

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 8TH 2026

Item 10 - To receive and note a report on National changes to Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation

BACKGROUND

A new National Scheme of Delegation for Local Planning Authority (“LPA”) planning committees in England will take effect from 31 October 2026, although some local authorities have already begun introducing the new arrangements.

The scheme is intended to create a more consistent approach to deciding which planning applications are handled by officers and which may be considered by planning committees.

The changes will not apply to National Parks which means that the current process for NFNPA planning applications remains unchanged.

The changes **will** apply to NFDC (who for Copythorne Parish are the LPA for that part of the District outside of the National Park (a small area to the north of the A36) and are outlined below.

Applications will broadly fall into two categories:

- **Schedule 1: Mandatory Officer Delegation**

Applications in this category must be determined by planning officers and cannot be referred to committee through councillor call-in procedures or because of public objections.

- **Schedule 2: Presumed Officer Delegation**

These applications will normally be determined by officers, although there may be circumstances where they can be referred to a planning committee or sub-committee.

The changes do not affect the role of parish and town councils as statutory consultees. Existing arrangements for councils to be consulted on planning applications will continue.

However, some local arrangements, including councillor call-ins and automatic committee referrals based solely on the number of objections received, may no longer be possible.

CURRENT POSITION

On behalf of NFDC and NFNPA, Mark Wyatt (an officer in Planning – Development Management, a part of the Place, Operations and Sustainability Team at NFDC) has sent all Town and Parish Councils within the NFDC area a letter explaining how the changes will work as far as NFDC are concerned.

A copy of the letter, which was issued to Parish Councillors by me on August 24th 2026, is attached. Also attached is a map showing the part of the Parish that NFDC are the LPA for.

ACTION REQUIRED

All Parish Councillors are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements.

David Rigby

Clerk to Copythorne Parish Council

August 26th 2026



Planning - Development Management

Manager: Mark Wyatt

To all Town and Parish Councils in the New Forest District and National Park Authority Planning Areas.

My Ref:
Your Ref:

Date: 20 August 2026

By email only

Dear Town Council / Parish Council Clerk,

Subject: National Changes to Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation

We are jointly writing to advise you of forthcoming national changes to the planning application decision-making process, including the introduction of a National Scheme of Delegation (NSD) and revised arrangements for planning committee referrals. The implications of these changes will vary depending on where the planning application is submitted, as the NSD will not apply within the New Forest National Park but will to all other areas of New Forest District outside the National Park.

The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 gave powers to the Secretary of State to control the function of Planning Committees, the type of applications that they can consider, their size and their training requirements.

The Government's stated aim behind the NSD is to ensure that there is greater clarity and consistency about the role of planning committees in planning decision making. Committees should focus on the key proposals that matter to an area, enabling other, often more minor and technical, decisions to be made by planning officers.

The changes are due to come into effect on 31 October 2026 and will apply to all local planning authorities except development corporations, the Homes & Communities Agency, national park authorities and the Broads Authority. These exceptions are obviously highly relevant in the New Forest context and further detail is provided below on what the introduction of the NSD means for New Forest town and parish councils.

In the areas of New Forest District outside the National Park, the NSD proposes a two-tier approach clearly defining applications that must be delegated to officers and those that "may" be referred to planning committee subject to passing through a gateway test.

newforest.gov.uk

Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, LYNDHURST, SO43 7PA

The government is quite clear that Planning Authorities are expected to have made appropriate arrangements over the summer of 2026 such as adjustments to their constitutions to ensure that planning committees can comply with the Regulations when they take effect. Failure to comply with the Regulations once in force may expose LPAs to legal challenge, including where committees determine applications that should have been delegated.

So what does this mean for the way a Parish or Town Council responds to a planning application in the New Forest District Council outside the National Park area?

Currently you are invited to respond to a planning application using one of five options, namely:

PAR1: We recommend PERMISSION, for the reasons listed, but would accept the decision reached by the District Council's Officers under their delegated powers.

PAR2: We recommend REFUSAL, for the reasons listed, but would accept the decision reached by the District Council's Officers under their delegated powers.

PAR3: We recommend PERMISSION, for the reasons listed below.

PAR4: We recommend REFUSAL, for the reasons listed.

PAR5: We are happy to accept the decision reached by the District Council's Officers under their delegated powers.

One of the most significant changes for town and parish councils in the District Council planning area outside the National Park is that comments submitted in response to planning applications will no longer be able to automatically trigger referral of an application to the Planning Committee should officers come to a different view to the opinion expressed in your response (responses currently using PAR3 and PAR4).

As such the existing PAR1 to PAR5 response categories will require review as they are no longer relevant, together with consideration of the ongoing necessity and relevance of the parish briefing notes that currently support the process.

The new arrangements will also remove the ability for Members of the Council to refer planning applications to the Planning Committee where such referrals would be outside the scope of the national scheme.

There are no transitional arrangements associated with the implementation of the new requirements. This means that any planning application which remains valid and undetermined as at 31st October 2026 will be determined in accordance with the new National Scheme of Delegation, regardless of any comments received previously under the PAR categories.

Accordingly, applications that remain undetermined on 1 November 2026 cannot continue to be referred to Planning Committee solely on the basis that comments have been submitted which, under the current arrangements, would otherwise have triggered a committee referral. To do so would create a risk of legal challenge to the decision-making process.

The Council is working throughout the summer to review and amend its local Scheme of Delegation to ensure that it is aligned with the national requirements and is fully operational ahead of the implementation date.

It is important to emphasise that comments received from town and parish councils will remain a material consideration in the assessment and determination of planning applications. Whilst such comments will no longer automatically result in a committee referral, they will continue to form an important part of the decision-making process and will be carefully considered by officers when applications are assessed.

What does this mean for the way a Parish or Town Council responds to a planning application in the National Park area?

The Government has confirmed that the NSD will not apply within National Park areas. This follows lobbying by national park authorities – including the New Forest National Park Authority – which highlighted the impact the NSD could have on decision-making within nationally protected landscapes.

The legal provisions relating to the introduction of the NSD confirm national park authorities are exempt and therefore town & parish councils within the National Park will continue to: (a) be consulted on all relevant applications submitted to the National Park Authority; (b) be invited to respond using the existing options outlined on page 2 of this letter. The current triggers for applications being considered by the Authority's Planning Committee meetings (including a contrary town or parish council view, or a 'call in' by an Authority member or local councillor) will remain.

For ease of reference, Annex 1 to this letter sets out the parishes that are entirely within New Forest District for planning purposes (where the NSD will apply); those that are entirely within the National Park for planning purposes (where the NSD will not apply at all); and those 'split' towns and parishes where the location of the application will dictate whether the NSD applies or not.

Further updates and guidance will be provided as the Council's review progresses. In the meantime, thank you for your continued engagement and contribution to the planning process.

Yours sincerely

Mark Wyatt
Service Manager – Development Management
Development Management
Place, Operations and Sustainability

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

David Illsley
Interim Head of Planning & Place

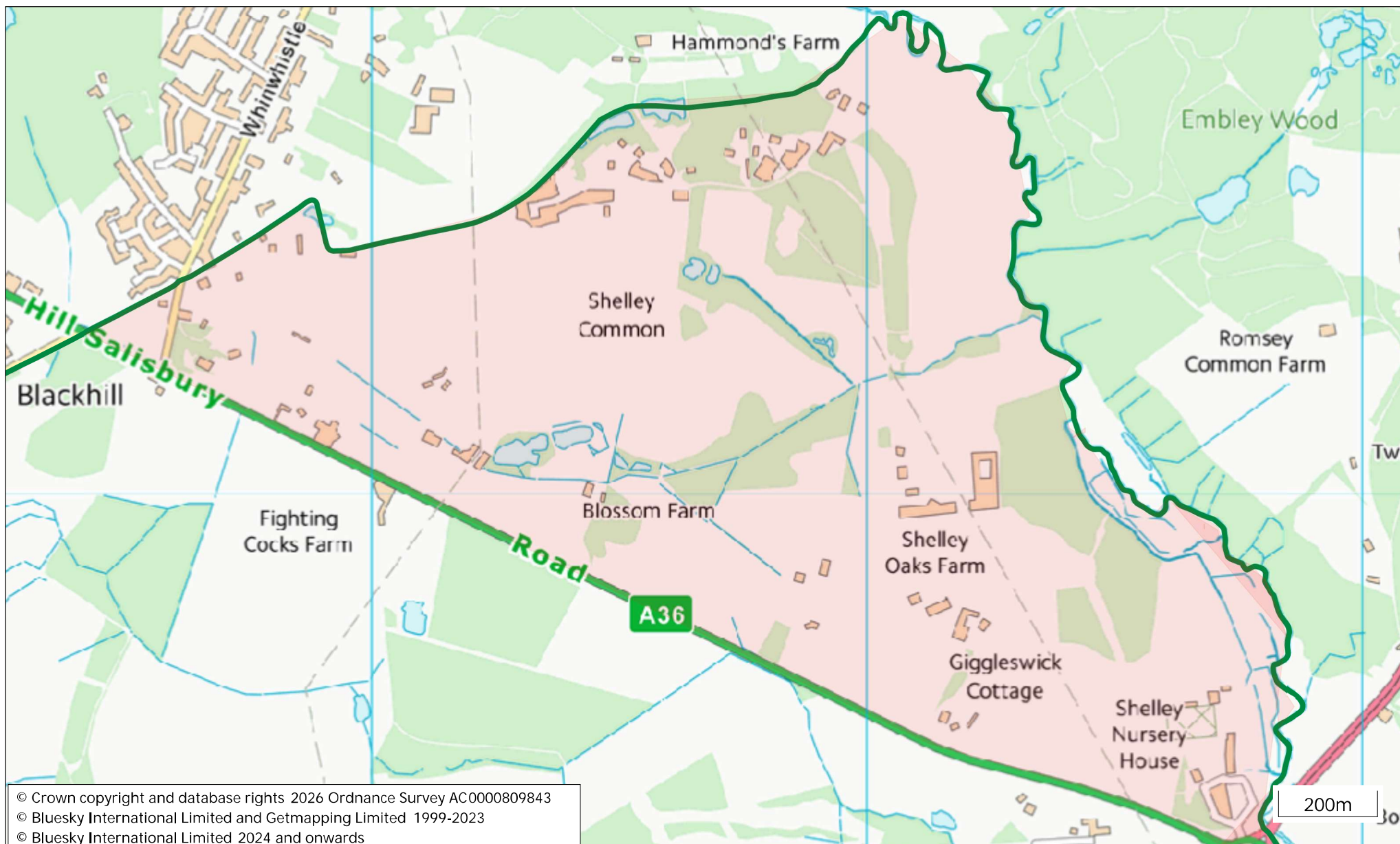
[REDACTED]

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You may hear about local government reorganisation (LGR).
This is a national change and does not affect your council services at this time.
You can find out more at www.newforest.gov.uk/LGR

Annex 1 – List of town and parishes within and outside the New Forest National Park

Town and Parishes entirely within New Forest District for planning purposes where the NSD will apply to all applications	Town & Parishes ‘split’ between New Forest District and New Forest National Park for planning purposes where the NSD will apply to applications submitted outside the Park	Town and Parishes entirely within the New Forest National Park for planning purposes where the NSD will not apply to any applications
Martin	Breamore	Woodgreen
Damerham	Fordingbridge	Godshill
Sandleheath	Hale	Bramshaw
Rockbourne	Hyde	Minstead
Whitsbury	Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley	Beaulieu
	Ringwood	Exbury and Lepe
	Sopley	East Boldre
	Bransgore	Lyndhurst
	New Milton	Brockenhurst
	Hordle	Sway
	Milford on Srea	Burley
	Lymington and Pennington	
	Boldre	
	Fawley	
	Hythe and Dibden	
	Marchwood	
	Totton & Eling	
	Netley Marsh	
	Copythorne	
	Ashurst & Colbury	
	Denny Lodge	



Copythorne Parish Council

www.copythorne.org.uk

NFDC outside of the National Park within Copythorne Parish

Date 26/08/26

Scale 1: 10500