

Local Plan Review

The Parish Council of Milford-on-Sea have agreed the following analysis and response to the local plan review presented by NFDC, specifically areas SDGOs H and J and further smaller areas identified in Milford-on-Sea by NFDC.

The conclusions in our response are supported unanimously by all members of the Parish Council. The response is a product of our technical analysis of the documents provided and local presentation given by NFDC, but also significantly from communication with our parishioners (both individuals and groups representative of specific Milford-on-Sea areas).

Our conclusions therefore incorporate our parishioner views as best we can in the limited time offered to provide the response. In many cases such individuals and area groups, have, we understand, also made direct representations/responses to the Local Plan. Our understanding/observation is that the majority of the direct responses we know of are in line with and reflect the same concerns that we as a council are ourselves formally presenting.

Milford-on-Sea Parish Council suggest that the numbers of dwellings being considered would result in the green corridors that NFDC feel are essential, being lost, resulting in the towns and villages of New Milton, Milford-on-Sea, Everton and Hordle all merging into one combined area. This would destroy the essence of charm that characterises the villages surrounding the National Park.

We consider the principal concerns to be lack of Infrastructure, the detrimental effect on the New Forest National Park and the damage to the Environment.

Infrastructure

Protecting the distinct identity of settlements and preventing the coalescence of neighbouring villages has been a long-standing objective of NFDC. Both SDGO H and SDGO J are in Green Belt areas, which serve to prevent urban sprawl and protect the countryside. The Council has not provided a cumulative impact assessment, which is essential to evaluate the combined effects of existing and proposed developments.

The current infrastructure within Milford-on-Sea has not changed in a century. As the population of Milford-on-Sea doubles in holiday season, investigation into the ability of the infrastructure to support any development should take this population increase into account.

The only transport option for SDGO H and SDGO J is by road, impacting on air quality and environment. The rural road network, including the A337 and Barnes Lane, lacks capacity and resilience to support the proposed developments. No detailed transport assessment has been conducted, making the deliverability of the SDGOs uncertain. Currently the Everton Junction can be backed up to the school and often there is no parking in the village centre. There are also concerns regarding adequate services. SDGO H lacks a primary school, and the cost and feasibility of new infrastructure have not been assessed.

Barnes Lane and Newlands Manor Farm currently have problems with surface water; hence development within the area could increase the problem. A section of SDGO J is part of the “Flood protection for Milford-on-Sea infrastructure”. Although the Danes Stream is managed, recent reports indicate that its levels have increased considerably in the past few years and are expected to keep rising due to the combined effects of new developments and climate change.

Recent Environment Agency flood alerts for the Danes Stream confirm that water levels have repeatedly reached ‘very high’ levels in 2023–2025, resulting in localised flooding of footpaths and gardens, demonstrating the sensitivity of the watercourse to increased pressure on wastewater and drainage.

New Forest National Park

Milford-on-Sea is unique in being the only coastal village in the district. There are currently approximately 3200 properties. Proposed SDGO H and SDGO J would provide an additional 3000 properties, which is massively out of proportion and would likely have a detrimental effect

on the charm of the village. Significant recent and committed developments of approximately 200 additional homes in the area already strain infrastructure.

Any development adjacent to the important landscape of the New Forest National Park, would decrease the appeal of the local area, and increase recreational pressure, traffic volume and congestion and have environmental impacts within the National Park.

The New Forest attracts over 15 million visitor days annually, around 8,500% of the resident population over the course of a year and a 12.4% uplift over the last 20 years.

With Milford-on-Sea being the nearest beach and promenade to the National Park we reasonably estimate that the population can at least double at peak periods with substantial seasonal pressures on infrastructure and environmental capacity.

Reliance on static resident population data risks materially underestimating peak pressures on the transport network, parking provision, public services and environmentally sensitive areas, particularly in coastal locations such as Milford-on-Sea that experience significant seasonal visitor inflows.

The Parish Council therefore requests that the Council’s evidence base be updated to explicitly assess seasonal population variation and its implications for infrastructure capacity

Environment

Planning policy recognises the importance of protecting the setting and environmental integrity of this landscape. The village of Milford-on-Sea and the surrounding areas are important destinations for tourism. Given the ecological sensitivity of the area and the known presence of protected species across the local area, there would be a substantial risk of habitat destruction, ecological fragmentation and increased risk to protected habitats.

Several of the SDGO's under consideration are within the 'Green Belt' and possess significant ecological and community value. We would refer you to Site 110 where in September 2024, a legally binding Section 106 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) agreement was signed, securing the land exclusively for biodiversity and habitat creation.

This means that Site 110 is now legally committed to biodiversity and habitat creation for which residential development is expressly prohibited. Its continued inclusion in the Local Plan process is also inconsistent with the Council's policy direction, including identified infrastructure limitations such as road capacity and school constraints. It also dismisses the substantial ecological importance and community value of this area.

Conclusion

While acknowledging the pressure for development, the Parish Council emphasizes the need for appropriate location, infrastructure, and environmental justification.

Milford-on-Sea Parish Council feel that the numbers suggested are highly unsuitable and unsustainable for the level of development being considered.

Finally, Milford-on-Sea Parish Council insist the following of NFDC:

- NFDC commission and complete the transport assessment it has itself acknowledged is required before any allocation decision is made, to address cumulative highway impacts alongside the committed development pipeline.
- NFDC provide a cumulative impact assessment, integrating existing committed sites with the proposed SDGOs before the Regulation 19 stage.
- NFDC confirm it will not progress the MEH SDGOs to allocation without that evidence base being made publicly available for scrutiny.