Duty to Co-operate Statement

1.0 The Duty to Co-operate (DTC), brought into effect by Section 110 of the Localism Act (2012) aims to ensure that bodies engaged in planning work together on issues that are of more than local significance. There is a specified list of bodies that are bound by the Duty to Co-operate.

Co-operation with relevant bodies in preparing New Forest District Council’s Local Development Plan

1.1 New Forest District Council’s statutory development plan falls into two parts:
   - Part 1: The Core Strategy (adopted 2009)
   - Part 2: Sites and Development Management (as submitted for public examination).

1.2 The “Duty to Co-operate” is of most relevant at the strategic level of plan making (the Core Strategy). The Council’s Core Strategy sets out the planning strategy for the district, including future levels of housing, employment and retail development. The Council’s Core Strategy was prepared before the statutory “duty to co-operate”. However, there were prior requirements for consultation and involvement which had been met in preparing the Core Strategy.

1.3 The Core Strategy was formulated within the framework set in the South East Regional Plan, with which the Council had no major issues. The South East Plan had
been prepared through a thorough process of evidence gathering and consultation, involving all local authorities in the region and the main service and infrastructure providers. The regional plan took on board many of the matters that would now be covered by the new “Duty to Co-operate”.

1.4 At the “sub-regional” level, the Council co-operated over a period of several years with other local authorities in the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). This partnership prepared a strategy and policies for the South Hampshire Sub – Region. The South Hampshire planning strategy was incorporated within the South East Plan. New Forest Council’s Core Strategy was endorsed by the local authorities that comprise the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire. Also the Council co-operated with other local authorities in South East Dorset. The Inspector’s Core Strategy report does not identify any substantive issues in this regard.

1.5 The Council has also aimed to maintain a close working relationship with the New Forest National Park. Given the geography of the Plan Area and its relationship with the New Forest National Park, the Council considers that collaboration with the New Forest National Park Authority and the consideration of impacts on the New Forest National Park to be vitally important.

1.6 At the time of the Core Strategy Examination there were issues between the Council and the National Park Authority. The National Park Authority appeared as an objector at the Public Examination into the Council’s Core Strategy. The National Park’s comments particularly related to their concerns about the levels of proposed development in proximity to the National Park and international nature conservation designations. However, the Inspector, in his report on the Council’s Core Strategy commented (in paragraph 3.48) that:

....‘It is clear to me that both from the Council’s comments during the examination hearings and the details of the Plan’s evidence base, that the potential effects of the Core Strategy’s proposals on the National Park have been taken into account. Indeed, it seems to me that the area’s proximity to the National Park has been an important factor influencing the Council’s decisions about both the scale and location of new development.’

1.7 Since that time the working relationships with the National Park Authority have been very much improved. The Council was able to support the National Park’s Core Strategy and the National Park Authority considers the Council’s Local Plan Part 2 (Sites and Development Management) to be sound.

1.8 The Council has also consulted and co-operated with the other bodies that are bound by the duty to co-operate, both in preparing the Core Strategy and in preparing the Local Plan Part 2 (Sites and Development Management). Mechanisms for co-operation have included, as appropriate, evidence-gathering; informal consultation; officer meetings; consultation on draft documents; formal consultation at proposed submission stage.

1.9 While strategic issues were dealt with at the Core Strategy stage, relevant bodies have continued to be involved in the preparation of Part 2 of the Council’s Local Plan (Sites and Development Management). The Council, as would be expected, has
continued to work with the statutory agencies in making sure that information is up-to-date and in preparing the various assessments – including the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment/Appropriate Assessment.

1.10 Relevant bodies have been notified of the key relevant stages and have been given the opportunity to comment on the Public Consultation Document (January 2011) and to make formal representations on the Proposed Submission Document (January 2012).

Issues remaining with other local authorities

1.11 With regards to representations received on Part 2 of the Council’s Plan, while the aim has been to resolve issues a small number of issues remain with other local authorities.

1.12 Southampton City Council (Rep 379) consider the plan to be unsound as in their view it fails to acknowledge the need for, or safeguard land at Dibden Bay for port uses, and Policy MAR7 fails to safeguard land at Marchwood Military Port for marine use as reflected in the SEEDA Solent Waterfront Strategy. In addition Southampton City Council suggests the policy should recognise Marchwood Military Port’s potential as a minerals wharf. New Forest District Council considers that matters surrounding Dibden Bay are dealt with in the Council’s Core Strategy (see 9.15 and 9.16 of the Council’s Core Strategy). With regards to policy MAR7 New Forest District Council considers that the policy appropriately sets criteria for the consideration of any future proposals.

1.13 Hampshire County Council (Rep 382) has raised a number of points to suggest the plan is unsound. New Forest District Council does not consider that these are major soundness issues. One of the issues that is raised is in relation to the evidence base that it being used in determining the provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and the overall provision that is being made by the Council (see paragraphs 2.0 - 2.2 below).

Specific issues that especially require co-operation

1.14 As would be expected, the Council will continue to work with a wide range of statutory and non-statutory bodies in fulfilling its planning duties and ensuring that issues of more than local significance are properly dealt with. However three policies in the Core Strategy, which specifically refer to the intention to work with other bodies in carrying forwards and implementing the policies, are elaborated on below. These three matters are:

- provision of Gypsy and Traveller Sites;
- provision of Green Infrastructure; and
- cross boundary transport issues.
Provision of Gypsies and Traveller Sites

2.0 The Core Strategy (Policy CS16) says that the Council will work with neighbouring local authorities, the National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, local communities, Hampshire Constabulary, and other stakeholders to ensure that the identified need for pitch provision (both permanent and transitory) for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople, for this part of Hampshire is met. At that time it was expected that this matter would be dealt with through the partial review of the South East Plan that was being progressed but that review was abandoned before it was completed.

2.1 Several representations have been received in relation to the matter of Gypsies and Travellers. Hampshire County Council (Rep 382) has suggested the plan is unsound on the basis of the evidence base that it being used by the Council in determining the provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and the overall provision that is being proposed by the Council. Furthermore the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups (Rep 17) suggest the plan is not sound or legally compliant as it fails to provide for the South East requirement as it stated it will do in paragraph 7.4.4 of the Council’s Core Strategy. The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups comments that the Council’s evidence base needs to be updated. Dorset County Council (Rep 217) has suggested the possibility for Gypsy and Traveller provision at Sopley Camp.

2.2 The provision for Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Core Strategy was based on two needs assessment studies. A Gypsy and Traveller needs study was published in June 2007, whilst a Travelling Showpeople needs study was published in March 2008. These reports provided the basis for an estimate of needs looking ahead only as far as 2016. The Council accepts that this is an inadequate basis for long term planning. Since the adoption of the Core Strategy the Council has joined in a group of twelve Hampshire Authorities who have commissioned consultants to carry out a new Gypsy and Travellers needs assessment study. It is expected that a final report will be produced by the end of the year. The need for a future review of provision will be considered in due course in the light of the findings of this joint re-assessment. In the meantime, Policy TOT10: \textit{Land at Little Testwood Caravan Site} makes provision for additional pitches by way of an extension to the existing site at Little Testwood Farm, Totton. A suggested change is proposed by the Council to the Submission Document to clarify matters regarding Gypsy and Traveller provision (see Proposed Change CH2.8).

Green Infrastructure

3.0 The Core Strategy (Policy CS7) says that the Council will work with the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), the National Park Authority and other local authorities to develop green infrastructure strategies; and with landowners and local communities to preserve and enhance green infrastructure and green links between open spaces.

3.1 Since the Core Strategy was adopted, the Push Green Infrastructure Strategy has been completed and adopted. The Council took a full part in this, including being a
part of the commissioning group and steering group. The PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy was adopted in June 2010.

3.2 The Council is using the methodology of the PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy as a basis for preparing a Green Infrastructure for the whole plan area, including those parts outside the PUSH area. Policy DM9 of the Local Plan. Part 2: Green Infrastructure sets out the main requirements relating to green infrastructure associated with development proposals, and states the Council’s intention to progress the Green Infrastructure Strategy through SPD. Other relevant parties, including neighbouring authorities and the National Park Authority, will be fully involved in the preparation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

3.3 One of the major projects emerging from the PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy is a proposal for Green Infrastructure at Forest Park in close proximity to New Forest District. New Forest District Council is part of a steering group comprising of Hampshire County Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Eastleigh Borough Council, Southampton City Council, New Forest National Park Association, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and Natural England, which is working up proposals to implement this green infrastructure scheme.

3.4 The Council is also engaged with Christchurch Borough Council regarding Christchurch BC’s proposals for a Site of Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in an area of land which falls within the New Forest District’s Plan Area.

3.5 The Council considers it important that the need for cross-boundary working on green infrastructure matters is properly set down in the development plan. Hence the Council’s proposed ‘Changes to the Proposed Submission Document’ (see change CH2.4) include a statement setting out the importance of working across administrative boundaries to secure green infrastructure provision:

‘Some strategic green infrastructure issues cross local authority areas. The Council will work with other local authorities to secure the delivery of appropriate strategic GI projects.’

Transport

4.0 The Core Strategy (especially Policies CS23 and CS24) set out the transport strategy and key strategic proposals. The Council is not the transport authority and recognises the need for full co-operation with Hampshire County Council in particular, but also other local authorities and transport providers in carrying forward and implementing the transport strategy.

4.1 Hence, the Council is involved in continuing liaison with Hampshire County Council and with neighbouring authorities with regards to transport issues. The Council attends regular meetings including the Transport for South Hampshire (TfSH) Joint Committee, Liaison meetings with Hampshire County Council, Traffic Management Liaison Meetings with Hampshire County Council and Dorset County Council as well
as Police Road safety and Forestry Commission Officers. In addition to the above the Council has been involved with the development of the recently completed South East Dorset Transport Study.

4.2 Of particular relevance, in developing the proposals in Local Plan Part 2 have been the meetings held between HCC officers and NFDC officers. There has been close liaison on considering the proposed housing and employment development sites being put forward by the Council and their potential impact on the road network. HCC do not object, on highway grounds, to any of the development sites being put forward by the Council. The Highways Agency (Rep 392) in their comments on the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan Part 2 state that, with regards to sites RING1 to RING4, in Ringwood, ‘there should be an indication that consideration is given as to the impact these sites may have on the A31 and/or demonstrated to be suitable assessed in accordance with DfT Circular 02/2007 and PPG13’. In addition the Highways Agency go on to state, in relation to the A31/A338 junction, that ‘we do have concerns about increases in traffic resulting from developments exacerbating the problem’. However the Highways Agency in their representation welcome the mitigation measures, variable speed limits/control and other initiatives, within Ringwood and at the A31/A338 junction.

4.3 In addition to close co-operation on the development sites, close co-operation has taken place with regards to the transport schemes outlined in Local Plan Part 2. NFDC worked closely with HCC in the preparation of a list of transport improvement schemes across the district. The schemes are particularly aimed at improving accessibility by non-car modes and reducing the adverse impact of traffic. Wide consultations were carried out as part of the process of formulating a schemes list and this included liaison with district and county councillors, town/parish councils, transport providers, Highways Agency and various other interest groups as well as technical officers at both NFDC and HCC. The schemes list was jointly agreed by both NFDC and HCC and the ‘significant’ schemes are included in the Local Plan Part 2 (Sites and Development Management DPD). Additionally HCC’s forthcoming transport district statement for the New Forest area also includes these schemes.