

**Test Valley Revised Local Plan DPD
2011 – 2029
Regulation 22 – Submission to
Secretary of State**

**Policies E6 (Green Infrastructure)
and LHW3 (Forest Park)
Topic Paper**

July 2014

REVISED LOCAL PLAN

TOPIC PAPER – POLICIES E6 and LHW3 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE FOREST PARK

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide background justification to the inclusion of the green infrastructure and forest park policies within the Test Valley Revised Local Plan.
- 1.2 The national policy context for both these policies is the same, therefore this is provided in section 2. The rest of the paper is divided into two parts to reflect the evidence for green infrastructure in general and the specific project of a Forest Park.

2 National Policy Context

- 2.1 The importance of green infrastructure has been increasingly recognised, including through the natural environment White Paper – ‘The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature’¹. In addition, it is considered to have multiple benefits, including conserving biodiversity, supporting adaptation to climate change, improving quality of life and health of communities. Evidence and guidance linked to green infrastructure has been produced at national to local scales. A summary of key documents is provided below.
- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines green infrastructure as:
*“A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.”*²
- 2.3 While there are links to green infrastructure throughout the NPPF, paragraph 114 highlights the need for local planning authorities to take a positive strategic approach in their local plans to the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of green infrastructure.
- 2.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)³ also provides advice in relation to green infrastructure, including as part of the natural environment section, this includes an elaboration on the definition of green infrastructure and direction to further guidance provided by Natural England on this topic⁴. It is also noted that enough green infrastructure should be incorporated into a

¹ The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature, DEFRA, 2011.

² National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012, page 52.

³ Available: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

⁴ Reference ID: 8-015-20140306

development to make it sustainable⁵. Other sections recognise the role of green infrastructure in mitigating adverse effects – this includes in relation to flooding, air quality and climate change.

PART A: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

3 Sub-Regional and Local Context

- 3.1 The Council works with other authorities within south Hampshire through the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). PUSH has given consideration to green infrastructure across this area and produced a Green Infrastructure Strategy⁶ and Green Infrastructure Implementation Framework⁷. The Strategy seeks to provide an overview of the green infrastructure network in south Hampshire, of which southern Test Valley is part. It also seeks to identify opportunities to enhance the network, including through the identification of specific projects.
- 3.2 The Council has an approved Borough wide Green Infrastructure Strategy⁸. It seeks to consider the green infrastructure network at a local scale and opportunities to conserve and enhance it. Potential green infrastructure initiatives are identified for sub-areas within the Borough.

4 Revised Local Plan

- 4.1 The Council considered it to be appropriate for the Revised Local Plan to establish the approach to green infrastructure in general through a specific policy.
- 4.2 Taking account of paragraph 114 of the NPPF, any policy on green infrastructure would need to cover the creation, protection, enhancement and management of green infrastructure. It was not considered necessary to repeat all of the projects that have been identified within the Test Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy; however a cross reference to this document has been provided.
- 4.3 Through consultation on the Regulation 18 and 19 versions of the Revised Local Plan, additional wording has been proposed to provide clarification on what is considered to comprise green infrastructure. This includes the addition of a definition to the glossary and through the supporting text to the policy. The Test Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy provides further information on green infrastructure assets within the Borough – the strategy is cross referenced in the supporting text.

⁵ Reference ID: 8-019-20140306

⁶ Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire, UE Associates, 2010 (available: <http://www.push.gov.uk/work/sustainability-and-social-infrastructure.htm>).

⁷ PUSH Green Infrastructure Implementation Framework, PUSH, 2012 (available: <http://www.push.gov.uk/work/sustainability-and-social-infrastructure.htm>).

⁸ A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Test Valley, Test Valley Borough Council, 2014. Approved by the Council's Cabinet 16th July 2014.

- 4.4 The policy has been drafted recognising the plan needs to be considered as a whole. Therefore, matters such as biodiversity and public open space provision have been covered through separate policies, with their requirements not duplicated in relation to green infrastructure.

5 Proposed Way Forward for Green Infrastructure

- 5.1 The Council has proposed a policy linked to green infrastructure within the Revised Local Plan providing a framework for decision making. The supporting text to this policy refers to other local strategies in place on these topics, including the Test Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 5.2 The proposed wording of the green infrastructure policy is provided below for information.

Policy E6: Green Infrastructure

Development will be permitted provided that:

- a) it protects, conserves and enhances the Borough's Green Infrastructure network;
- b) it avoids the loss, fragmentation, severance or a negative impact on the function of the Green Infrastructure network;
- c) mitigation is provided where there would be an adverse impact on the Green Infrastructure network; and
- d) where it is necessary for development to take place on identified areas of Green Infrastructure an appropriate replacement is provided.

PART B: FOREST PARK

6 Sub-Regional and Local Context

- 6.1 As noted above, the PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy identified specific projects to deliver. One of these projects relates to the creation of a 'forest park' within southern Test Valley to open up access to a series of woodlands and increase connectivity between them (project W1, page 55). The woodlands are currently in private ownership, with limited formal public access (through the public rights of way network) and some unauthorised use known to be taking place.
- 6.2 The PUSH Green Infrastructure Implementation Framework seeks to prioritise key strategic projects that had been considered through the Strategy. The Forest Park proposal within southern Test Valley is noted to be of sub-regional importance within this document. This relates to 400 hectares of woodland. The key outcomes are noted to be⁹:
- The delivery of public access routes within the woodland
 - Positive management of the nature conservation value of the woodlands

⁹ Summarised from page 20 of the PUSH Green Infrastructure Implementation Framework.

- To allow local residents to enjoy informal recreation close to their homes

6.3 Alongside work undertaken at the sub-regional scale, the Council has sought to further understand how the Forest Park proposal could come forward. As such two studies have been undertaken to consider the viability of this specific project and how it could come forward, one of which was prepared by the Forestry Commission¹⁰. A supplementary report was prepared to suggest how car parking could be provided to serve the woodlands¹¹. The outcomes of these reports do not necessarily represent a plan for how the Forest Park will come forward, but explore some of the options available.

6.4 A draft implementation framework¹² for the forest park has also been prepared and subject to consultation earlier this year. A final version of this document is currently under preparation. This sets out that the forest park would be a long term proposal, which would come forward in phases, with delivery likely to extend beyond the plan period. In addition to the formal consultation, the Council has liaised with the Forestry Commission, neighbouring authorities and landowners (or their representatives) in developing its understanding of the potential to bring forward the proposal.

6.5 As noted within the draft implementation framework, public access to part of the forest park has been secured in conjunction with a planning permission for residential development¹³.

7 Revised Local Plan

7.1 Given local and sub-regional aspirations, it was considered appropriate to include a specific policy within the Revised Local Plan recognising the proposal for a 'forest park' within southern Test Valley.

7.2 This is focused on five woodlands, which have been mapped (appended to this document and shown in Map I within the Revised Local Plan). Aside from highlighting potential access points for these woodlands, it was not considered to be appropriate to provide more detail within the Revised Local Plan as it is envisaged that this would come forward through woodland specific plans as parcels become available. This approach is set out within the emerging Forest Park Implementation Framework.

7.3 Some concerns have been raised through the consultations on the potential for recreational use of these woodlands to prevent future development within

¹⁰ Test Valley Forest Park Feasibility Study, Green Dimensions, 2009 and Feasibility Study for the provision of a forest park in South West Hampshire, Forestry Commission, 2011 (both available: <http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/resident/planningandbuildingcontrol/planningpolicy/local-development-framework/evidence-base/evidence-base-leisure/>).

¹¹ Forest Park Access and Parking Options, Test Valley Borough Council, 2011 (available: <http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/resident/planningandbuildingcontrol/planningpolicy/local-development-framework/evidence-base/evidence-base-leisure/>).

¹² Forest Park Implementation Framework (Draft), Test Valley Borough Council, 2014.

¹³ 09/01706/OUTS – Land at Redbridge Lane, Nursling – legal agreement no. 3 provides for public access to Fields Farm (also known as Fields Copse), Rownhams Lane.

them for housing, particularly the woodlands closest to Southampton. In addition, there have been concerns about the likely delivery of this project.

- 7.4 Responses to the comments have picked up on these points, noting other site constraints which would make housing development less appropriate and that the Implementation Framework seeks to provide an overview of the approach to the delivery of this long term project and the detailed management of those areas. There has been support for the principle of the Forest Park proposal through the consultation. In addition, the Southampton City and New Forest District Core Strategies, as well as the emerging Eastleigh Borough Local Plan have had regard to the provision of a Forest Park within southern Test Valley.

8 Proposed Way Forward for the Forest Park

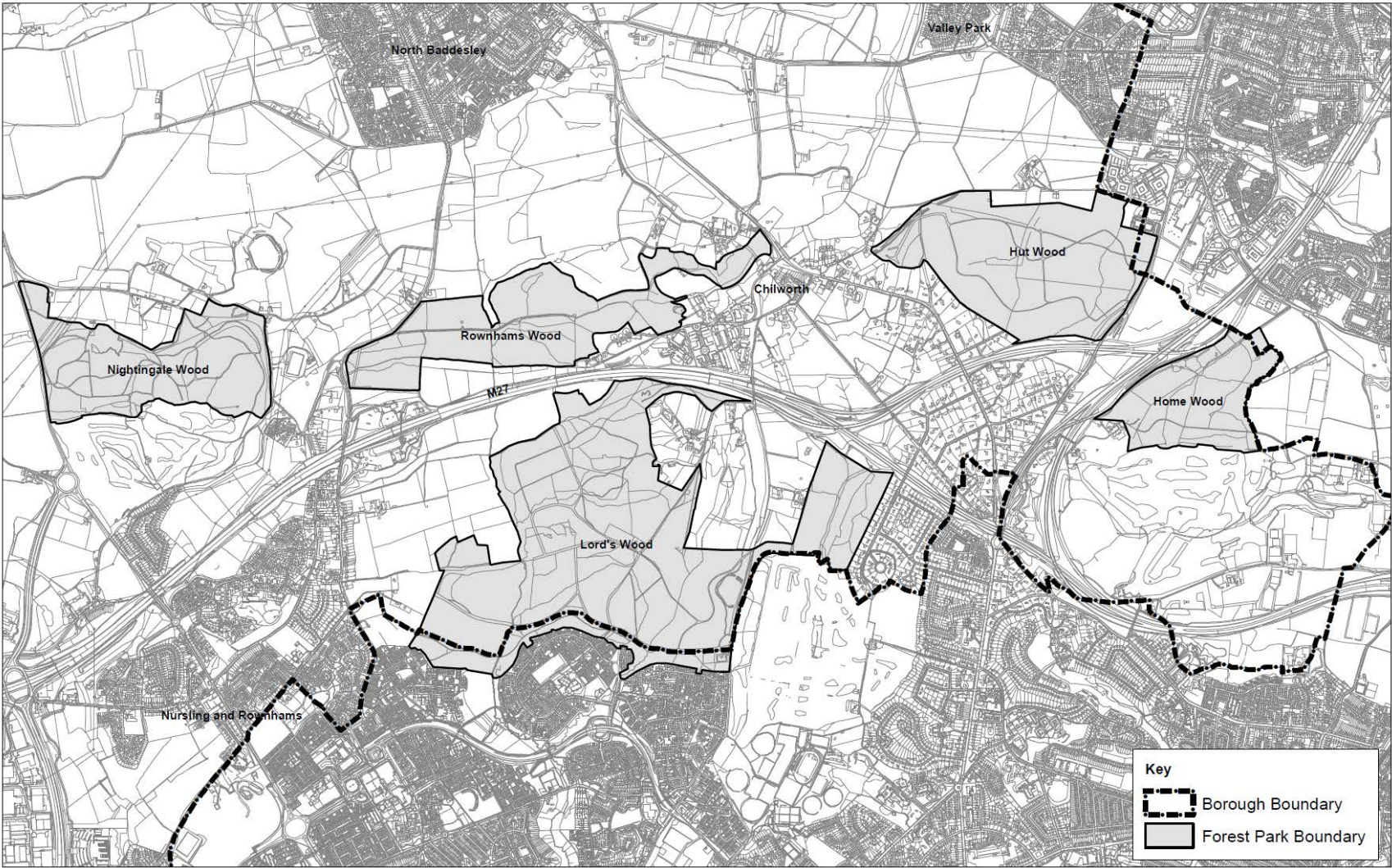
- 8.1 The Council has proposed a policy seeking to allocate a green infrastructure asset of sub-regional importance, namely the Forest Park. The supporting text to this highlights the links to sub-regional and local strategies.
- 8.2 The proposed wording of the forest park policy is provided below for information. A map of the Forest Park extent is provided in Appendix 1, which replicates Map I within the Revised Local Plan.

Policy LHW3: Forest Park

Land adjoining the M27 Motorway is proposed as a Forest Park (see Map I).

Vehicular and pedestrian/cycle access will be provided from the A3057 (Nightingale Wood); Rownhams Lane (Rownhams Wood); the A27 Botley Road (Lordswood); and Bournemouth Road (Hut Wood).

Appendix 1: Map I – Forest Park (LHW3)



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