They are generic and can occur in different areas in different parts of the country, and share similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historic land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic qualities

**Landscape Sensitivity:** combination of judgements about susceptibility to change as a direct result of the proposals and judgements about the value attached to the receptor

**Landscape Capacity:** Landscape capacity is the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the type and amount of change and the value attached to the landscape

**Landscape Value:** The relative value attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by a variety of stakeholders for a variety of reasons

**Landscape Condition** (or Quality): A measure of the physical state of the landscape, it includes the extent to which landscape character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and condition of individual elements

**Landscape Context:** The contribution that a particular site or area makes to the wider landscape

**Visual Amenity:** The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities for the people living, working recreating, visiting or travelling through an area

**Landscape Receptor:** defined aspects of the landscape that have the potential to be affected by development

**Visual Receptor:** Individuals or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by development

**Key Characteristics:** The combination of elements that are particularly important to the current character of the landscape and help to give an area its distinctive sense of place

**Time Depth:** The visible historical layering – the idea of landscape as a palimpsest

**Social cultural association:** a landscape, place or views that are recorded as having local significance for a variety of reasons

**Zone of Visual Influence:** the theoretical area from which a development can be seen

**Cumulative Impacts:** the effects of more than one development when considered together

**PROW.** Public right of way, including Footpaths, Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic

## **10.0 Planning Policy and References**

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

*March 2012 Department for Communities and Local Government*

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

### **Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy for New Forest District (outside the National Park)**

*Adopted October 2009*

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/corestrategy>

### **Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management**

*Adopted April 2014*

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/14184/Local-Plan-Part-2-Sites-and-Development-Management>

### **Ringwood Local Distinctiveness**

*NFDC Adopted 2013*

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/14409/Ringwood-Local-Distinctiveness>

### **Lymington Local Distinctiveness**

*NFDC Adopted 2011*

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/14294/Lymington-Local-Distinctiveness>

### **New Milton Local Distinctiveness**

*NFDC Adopted 2010*

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/14293/New-Milton-Local-Distinctiveness>

### **Hordle Village Design Statement**

*Adopted by NFDC 2014*

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=27639&p=0>

### **Fordingbridge Town Design Statement**

*Adopted by NFDC 2008*

[http://www.newforest.gov.uk/media/adobe/f/p/TDS\\_Web.pdf](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/media/adobe/f/p/TDS_Web.pdf)

### **Fordingbridge Town Design Statement**

*Adopted by NFDC 2008*

[http://www.newforest.gov.uk/media/adobe/f/p/TDS\\_Web.pdf](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/media/adobe/f/p/TDS_Web.pdf)

### **Milford Village Design Statement**

*Adopted by NFDC 2002*

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/media/adobe/MilfordDesignGuide.pdf>

**An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment**

*Christine Tudor, Natural England, October 2014*

**Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition  
(GLVIA3)**

**Topic Paper 6: techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and  
Sensitivity**

*The Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage extract below:*

Para 4.1 'Judging the sensitivity of the landscape as a whole, in terms of its overall character, its quality and condition, the aesthetic aspects of its character and also the sensitivity of individual elements contributing to the landscape. This can be usefully referred to as landscape character sensitivity.

Judging the visual sensitivity of the landscape in terms of its general visibility and the potential scope to mitigate the visual effects of any change that might take place. Visibility will be a function particularly of the landform of a particular type of landscape and the potentially screening land cover, especially trees and woodland. It will also be a reflection of the numbers of people who are likely to perceive the landscape, whether they are residents or visitors'

Para 4.2 'Judging landscape sensitivity requires professional judgement about the degree to which the landscape in question is robust, in that it is able to accommodate change without adverse impacts on character. This means making decisions about whether or not significant characteristic elements of the landscape will be liable to loss through disturbance, whether they can easily be restored and whether important aesthetic aspects of character will be liable to change.'

Combined, these give a measure of **overall landscape sensitivity**.

# Appendix A

## **1.0 Existing Landscape Character Assessments**

### **1.1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the Local Plan 2036**

#### **1.1.1 Introduction**

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a formal process of identifying and assessing the potential impacts or effects of development on the landscape as a resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity.

It is usually carried out to identify landscape impacts or effects at a project or site level, but can be used at a strategic level to inform policy planning by making judgements about cumulative impacts of development (Landscape sensitivity and capacity) and therefore help identify strategic approaches to land allocation before decisions are made.

Whatever the purpose of a specific LVIA, the process necessarily involves a prescribed series of steps, which lead through analysis of baseline data from a variety of sources and field work to enable professional judgements to be made about landscape impacts or effects.

This report identifies existing baseline data that will be used to inform a New Forest District (Outside of the National Park) Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity study and further LVIA work that will feed into the local plan making process, at a site allocation level.

#### **1.1.2 Baseline information**

Existing Landscape Character Assessments

#### **1.1.3 National**

- [NCA Profile 131 New Forest](#)  
Covers majority of the district outside of the NP boundary
- [NCA Profile 134 Dorset Downs and Cranbourne Chase](#)  
Includes small area on the western edge of district, AONB
- [NCA Profile 128 South Hampshire Lowlands](#)  
Wraps around Totton

The national character area profiles are the most recent Landscape Character Assessments available, published in 2014 with an apparent commitment to refreshing and updating as data becomes available. They are fully integrated profiles; including information and analysis of a broad range of influencing factors, reflecting the most recent national policies and strategies that NE are concerned with:

NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The

information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information.

The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.<sup>2</sup>

#### **1.1.4 Regional** **Hampshire County Council Integrated Landscape Character** **Assessment, 2012**

HCC published their adopted County wide landscape assessment in 2012; the 'integrated' assessment is such because of the inclusion of townscape and seascape assessment, in accordance with revised guidance and the European Landscape Convention that reminds us that landscape does not stop at settlement edges. It also uses advances in GIS to incorporate map based spatial analysis of soils, geology, habitat information and historic landscape assessment.

In addition it draws together local evidence produced at district and borough level, particularly townscape assessment, and is intended to provide a strategic level assessment that provides a consistent approach having applied the same methodology across the whole county and merges seamlessly across administrative boundaries.

The HCC assessment defines landscape character types by geology, soils and vegetation, and are generic, these LCTs are then refined by scale to describe landscape areas (LCAs), which may be a combination of types (LCTs) but with additional influencing and connecting data. This assessment, by necessity to provide a consistent approach, smooths out different approaches or different methodologies that have been employed to produce local level assessments at various points in time. Each HCC profile provides a statement of the similarities and variation with the local level assessments.

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<sup>2</sup> Natural England 2014 National Character Areas

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The following Landscape Character Areas within the [Hampshire Integrated Landscape Assessment](#) describe the landscape within this district:

- Part of [1c-ringwood-plantations-heath](#)
- Parts of [2j copythorne and ashurst heath associated wooded farmland](#)
- Part of [2k lyminster wooded farmland](#)
- [2g sandleheath wooded farmland](#)
- [3a avon valley](#)
- Part of [3b test valley](#)
- Western edge of [4a new forest open western heaths](#)
- Part of [4b new forest open western heaths](#)
- [8j martin and rockbourne open downs](#)
- [9a south west new forest coastal plain](#)
- Part of [9b south east new forest coastal plain](#)
- [9c new forest waterside](#)
- [11b southampton water](#)
- [11a western solent](#)

14 LCAs mapped at 1:50000 compares well to 27 LCA's mapped at 1:25000 at a local level.

#### **1.1.5 Local**

##### **New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (NFD LCA 2000)**

It is at this level and scale of assessment that would usually be used to inform Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment at a site specific level, information would be cross referenced and checked against the regional and national scale Landscape Character Assessment, primarily to ensure a complete understanding of all relevant issues, such as identified forces for change and management objectives.

At a local level, New Forest District Council commissioned a study in 1999 which was prior to the New Forest National Park being formally designated. It therefore includes the whole of the district and what was previously designated as the New Forest Heritage Area.

This assessment was the last of a county wide initiative to provide landscape character assessment that informed the 'The Hampshire Landscape: A Strategy for the Future' 2000, and was used to explore the concept of an 'integrated' (landscape and townscape) assessment, and using new data to test and define HCC's historic landscape assessment at a local level.

In addition it attempts to draw together a number of other studies carried out in the early 1990s for a variety of purposes, and has taken base data directly into the study, such as previously defined Landscape Character Types,

which ensures an automatic cross boundary compliance but does not review or redefine that information. However, the document is now showing its age and has been reviewed against 10 broad headings suggested by current guidance<sup>3</sup>:

See section 3.0 Review of Existing New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment, 2000 below.

The New Forest National Park has, more recently, published their first Landscape Character Assessment, 2013. This document is based on the NFD LCA 2000, simply taking the previously defined LCA's, in part or wholly depending on location, and reformatting the baseline information to meet current guidance where the guidance recommends a clear distinction between facts and evaluation, leading onto a more refined set of 'forces for change' and future landscape management guidelines. The document is silent on any methodology employed but it is clear where the baseline information is derived from. It is also important to note that the purpose of this document is different to many other landscape character assessments, in that it is designed specifically to support its sister document: the adopted New Forest National Park Landscape Action Plan, 2013, which develops landscape management themes highlighted as management issues within each landscape character area defined in the LCA.

More importantly, the Landscape Action Plan details proposed methods of monitoring of the key themes, providing a clear method of collecting an appropriate evidence base for monitoring purposes.

The New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment is only concerned with the landscape within the National Park boundary although there is recognition and concern of potential development and recreation impacts on the National Park landscape from outside of its boundary, it is unfortunate that this new document has not reformatted and refreshed the landscape character areas outside of the NP boundary, most notably in the north west of the district that forms part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire AONB and the Waterside.

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<sup>3</sup> Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002, The Countryside Agency An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, 2014, Natural England

**LCAs reformatted and republished:**

[6.Upper Avon Valley](#)  
[7 Lower Avon Valley](#)  
  
[8 Poulner Woods and Pastures](#)  
  
[9 Landford Forest Farmlands](#)  
[10 West Wellow Heaths and Commons](#)  
[11 Copythorne Forest Farmlands](#)  
[12 Hythe and Ashurst Forest Farmlands](#)  
[15 North West Solent Estates](#)  
  
[16 Lymington and Pennington Coastal Plain](#)  
[18 Sway Pasture and Residential Settlements](#)  
[19 Bransgore Woods and Pastures](#)  
[20 Southern Heathland and Forest](#)  
[21 Northern Heathland and Forest](#)  
[22 Furzey Woodlands and Villages](#)  
[23 New Forest Central Woodlands](#)  
[24 Lymington River](#)  
[25 Beaulieu Heath](#)  
[26 Beaulieu River](#)  
[27 Eastern Forest Heaths](#)

**LCA's NOT reformatted and republished:**

1 Martin and Tidpit Downs  
 2 Martin and Whitsbury Open Farmland  
 3 Damerham and Rockbourne Valleys  
 4 Wooded Sandleheath Farmland  
 5 Ringwood Forest  
 13 Waterside Parishes  
 14 Fawley Refinery Complex  
 17 Barton and Milford Coastal Plain

In addition to local level Landscape Character Assessments, consideration of Tranquillity Mapping from a number of sources provides a new layer of information that is reflected in the regional and national assessment levels, and should be considered at a local level for those parts of the district outside of the National Park boundary.

#### **1.1.6 Conclusion**

Whilst the NFD LDA 2000 is outdated and does not conform to current guidance for a Landscape Character Assessment, it, in combination with more recent studies at a local, regional and national level, provides an adequate baseline of information to undertake LVIA to support the local plan process in allocating land for development. The underlying hard facts that have informed all of the LCAs remain valid. Additional confidence would be granted by ground testing a sample of the original record sheets and having a discussion with the NFNPA (Landscape Architect) to gain a full understanding of what led them to their approach to updating the existing NFD LCA 2000.

#### **1.1.7 Recommendation**

That consideration is given to producing an updated New Forest District Integrated Landscape Character Assessment using an agreed methodology that reflects current guidance, to include an approach to monitoring landscape change over time.



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## **2.0 New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment**

### **Landscape Character Areas not covered above:**

#### **2.1 4 WOODED SANDLEHEATH FARMLAND**

##### ***Key Characteristics***

- Mosaic of deciduous copses, pasture, water meadows and built development at the transition between chalk downland and lowland heath.
- Areas of open water, tranquil grazed water meadows and stone bridges along the Sweatford and Ashford Rivers.
- Leafy lanes wind their way through woodland.
- Large built area of Sandleheath with ribbon development branching out along communication routes, into the surrounding countryside.
- Medieval assarted woodland is dominant a historic feature of the landscape.
- Pines, gorse and rhododendron indicates an isolated pocket of former heath at Sandleheath.
- Area of scrub and semi-improved grassland at West Park.
- Traditional materials are red brick with clay tile or slate and thatch.
- Rural landscape with no clear landmarks difficult to orientate.

##### ***Formative Influences***

The change in underlying geology from chalk to London Clay has the greatest influence in changes in character seen in this area. The structure of the landscape has developed from the surviving earlier/ smaller Medieval type assarts interspersed with wooded tracts. There has been later post-Medieval rationalisation.

##### ***Landscape Description***

This area lies on the edge of the eroded dipslope margins of chalk. Geology has a strong influence on local landscape character; the Reading Beds on higher ground and London Clay around Sandleheath give rise to brown forest soils which support a rich woodland flora. It is this woodland which gives structure to the landscape. Two rivers, the Ashford Water and Sweatford Water, drain eastwards into the Avon.

The area is dominated by pre 1810 woodland - these ancient deciduous woodlands have a high nature conservation value as well as giving the landscape a robust structure and strong sense of enclosure. The copses are linked by hedgerows which enclose regular, medium sized fields. An isolated patch of former heath at Sandleheath, marked by the presence of gorse, pines and rhododendrons, and an area of scrub and semi-improved grassland at West Park contribute to the biological diversity of this area. The marshy grasslands within the river valleys are particularly important for their nature conservation and landscape value.

Communication routes run SE-NW along the length of the valleys as well as between them, converging at Fordingbridge. These minor routes are leafy lanes which wind their way around hills and through woodlands. The village centre of Sandleheath is relatively small, although recent development has led to growth out into the surrounding countryside, making it difficult to

distinguish the traditional built character of the area. Most green space within the settlement is in the form of private gardens.

#### **Key Environmental Features**

- *Ancient deciduous copses* and woodlands which give structure to the landscape and many of which are designated as SINC's;
- *winding, leafy lanes* which give the area a distinctive character;
- *water meadows* alongside the Sweatford and Ashford Waters;
- *semi-improved grassland and scrub* at West Park.

#### **Principles for Landscape Management**

- The survival of traditional management techniques such as coppicing within the woodlands will ensure these woodlands are conserved as copses.
- The management and re-planting of hedgerows will conserve the hedgerow network, the linkages these form with the woodlands and the historic field systems.
- Careful management of water courses and controls on abstraction will encourage the conservation of important water meadows along the Ashford and Sweatsford Waters.
- Replacing conifer plantations with native deciduous species will conserve the interplay between broadleaf woodland and farmland which is characteristic of the area.
- Restoration and conservation of heathland at Sandleheath will conserve the distinctive character and ecological value of this isolated former heath.
- Avoidance of road straightening works on winding leafy lanes will ensure that the character of this in this area is conserved.

#### **Principles for Built Form**

- The strategic gap between Sandleheath and Ashford is important in retaining these as distinct settlements.
- The creation of distinctive 'gateways' (buildings, walls, tree planting etc) at the entrances to Sandleheath could mark a clear limit of settlement and prevent a nondescript merging of town with country.
- Any new development around existing settlements should be accompanied by significant tree and hedgerow planting to integrate buildings into the surrounding landscape pattern.
- Traditional materials include red brick (orange-toned) with clay tile, Welsh slate or thatch.
- Weather boarding is often a feature of agricultural buildings.

## **2.2 13 WATERSIDE PARISHES**

#### **Key Characteristics**

- Flat, or gently undulating, alluvial plain on the western edge of Southampton Water.
- Large scale enclosed landscape with a well wooded character creating a sense of enclosure and a robust structure.
- Open coastal edge with salt marshes, intertidal mud and expansive views across to Southampton.

- Major infrastructure including the A326 which runs along the western edge of the area, punctuated by a series of roundabouts.
- High density of built development including residential estates, industrial parks, military ports, electricity sub-stations, electricity pylons, docks and urban fringe activities.
- Small historic cores to settlements and remnant tide mills.
- Tall vertical elements such as electricity pylons, Oil Refinery Chimneys and the towering Power Station stack of Fawley Power Station visible above the tree line.

### ***Formative Influences***

Early settlement cores of Eling, Dibden, Hythe and Fawley were probably separated by areas of the earlier medieval types of assarted fields and copses, modified by the post-medieval small/ informal enclosure period. A number of small estates were formalised in the 18-19th century by reorganisation into small parliamentary-type fields and the addition of formalised planting and 'estate-type buildings' such as gatehouses. The landscape has generally been overlaid by 20th century suburbanisation.

### ***Landscape Description***

The *Waterside Parishes* lie alongside Southampton Water, from the Fawley Refinery Complex at the southern end, to the town of Totton to the north end. The area's western extent is broadly defined by the route of the A326, beyond which the land rises to a settled ancient farmland landscape from Totton to Hythe, and a forest heath landscape from Hythe to Fawley. The area is strongly enclosed' by the conifer plantations of Dibden and Fawley Inclosures at Hythe. To the east there is also a definite boundary, this time with Southampton Water. To the south the area abuts the *Fawley Refinery Complex* and the large scale landscape of the *North West Solent Estates* lies beyond.

The topography is low lying and flat at the coast but becomes gently undulating inland where the Barton Clays are overlain by Barton Sands. The highest land is in the north of the area, around Totton, where the underlying Bracklesham Beds are exposed. Alluvium and plateau gravel masks most of the solid geology in this area.

There is extensive remnant pre 1810 woodland as well as more recent structure planting. This creates such a strong sense of enclosure that the high density of development is not generally perceived. The area has therefore retained a strong rural character despite the high density of built development throughout.

Although views inland are restricted, the coastal edge is open in character and allows clear views out across Southampton Water, and conversely, from the edge of Southampton towards the Waterside Parishes. There are few areas of undeveloped coast; those remaining at Eling Creek, Dibden Bay and Cadland Creek provide important historic and visual links between Forest and water.

The exposed coastal edge is highly visible, and is also particularly rich in nature conservation designations. The saltmarshes and intertidal mud flats

carry SSSI, SPA and SAC designations while the River Test at Totton is designated an ESA. There is a large SINC between Hythe and Marchwood. Inland, some of the ancient woodland remnants and heaths are designated as SSSIs

Built development is a dominant feature of the area; a mixture of heavy industry, military ports, marinas, large residential estates and small rural estates and villages survive side by side. The period of predominant character is 20th century suburban settlement - private gardens have affected the character of the landscape by replacing the native vegetation of the area with ornamental species. The A326 is the major communication route from which minor roads access the towns and waterfront. However, the Hythe Ferry is an important link to Southampton and provides a unique gateway to the New Forest. Fawley Power Station Chimney, stacks and flares at Fawley Refinery

Complex and electricity transmission lines are prominent vertical elements in the landscape.

#### ***Key Environmental Features***

- *Strategic open land* at Eling Creek to Marchwood, Dibden Bay and Cadland Creek where the Forest scenery meets the water;
- The *coastal edge* which is particularly important in terms of its nature conservation value and as a habitat for migratory birds. The water's edge is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and SSSI along much of its length, and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) between Totton and Marchwood;
- *Remnants of ancient woodland and heathland* within settlements and between settlements which are reminders of the proximity to the New Forest and provide strategic green spaces between the settlements;
- *River Test floodplain* which is important in recreational and nature conservation terms;
- *Tide mill at Eling* which is an historic feature of the water's edge.

#### ***Principles for Landscape Management***

- Management of hedgerows and woodland remnants will ensure that the landscape structure of the area is maintained and fragmentation is minimised. Priority should be given to new woodland, shelterbelt or hedgerow planting which is designed to link existing woodlands, particularly those with ancient or semi-natural status.
- Replacement of hedgerow oaks will maintain these trees as positive features of the area.
- Improvement in access to the waterfront would enhance opportunities for enjoyment of the landscape.
- Traditional management techniques such as coppicing should be employed or reintroduced where possible to retain the traditional character of these woodlands.
- Strict controls on air pollution will ensure that the exceptionally rich resource of lichens, bryophytes and fungal flora of the New Forest is not depleted.

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### **Principles for Built Form**

- New development may be accommodated within existing settlements - there are opportunities to develop on brownfield sites.
- The small tide mill villages are, in themselves, attractive landscape features. Development on the fringes of these settlements may obscure views to the characteristic built form. Their settings should be conserved to enhance their presence in the landscape as traditional settlements.
- Local building materials are red brick (Flemish bond) with clay tile or slate roofs inland with red brick or rendered and painted houses on the waterfront. New built development should avoid sites of historic or nature conservation importance or sites with a high landscape value. The strategic green spaces between settlements should remain undeveloped to prevent their coalescence.

## **2.3 17 BARTON AND MILFORD COASTAL PLAIN**

### **Key Characteristics**

- Large scale undulating wooded estate land landscape overlooking Christchurch Bay.
- An exposed coast with eroding cliffs and narrow shingle beaches to the west of Hurst Spit.
- Enclosed farmland is characterised by large scale fields (arable and pasture) divided by hedgerows, fence lines or blocks of woodland which give the landscape structure. Linear deciduous woodlands along valleys of the Avon Water, Danes Stream and other minor tributaries.
- Large dense settlements showing massive recent expansion of residential housing of a variety of styles and materials at New Milton, Barton-on-Sea, Milford-on-Sea and Lymington.
- Red brick farm houses estate cottages, boundary walls and large country houses.
- Golf courses, caravan parks, holiday parks, cliff top parking and cafes selling fish and chips are all typical of the sea front.

### **Formative Influences**

This coastal landscape developed from former heathland into an enclosed farmed landscape from the Medieval period. The informal Medieval enclosure pattern was then partially overlaid by the formal enclosures of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19th centuries resulting in a pattern of small parliamentary fields. Plantations and 20th century built development have now largely obscured the historic landscape pattern.

### **Landscape Description**

The *Barton and Milford Coastal Plain* landscape which overlooks Christchurch Bay stretches between the Hurst Spit to Chewton Brook. The whole area is underlain by workable gravel deposits and extraction already occurs at Efford and New Milton, with other sites proposed for future extraction. This is a large scale estate landscape dominated by 20th century seaside towns, although it exhibits a less formal enclosure pattern than the *North West Solent Estates*.

Horticultural units, garden centres, caravan parks, holiday villages and expanded settlements are features of this area and the busy roads reflect the proximity to large urban centres. Fields are divided by fragmented hedgerows with clumps of hedgerow oaks, holly or pine. Small remnants of ancient semi-

natural woodland along water courses provide visual links to the Forest. These wooded valleys, containing the courses of the Danes Stream, Walkford Brook and tributaries of the Avon Water, drain south into the Solent and provide important structural and ecological corridors linking the enclosed inland landscape with the open coastal edge. Sturt pond, at the mouth of Danes Stream, forms part of a SSSI.

The coastal edge is dominated by soft, unstable cliffs which are rapidly eroding. These cliffs have geologically interesting rock formations and are designated as a geological SSSI. There are long views to the Isle of Wight from the cliff top footpath, a popular pedestrian route which links Milford to Barton. The cliff top between these towns is for the most part undeveloped and forms strategic open land. Access to the beaches is made difficult due to coastal erosion.

Traditional rural built forms are scattered brick and tile farmsteads, country houses with estate cottages and gate houses. Weatherboarding is a feature on agricultural buildings. Within towns and villages many of the cottages have thatched roofs and are clustered around a village green. Coastal dwellings are often whitewashed.

#### **Key Environmental Features**

- *The cliffs to the west of Hurst Spit* which are eroding and geologically important (geological SSSIs);
- *Remnant semi-natural woodland* along watercourses which create visual and ecological connections with the New Forest;
- *Country houses set within historic designed landscapes* which are features of the landscape;
- *Wooded valleys* which contain remnants of semi-natural ancient woodland and important wetland habitats.

#### **Principles for Landscape Management**

- The provision of improved public access should be carefully designed to minimise erosion whilst enhancing public enjoyment of the landscape.
- The planting and regeneration of natural coastal vegetation, including coastal grassland, will help to improve the appearance of the exposed cliff tops around Milford and Barton.
- Recreational activities need to be monitored to ensure they do not compete with nature conservation or landscape objectives.
- Hedgerow management including replanting of the characteristic hedgerow oaks and pines will ensure the survival of the wooded network.
- Encouragement of organic farming practices will reduce the amount of polluting agricultural run-off into water courses and add diversity to the agricultural landscape in this area.
- Ancient semi-natural valley woodlands are vital to the structure and ecological diversity of the landscape - their continued management is important in the survival of this resource.
- Signage along the coastal edge should be carefully designed to convey the message whilst responding to local character and colours.

***Principles for Built Form***

- Coloured or white render facades are characteristic of the seaside towns and villages.
- Countryside dwellings are traditionally red brick country houses, estate cottages and farmsteads; weather boarding is characteristic of agricultural buildings.
- Settlements are traditionally clustered around a village centre or green.
- Any new development should be set within a robust woodland structure and associated with woodland and hedgerow planting to integrate it into the wooded landscape framework.
- The continued expansion of residential areas will erode landscape character; continuity of architectural styles and materials in individual settlements would enhance their sense of identity.
- Gateway features may be used to indicate the extent of individual settlements and which would give each settlement a sense of place.

### 3.0 Review of Existing New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment, 2000

Review Heading		Existing LCA	Comments
1	Date carried out and methodology used	<p>1999, The methodology employed was a forerunner to any published guidance and a key task of the brief was to develop and pilot an integrated assessment methodology... applied to rural landscapes and settlements, that also advanced thinking on combined assessment of landscape and townscape character,.... encompassed historic and ecological aspect of landscape character and draw upon local knowledge within the community through stakeholder participation, following the process below:</p> <p>Review of existing data and its hierarchy, development of assessment themes: physical influences, biodiversity, historical and cultural influences, settlement character, and forces for change, desk study involving overlaying mapped information, field survey, research, analysis and reporting, stakeholder participation.</p> <p>The final output contains all the relevant information but it has not been amalgamated into a complete snapshot of each LCA, it is dispersed throughout all of the documents. There is no clear</p>	<p>The methodology used was in development and has subsequently been refined further to achieve integration of a large quantity and variety of data that informs landscape assessment.</p> <p>Development and consensus with common headings, based on the European Landscape Convention definition of 'landscape' (2000)</p> <p>Refinements to the methodology now suggests a more objective analysis based on agreed criteria or descriptions and therefore allow a tick box approach to field work, rather than a text based proforma where an element of subjectivity can creep in.</p> <p>Later assessments present information in a complete chapter for each LCA, integrating all of the outputs from a variety of sources and themes (depending on the purpose of the document). They also make a clear distinction between data derived information and any evaluation of that data, enabling a user of the document to see clearly which elements are subject to a professional judgement.</p>

		distinction between facts and evaluation.	
2	Date and provenance of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hampshire Historic Landscape Assessment 1999</li> <li>• The New Forest Landscape 1986</li> <li>• New Forest Heritage Area: Proposed Boundary 1991</li> <li>• Test Valley Borough Landscape Assessment 1996</li> <li>• The Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Landscape 1995</li> </ul>	<p>Appropriate in its time, there is now an additional raft of studies that update the baseline data within and bounding the district</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National JCA's 2013 (Natural England)</li> <li>• HCC Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2012</li> <li>• NFNPA LCA, 2013</li> <li>• The Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2003</li> <li>• EDDCD Landscape Character Assessment 2008</li> <li>• Test Valley Community Landscape Project 2005</li> </ul>
3	The original purpose of the existing LCA	<p>'an holistic approach which considers the landscapes of the New Forest District as a mosaic of different landscape types and character areas, each with particular characteristics and subject to particular forces for change. <b>The assessment is intended to provide an understanding of the areas landscape, of the constraints and opportunities it presents to development and inform policy formulation in the area</b></p>	<p>It is not used as a DC tool and it is rare to require submission of an LVIA or landscape appraisal, despite NPPF supporting.</p> <p>In an era of development restraint it has not been used as a tool for allocating land for development</p>
4	Scale of the assessment and appropriateness for the proposed use.	Mapped at 1:25000 and 1:50000, It is at an appropriate scale as a background document for policy and development management planning purposes	The LCAs could be further refined, see note below
5	Stakeholder	Yes, information gathering exercise and 'buy in' to	Now a key component of Landscape Character

	engagement	outcomes	Assessment to inform the 'people' aspect of landscape assessment
6	Amount of landscape change over document life		Not monitored
7	Extent of cross boundary join up at the edge of the study area		As this assessment now predates all neighbouring assessments at the same scale and the HCC assessment there is some disparity in naming conventions, although the descriptions of LCTs are broadly similar having derived the definitions from common base data
8	Existence of original field work, can it be updated?	Yes	Record sheets need reformulating, using more recent examples to avoid subjective commentary
9	Location: does it include new models, such as Seascape characterisation?	No	HCC seascape assessment at an appropriate scale? Review to determine if further refinement necessary
10	Will particular aspects of landscape character require closer scrutiny?	Not at this baseline assessment level	Test existing field work (sample), develop new field study record sheet for site specific assessment as part of LVIA

The HCC Integrated Landscape Character Assessment, the New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment and the New Forest National Park Authority Landscape Character Assessment derive baseline data from similar sources and all have generic Landscape TYPES defined by physical influencing factors, such as geophysics, soils and vegetation. The Landscape Character AREAS are a combination of one or more landscape types. This methodology has been applied where many of the landscape types are small scale, have visual connections across different types and the historic land use combine different types.

This is a departure from other landscape assessments which refine large scale types into smaller, locally distinct character areas and this different approach can lead to some confusion for the user of these landscape assessments in their current format.

Therefore, future reviews should address this issue by placing less emphasis on Landscape Character Types (mapping and text descriptions) and describe Landscape Character Areas entirely as locally distinct landscape character areas, referring to the types only when there is a clear visual or physical cue on the ground. For example, Historic Parkland has been described as a landscape type, but is usually defined by land management and key visual characteristics, rather than geology, for example. There is little to connect each mapped historic site generically, but do usually contribute to or is a component of the character of an area as a locally distinct feature.

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