

BROCKENHURST PARISH COUNCIL

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Mr. C. Chatters, Chairman
New Forest National Park Authority
South Efford House
Milford Road
Lymington
SO41 0JD.

8th October 2008

Dear Mr. Chatters

New Forest National Park Plan - Consultation Draft

The Chairs and Clerks of the four Parish Councils representing the communities proposed as "Service Villages" in the Draft Plan met on 3rd October to compare their initial reactions to the draft. We came prepared to be constructive and forward-looking, and had read the documents carefully.

We are strongly opposed to the designation of Service Villages.

We can find nothing to explain the concept, or what benefit this special status might confer on either the four villages or the National Park. On the contrary, the four communities, which have little in common except population size, seem to be singled out to be the last-resort repositories of activities and developments thought undesirable and inappropriate in the Park as a whole.

We see no reason why our communities should be discriminated against in this manner.

However, this is an initial reaction. We are always conscious of our democratic responsibility to represent carefully and fully the views of our residents and electors. All four of us have various forms of consultation under way.

On related issues, we consider that the draft plan offers no indication of the likely costs to villages or to the New Forest as a whole of the relocations proposed - indeed the draft does not specify what these might be, or give examples.

The proposed concentration among our communities of further social housing (confusingly labelled "affordable housing" in some places) is made with no regard for the existing infrastructure (outside the NPA's remit) from overburdened sewers to already full primary schools.

Taken with the seeming indifference to the reduction of shops at the heart of village community life, the draft appears designed to accelerate further the trends of recent years towards the increasing urbanisation of relatively small village communities.

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8th October 2008

Mr. C. Chatters

Chairman, New Forest National Park Authority

We reside in living, working communities - not service repositories.

The emphasis should be on sustaining their continuing viability, serving the needs of residents, but also gaining significant economic and community enhancement through interaction with visitors to the Forest, with plans to support commoning and the long-standing traditions of the Forest.

Consultation with our residents and then with the NPA will take time, especially if it is to be thorough. You call for more Village Plans, but there is no sign in the draft that anyone in the NPA or your consultants have read even one.

We request an extension of the deadline for comments to 31st December.

Unless that is, following the devastating and revealing comments recently made by the Authority's Vice-Chairman, the NPA will withdraw the draft and start a proper consultation based on dialogue and listening to those who live, work and find recreation and enjoyment in the New Forest - in accordance with your two fundamental purposes.

We look forward to an early response, and to comments from copy addressees.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. S. Arnold
Ashurst and Colbury PC

J.T. Masefield
Brockenhurst PC

G. Bisson
Lyndhurst PC

Mrs. C. Gates
Sway PC

c.c. Rt. Hon. Hilary Benn, MP, Secretary of State, DEFRA
Mr. Jonathon Shaw, MP, Minister for National Parks
Dr. Julian Lewis, MP and Mr. Desmond Swayne, MP
Cllr. T.K. Thornber, Leader HCC
Cllr. M. Kendall, Leader NFDC
Hampshire Association of Local Councils
New Forest Association of Local Councils
Ms. L. Cornish, Chief Executive, New Forest National Park Authority