Dear Mr Ives,

New Forest District (outside the National Park) Local Plan Part 2: Examination: Public Consultation on Main Modifications and Draft Mitigation Strategy

Thank you for consulting Dorset County Council on the New Forest District (outside the National Park) Local Plan Part 2: Examination: Public Consultation on Main Modifications and Draft Mitigation Strategy.

I am pleased to confirm that Dorset County Council does not wish to raise any issues of “soundness” concerning the Local Plan Modifications however we would like to comment on some issues of cross border interest.

Main Modifications
Dorset County Council supports Main Modifications 8, 9 and 10 which introduce policies and text to ensure that an effective mitigation strategy is in place to address the recreational impacts of proposed new development on European Sites. We welcome the strengthened approach introduced by these proposed changes which complements that being used in Dorset. There may be an opportunity for the Dorset Urban Heaths Partnership to offer services to NFDC, as the roles to be undertaken, at least in the heathland areas, are so similar. We already have mature wardening and education services which we have been developing since 2000, and we would be pleased to discuss possible joint working arrangements if that would be helpful to NFDC.

We wish to raise one specific point on MM10 – para 2.11.f One interpretation of the second sentence is that when the evidence base is refined the precautionary principle can be abandoned; we presume this is not intended. We would prefer to see ‘until’ replaced with ‘unless’ and ‘is refined’ replaced with ‘demonstrates otherwise’.

Dorset County Council also notes the changes under MM17 to paras 2.57 – 2.59 in respect of the findings of the “Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Hampshire 2013”. This identifies a slightly higher requirement for residential pitches (12 in total up to
2027) in New Forest District than was previously planned for, as well as a need for transit pitches within the wider area of western Hampshire. The Dorset authorities have also undertaken a TAA recently which identified a need for 14 residential pitches in the Borough of Christchurch and 19 in East Dorset District in the period up to 2028, as well as the need for transit sites of between 10 and 25 pitches to serve both the Bournemouth /Poole conurbation and the Dorchester/Weymouth area. It is recognised that as Bournemouth and Poole are unitary authorities they will need to plan separate transit sites within their areas if they wish to make full use of police powers under section 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Dorset County Council is currently investigating options for temporary transit provision in the west of the county.

We would re-iterate the comments made in our letter of 1 March 2012 in response to your “Submission Draft Sites and Development Management DPD” (as it was then called) concerning the cross border linkages and movements by gypsies and travellers. We would welcome further discussion of the best means of addressing the need for both residential and transit accommodation for gypsies and travellers in our respective areas in order to realise any mutual benefits through cross boundary working.

Draft Mitigation Strategy for European Sites
Dorset County Council welcomes your proposed strategy which complements the work on European Sites being undertaken in South East Dorset. We are pleased to note the reference in para 6.43 to the proposed enhancement of the Castleman Way in Ringwood as this is part of a long distance recreational route that extends into Dorset and is recognised as a key strategic access route within the South East Dorset Green Infrastructure Strategy. We are also pleased to note in your Infrastructure Delivery Plan that funding for enhancements to the former railway line and improved signage are included as part of your mitigation strategy with, as a consequence, high priority for funding.

We support the continued dialogue between officers and members of our authorities as well as Christchurch Borough, East Dorset District, Bournemouth Borough, the Borough of Poole, New Forest National Park and Hampshire County Council with a view to strengthening and improving other cross boundary links in terms of green infrastructure particularly in the coastal area.

Yours sincerely,

Gill Smith
Senior Planning Officer

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1 Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment, September 2013.