Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Delivery

Service Manager: Dean Brunton

Sent by email to:
[redacted]

My Ref:
Your Ref:

Date: 28 August 2026

Dear Mr Hayward

Havant Local Plan – Building a Better Future Plan: New Forest District Council Response to Update from Havant Borough Council on Unmet Development Needs

Thank you for your letter of 10 August 2026 regarding the Havant Local Plan – the Building a Better Future Plan and the latest position on your housing and employment development needs.

NFDC notes that the pre-submission Havant Local Plan makes provision for 5,908 dwellings, equating to around 328 dwellings per annum, over the remaining plan period (2025-2043). This compares to the housing need figure generated by the current standard method of 879 dwellings per annum, equivalent to 15,822 dwellings over the remaining plan period (2025-2043). This would result in an unmet housing need figure of 9,914 dwellings.

NFDC notes that discussions in respect of unmet needs have been ongoing with other neighbouring authorities in southeast Hampshire and that the adopted Winchester District Local Plan 2020-2040 makes a contribution of 345 dwellings towards Havant's housing need, reducing the unmet need to 9,569 dwellings.

NFDC recognises the challenge Havant Borough Council faces in terms of meeting its housing need due to it being an area constrained by both its coastal geography and by numerous national and international designations. NFDC supports the efforts Havant Borough Council has made to engage with neighbouring local authorities in southeast Hampshire during the preparation of its Local Plan. NFDC also recognises Havant Borough Council's wider aspirations set out in its Regulation 19 Local Plan for economic growth, regeneration and investment across the Borough. Havant Borough Council's efforts to maximise development opportunities within a heavily constrained coastal authority area demonstrate the complexity of balancing housing delivery, economic growth, infrastructure provision and environmental protection.

NFDC faces many similar challenges, with significant environmental designations, coastal constraints and competing demands on limited developable land.

NFDC remains committed to effective cooperation and constructive engagement with both directly neighbouring authorities and other authorities in Hampshire. It is therefore important to set out clearly the District's own position on housing capacity and constraints.

The NFDC (outside the National Park) Plan Area faces uniquely significant constraints which directly affect the extent to which it may be able to meet its own housing need, let alone that arising from elsewhere. Under the current standard method, housing need for the New Forest District (including the National Park – which accounts for 68% of the New Forest District area) is calculated at 1,511 dwellings per annum (this is the 2025 figure). Based on the existing dwelling stock this equates to a potential housing need of 1,254 dwellings per annum within the NFDC Plan Area specifically, or 22,572 dwellings over the period 2025-2043.

The Plan Area is significantly affected by major physical and environmental designations and constraints. Approximately 57% of the Plan Area is covered by areas identified in footnote 7 of the previous 2024 NPPF as providing a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type, or distribution of development in the Plan Area. These include nature conservation designations (of both international and national importance); Green Belt; areas at risk of flooding or erosion; and National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The scale and statutory weight of these designations suggest that large parts of the Plan Area are likely to be particularly challenging to deliver strategic housing growth to meet the Plan Area's housing needs, before considering meeting wider unmet need. While further evidence and plan-making work is required, the emerging evidence indicates that NFDC itself may be unable to meet its own objectively assessed housing requirements in full. As a result, NFDC will also need to consider how any future unmet need arising within its own area can be addressed through wider strategic planning mechanisms. It also limits the scope for NFDC to identify capacity to accommodate unmet housing need arising from elsewhere.

NFDC has been working on preparing a new Local Plan since 2024. This has included carrying out research and technical studies, assessing potential development sites, and engaging with residents, businesses, and other stakeholders through two rounds of public consultation. Most recently, in February-March 2026, NFDC undertook a Regulation 18 draft Local Plan Spatial Options and Policy Direction consultation which sought views on different options for accommodating future housing and employment needs, alongside supporting infrastructure and environmental protections across the District (outside the National Park).

However, significant recent national and local changes, notably the Local Government Reorganisation decision and introduction of a new National Planning Policy Framework, mean that NFDC is no longer able to proceed with the Local Plan review as previously envisaged in the Local Development Scheme and is considering moving to the new planning system to produce a stronger and more deliverable Local Plan. NFDC's Cabinet members, at the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday 5 August 2026, recommended moving from the current Local Plan process to

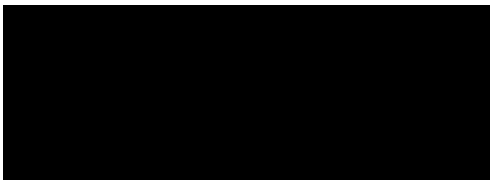
preparation of a Local Plan under the Government's new planning system. The matter will now be considered by Full Council on 14 September 2026. In parallel, Local Government Reorganisation and devolution proposals across Hampshire and the Solent area are creating new opportunities to address strategic growth issues at a broader geography. NFDC and Havant Borough Council are expected to become part of new unitary authorities centred on distinct economic areas. The case for change supporting Local Government Reorganisation identifies the potential for new unitary authorities to work more effectively with partners to support economic growth, infrastructure planning and housing delivery, whilst strengthening engagement through strategic planning arrangements.

The Regulation 18 Local Plan Spatial Options and Policy Direction consultation undertaken in February to March 2026 identified that there may be a potential supply of 13,582 dwellings (if all potential sites are concluded to be suitable, available and achievable) that could be developable in the period 2025-2043. However, at this stage this potential figure remains uncertain pending further assessment. Even under the most optimistic scenario, where every potential supply/site source currently identified were to be concluded as suitable, available and achievable, there would still be a significant projected unmet housing need of around 9,000 dwellings for the period 2025-2043.

Given the scale of NFDC's own emerging housing requirement, the likelihood that NFDC may itself have future unmet housing needs, and the extensive environmental and physical constraints affecting the Plan Area, NFDC cannot at this stage identify any suitable land capable of accommodating unmet housing needs arising from Havant Borough.

Nevertheless, NFDC considers that the emerging Strategic Mayoral Authority, Local Government Reorganisation programme and future Spatial Development Strategy provide an important opportunity to consider housing, employment growth, infrastructure provision and environmental constraints across a wider strategic geography. NFDC therefore remains committed to continued positive engagement with Havant Borough Council and other authorities as those arrangements develop. The Spatial Development Strategy may provide an appropriate framework through which wider unmet housing needs across Hampshire can be understood and addressed in a coordinated and sustainable manner, informed by the evidence base prepared by the new unitary authorities and strategic partners.

Yours faithfully



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