

Date: 17 June 2025
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BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Mr Sneller and Mrs Peach,

New Forest habitats and international sites SAMM contribution

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is now formerly advising both Councils that in the light of the significant evidence relating to recreational pressure on the New Forest designated sites, both Councils should not be authorising any additional residential development within 13.8km of the following habitats and international sites without first securing appropriate mitigation:

- New Forest SAC
- New Forest SPA
- New Forest Ramsar

The recent report by Footprint Ecology to the New Forest Steering Group (New Forest Strategic Access Management & Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy 2023) sets out at Table 4, page 41 a suitable tariff per dwelling (Dorset Council : £400 and Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council £300) which the Councils may use to secure an appropriate level of mitigation for recreation related impacts.

Advice consistent with this position was provided by Natural England to the Council and Inspector at the Alderholt Public Inquiry (APP/D1265/W/23/3336518, P/OUT/2023/01166) where the Council, applicant and Inspector agreed with the need to secure a level of mitigation which accorded with the SAMM contribution as agreed, prior to the first occupation. This was to be secured through the section 106 obligation, the relevant paragraph of the appeal is shown below:

"71. The s106 obligation would secure financial contributions to deliver the necessary mitigation measures in respect of recreational pressure and air quality on the New Forest SPA/SAC and Ramsar site."

Nevertheless, whilst the above appeal was dismissed, the principle of a requirement to secure appropriate mitigation for recreation related impacts in the New Forest is now established and supported by evidence. Mitigation contributions in addition to those to be secured for the Dorset Heaths should now be incorporated into developments which generate additional recreation related pressures eg residential and self-catering tourist accommodation (the draft April 2025 New Forest SAMM Strategy provides a full list of development types to be considered) in the 13.8km zone from the New Forest designated sites.

A similar case, which falls within the 13.8km, has recently been considered and approved at an appeal in Christchurch (APP/V1260/W/24/3351431, 8/23/0657/FUL).

I trust this advice will assist the Councils moving forward.

Yours sincerely

Nick Squirrell
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