PART 2. BOUNDARY SECTIONS 1 & 2

INTRODUCTION

2.1 The above objections can be most conveniently considered under the following sub-areas:

- land north of Totton, east of the A326/A36(T)
- land west of the A326/A36(T)
- Totton urban area

2.2 In addition, I deal here with an objection by Minstead Manor Commoners since Minstead (although well within the perambulation) is probably closer to these boundary sections than any others.

LAND NORTH OF TOTTON

2.3 J S Bloor Ltd (163), Bovis Homes Ltd (331), the Barker Mill Estate (178), Southern Water Services Ltd (219), and R J Latham (233) are broadly concerned with an area of contention as defined at 331 & 163/2/2/app1. The objectors seek exclusion of the land to the east of the north-south line of the A36T/A326 between the Ower Roundabout in the north and the north-western edge of the built-up area of Totton in the south.

2.4 Test Valley Borough Council (175) has a similar view but only seeks the exclusion of a more limited part of the above area at Calmore Croft – ie, the land between Totton, the A326 and Salisbury Road (A36). Laurel Bank Residential Home (128) is concerned with a still more limited area confined to the area of its own site at Cooks Lane.

OBSJECTIONS BY BOVIS HOMES LTD, J S BLOOR LTD, BARKER MILL ESTATE, AND TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

The case for the objectors

General conceptual matters

2.5 The objectors made submissions about a number of general conceptual matters as listed beneath. These issues are dealt with in the Landscape Assessor’s report at Appendix 1:

- the lack of any significant difference between the NFNP natural beauty test and that applied to the NFHA, which should result in the NFNP boundary being the same or smaller than the NFHA when the ‘back-up grazing’ criterion is removed and the recreation criterion is added to the process, unless there are special factors that are explained and justified;

- the need to confine designation to areas with a truly unified sense of ‘New Forestness’ as opposed to the Agency’s over-inclusive approach, commencing with an area of search which extended beyond both the National Character Area and the Natural Area covering the New Forest;
- over-reliance of the Agency on landscape character areas and landscape types as determinants of natural beauty, and failure to make a landscape value assessment based on the criteria in CD229;

- insufficient consideration by the Agency of the weight accorded to detractors;

- the apparent new emphasis on the ‘historic dispersed pastoral system’ with the implication that this somewhat nebulous factor can of itself constitute natural beauty or materially assist in qualifying land for inclusion in the NFNP despite assurances from the Agency that land cannot qualify only through its possible or potential provision of back-up grazing;

- lack of recognition that there are more effective ways of protecting back-up grazing than necessarily including it in the NFNP;

- the failure of the Agency to make available its landscape consultants’ field survey notes;

- the Agency’s confusion between landscape quality and landscape value.

Site specific matters

Past history of the area of contention

2.6 This area of contention has a complex ‘past history’ of inclusion and non-inclusion within the NFHA since 1991.

2.7 In April 1991 the deposit version of the New Forest (East) Local Plan confined the NFHA to the west of the (then proposed but not yet built) line of the A326/A36(T). However, the LUC report of June 1991 (CD206) recommended that the NFHA should extend east of the road-line as far as the River Blackwater, considering all the land within the area of contention to be within landscape type 5 (ancient forest farmlands).

2.8 In November 1991 the Council published a Proposed Change to the deposited local plan. This extended the boundary of the NFHA eastwards – not as far as proposed by LUC but to the line represented by the River Blackwater to the north and Hillstreet to the east – as indicated at 331 & 163/2/2 replacement p30. The area east of Hillstreet and south of the M27 was largely safeguarded for future reservoir construction.

2.9 The Inspector’s report into objections to the local plan (CD235, part 12.1) had to consider not only the District Council’s proposed eastern boundary of the NFHA at Hillstreet but also an extension east to the Blackwater as proposed by Netley Marsh PC. He concluded that ‘while displaying some of the characteristics of landscape type 5’ the area north of Totton did not do so ‘in sufficient strength or depth to justify its inclusion in the NFHA as part of the wider Forest landscape’. In particular he considered that this area:

- was not of outstanding national importance for natural beauty in its own right;
- would be ecologically severed from the Forest;
- could not be reasonably included on back-up grazing grounds; and
- that the line of the new road would be firm, clear and defensible, remarking that Junction 2 would be properly perceived as the gateway to the NFHA (and in the longer term to the National Park).
2.10 In June 1994 the Council published modifications to the plan. The Inspector’s recommendation to position the boundary along the new road line was not accepted but the Council stopped short of including the land up to Hillstreet within the NFHA partly because the Secretary of State expressed concern that their reasons did not provide convincing justification for overriding the recommendation. Instead, the adopted New Forest (East) Local Plan (December 1995) contained a holding policy that:

‘Land north of Totton…is a protected area within which development will not be permitted which would prejudice consideration of the inclusion of the land within the NFHA’.

2.11 By this time the Council had already commenced consultation on the first District-wide Local Plan. This placed a smaller area east of the A326/A369T within the NFHA – that is, only the approximate triangle of land south of Salisbury Road at Calmore Croft, as indicated at 331 & 162/2/2/p152. Again, objections to the inclusion of this land were taken to a public inquiry. Despite the District Council’s case being supported by evidence given by a Countryside Commission Officer, the Local Plan Inspector’s report issued in 1998 (CD236, paras 5.1.9-17) concluded that there was insufficient justification for rejecting the first Inspector’s conclusions. He was satisfied with the criteria used for defining the boundary and considered that the quality of the landscape south of Salisbury Road was insufficient to justify inclusion. Despite its classification as ancient forest farmland he felt that it had a limited measure of historical and visual continuity with land to the west of the new road.

2.12 After consideration of the Inspector’s report the District Council rejected the Inspector’s recommendation despite the lack of a clear recommendation to do so from their officers but in accordance with the wishes of the Countryside Agency. The adopted Local Plan (1999) therefore included the area south of Salisbury Road within the NFHA. The Secretary of State again expressed concern about the adequacy of reasoning but took no action. Consequently Bovis Homes sought judicial review, resulting in a judgement quashing the Council’s decision on 25th January 2002 (the day after the NFNP designation order was made). Transcripts at 331 & 163/2/2/app9 indicate that the District Council’s reasoning was found to be defective.

2.13 On the issue of the legal adequacy of the Council’s reasoning Mr Justice Ouseley found that the Council had ‘not grappled with the Inspector’s reasoning, showing a true and fair understanding of it and then explaining why the essence of the reasoning is rejected through the reasons for its decision…..It is not clear whether relevant parts of the Inspector’s reasoning were effectively ignored or misunderstood.’ He remarked that the Inspector’s conclusions were ‘expressed with robust conviction, rather than as a result of striking a difficult balance’. He also found that the Council had acted with a degree of bias and had not approached the matter with an open mind but been predetermined in its decision making.

2.14 In view of all this history it is very surprising that none of it is addressed in the boundary study and that the Agency’s officers did not refer this section of the NFNP boundary to the Board for review in the light of the Court’s judgement, especially as the District Council had been strongly reliant on reasoning provided by an officer of the Countryside Commission. Moreover, the considerations now relied upon to justify designation are the same as those found wanting in the judgement.

2.15 In July 2001 the District Council issued the First Deposit Draft of the First Alterations to the current adopted plan (CD223). This recognises that it would be inappropriate to seek to review the NFHA boundaries while the National Park designation procedures are taking place. However, the revised deposit in May 2002 amended the NFHA to delete the land affected by the
High Court decision. The first alterations to the plan also include a new protective policy for the Test Valley (DW-E30A) covering the whole of the area of contention.

2.16 In view of these lengthy and unsuccessful attempts to include land to the north of Totton within the New Forest despite the views of independent arbiters, it is a questionable course of action for the Countryside Agency to revisit this matter for a third time in 10 years.

2.17 The Agency has failed to demonstrate that the area of contention has any particular degree of quality in relation to the statutory criteria, let alone the necessary exceptional quality. Rather, it seems to be that because the land falls within a particular landscape type, therefore it should be designated, even if the natural beauty is less than exceptional and the recreational opportunities less than markedly superior.

Natural beauty

2.18 [Inspector’s note – Bovis Homes, J S Bloor and the Barker Mill Estate all produced separate evidence covering essentially the same area between Totton and the M27. In the interests of brevity I have framed most of the account of these cases around that presented by Bovis, inserting a limited number of additional specific references taken from the other two objectors].

2.19 The whole of the area of contention lies outside the New Forest Character and Natural Areas, falling within the South Hampshire Lowlands Character Area and the South Coast Plain and Hampshire Lowlands Natural Area. Although the area contains a ridge projecting north-east from the New Forest plateau this effectively turns its back on the forest and the views from it are all outward looking.

2.20 The New Forest District Landscape Assessment (CD127) placed most of the area north of Salisbury Road within the ‘Enclosed Valley Sides’ type and the area to the south within the ‘Heath associated small holdings and dwellings’ type. This is a different approach from LUC: in their NFHA study (CD206) the whole area was categorised as ‘Ancient Forest Farmlands’ but neither approach accords with what is apparent on the ground since the area has no strong forest character.

2.21 South of the M27 the area of contention forms two distinct zones to the west and east of Hillstreet. That to the east forms a continuation of the western side of the Test Valley with above average but not outstanding scenic quality. That to the west is an atypical tail transition from the New Forest landscape which is both below average scenic quality and separated from the landscapes of the perambulation by the 3-4km belt of the Copythorne Farmlands.

2.22 The area to the west of Hillstreet slopes gently northwards from Brookes Hill and consists mainly of regular large fields in arable use divided by largely treeless hedges. Wade Hill Drove historically connected the New Forest to the Test Valley but is now severed by the M27 and A326. In the southern part of the area of contention the landscape is only moderately attractive. Its rural nature is undermined by severance from the main forest by the A326 cutting and suburbanisation. Nearer the M27 there are some views towards the forest to the north-west but much is ordinary arable landscape punctuated by main roads and pylons. Towards the east the area is of a higher landscape quality with small enclosed fields and some attractive views towards the Test but the M27 and the lines of pylons intrude.

2.23 There are detractors in the area of contention in the form of the small industrial estate and chicken farm at Clamore Croft; industrial areas and a suburbanised landscape on the northern
edge of Totton; noise from the M27, A36 and A326; the line of pylons; the depot at M27 Junction 2; and development work around Testwood Lakes.

2.24 There is no element of rarity in this landscape and the part west of Hillstreet is more of a transition zone than representative of the ‘heath-associated smallholdings and dwellings’ landscape type. The eastern area is fairly representative of ‘valley sides’.

2.25 There are no ecological designations within this area and previous ecological surveys did not reveal anything of particular merit. Nor does the area have any sense of remoteness, wildness or artistic associations. It is linked by proximity and roads to north Totton and has something of an urban edge character. Any sense of place is either of urbanised countryside or of an enclosed part of the Test Valley. Traffic noise, light pollution and urban-edge effects make this a significantly less tranquil area than areas to the west of the A326/A36(T).

2.26 Turning to the area north of the M27, the main habitat is arable rotation and mixed grassland. There is little woodland although the hedgerows are heavily treed and the surrounding area is well wooded. The ERM classification of this area as ‘enclosed valley side’ fails to describe it adequately since it falls into 3 sub-areas. One (the Test Valley side) is an area of above average quality away from the M27 but below average close to it. A second forms the Blackwater Valley bottom: this is an area of irregular fields of high scenic quality in the east but average to poor in the west near the A36(T). The remainder, like the area to west of Hillstreet south of the motorway, is an atypical tail-end of the New Forest used mainly for arable farming with large fields and relatively little tree cover.

2.27 Referring to commoning considerations, the significance of this area for commoning has been exaggerated. It is important to recall that the weight ascribed to this issue by the Agency (and before that the Countryside Commission) was considered but did not find support at the two previous inquiries concerning the inclusion of the area in the NFHA.

2.28 As far as the land of interest to Bovis is concerned (ie the land south of Salisbury Road) it is not disputed that it had a historical functional relationship with the open forest. The majority of land has rights of common and it must be assumed that these were once exercised. However, even at the time of the LUC work (1991) the area described as ‘Hillstreet’ was assessed to have had only a medium historical use as back-up land during the previous 50 years. LUC relied on work done by Way in 1988. This identified 3 parcels of active back-up land (in an area greater than the present area of contention) and 7 active commoners in the built-up area of Totton.

2.29 In 1991 the land south of Salisbury Road was described as “a mixed area of under-used (mainly) grazing land generally in short-term licenses, on informal arrangements or in quasi-domestic owner-occupier uses”. Of the 9 owners and occupiers of the land ‘over 80%’ were said to be unaware of the forest rights attached to the land. Only one knew of a right being exercised but that had ceased 10 years before.

2.30 The survey was repeated in 1997. This identified two interests whose land was in very small scale back-up use and a further former interest that had ceased 8 years previously.

2.31 The current position is that Bovis has secured the freehold of the land identified by Way as back-up grazing land and it is currently unused as such. Thus, over the 15 year period that evidence has been available to those considering the matter, the area of land used for back-up grazing south of Salisbury Road has been insignificant and has now ceased.
2.32 Turning to the land of interest to the Barker Mill Estate and J S Bloor (between the A326, Salisbury Road, Hillstreet and the M27) none of this land has rights of common. Most of the land is let on a Farm Business Tenancy and used to graze stock, while one field adjoining Hillstreet is let on a grazing agreement and used as pony paddocks. Although the Way report identifies part of the larger area as being in use for back-up grazing in 1999, the tenant confirms that this has not the case during the time he has occupied it (1996-2002).

2.33 Throughout the 1990s the NFHA has represented a defined area specifically drawn up to secure an adequate supply of back-up land. It is for the Agency to demonstrate that the NFHA is no longer able to secure this supply and that it cannot be achieved without the inclusion of this large area of contention north of Totton within the NFNP. Yet there is no evidence of an increased need since LUC considered the matter. The number of active commoners in the area has changed little between 1988 and 2000. In the parishes of Totton & Eling and Netley Marsh it has decreased from 19 to 18 between 1988 and 2000, while further west in Copythorne parish it has increased from 16 to 18.

2.34 The Way report’s Map 1 (CD204) is inaccurate concerning back-up grazing south of the M27 (see information above) and also incorrectly shows BUG on a triangle of land to the north of the M27 which is in arable use. The report’s assessment of the area of contention north of Totton as ‘highly suitable’ as an area of potential back-up grazing (CD 205) is not supported by any clear justification. This area is about 5 km from the ‘good access to open forest at Cadnum’ identified by Way. Moreover, a 1987 report to the New Forest District Council considered the busy A326 to be a barrier limiting the functional area definable as being part of the New Forest.

*Opportunities for open-air recreation*

2.35 As indicated in the District-wide Landscape Character Assessment (CD127A), the land in the area of contention is ‘mostly private land – difficult public access’. There are no open access areas and recreational opportunities are limited to 3 discontinuous bridleways serving only localised functions and having very low usage. The attraction of Wade Hill Drove is diminished by its overgrown nature in places, its proximity to the main roads and the fact that it crosses the M27 by footbridge and passes under the A326 in a concrete tunnel. A recent survey of usage by walkers found almost no use (331/1/3 app8).

2.36 The Agency’s claim that there are ‘clear recreational grounds for inclusion’ does not chime with a situation where nothing ‘markedly superior’ is identified or remotely feasible.

*Human rights issues*

2.37 The inquiry is grappling with matters that engage both Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Designation constitutes a control of property needing to be justified and a determination of rights within Article 6.

2.38 Whereas a development plan allocation does not constitute a determination of a landowner’s rights, National Park designation causes immediate loss of certain GPDO rights. Ouseley J accepted that Article 6 might therefore apply (see his summary of *Oerlemans v Netherlands* (1991) 15 EHR 56 at 331 & 163/2/2 app9 p129 at paras 273-3 and p133A at para 301). It may be that the residual remedy of judicial review would be sufficient to ensure compliance with Article 6. However, the fact that these matters are engaged underscores the point that the Agency needs to be able to show clearly why land should be designated with proper application of the relevant criteria.
The response for the Agency

2.39 The Agency’s response to the general conceptual issues is dealt with in the Landscape Assessor’s report.

Natural beauty

2.40 This area of contention has been included in the NFNP on strong natural beauty grounds. Firstly, there are a number of unifying factors that make it part of the New Forest. It is geologically and topographically part of the raised New Forest plateau and surrounds, forming the eastern edge of the plateau together with the slope down to the River Blackwater. It is not significant that the area is not within the nationally drawn New Forest Character and Natural Areas since these are indicative national boundaries drawn through transition zones. This area is part of the Copythorne Forest Farmlands landscape character area stretching from the perambulation north-eastwards to include all the land north of Totton and comprising ‘heath associated smallholdings and dwellings’ and ‘enclosed valley sides’ landscape types.

2.41 It is not agreed that the ‘enclosed valley sides’ are not a New Forest landscape type. LUC classified them as part of the ‘ancient forest farmlands’ and although they were renamed in the District Landscape Character Assessment to be consistent with the Test Valley Borough Character Assessment much of the area of contention accords with the description of ancient forest farmlands.

2.42 Secondly, the character, quality and value of the area of contention, together with the other key components of natural beauty – historical, ecological and cultural (ie commoning) considerations – were examined through the process described in the boundary study (CD126) and the subsequent consultation stages (CD103, 104 and 107). The main reasons for including this area were as follows.

2.43 In this area the line of Hillstreet marks a clear topographic edge to the extent of the New Forest plateau. This edge is very visible from the Test Valley and the M27 as one approaches from the east and creates a definite impression of entering the New Forest, reinforced by views of prominent wooded skylines to the north and south. It also provides very fine outward views over the Test Valley giving a strong sense of being on the edge of the Forest. This ridge and the views associated with it create both a gateway to the forest and a rare opportunity to appreciate the New Forest at a strategic level in its wider landscape context.

2.44 In general the landscape within the contention area is larger scale and more open north of the A36 and west of Hillstreet and smaller scale and more enclosed in the south and east. However, its quality (condition and intactness) is everywhere good. Ancient forest features (such as fine mature hedgerow oaks, strong hedgerows and intact field patterns, small areas of woodland and remnant heathland and dense riparian woodlands) occur throughout.

2.45 In the northern part there are open unspoiled northerly views over the Blackwater Valley seen across fields of improved and unimproved pasture. Hillstreet, as it descends to Wade Bridge, has a winding leafy and sunken character reflecting its former role as part of the drove road connecting the Forest to summer grazing in the Test Valley.

2.46 To the east, beyond Hillstreet, the small-scale field patterns on the east-facing slopes above the valley are very intact and frame views over the floodplain and lakes. Hillstreet itself is a typical linear Forest settlement with traditional dwellings.
2.47 To the south of the A36 the ‘heath associated smallholdings and dwellings’ landscape type is characterised by smaller fields, often of unimproved pasture, and there is linear roadside settlement. While there are local detractors such as Calmore Croft Farm, their impact is contained because the landscape is very well-treed and enclosed.

2.48 While acknowledging the influence of the M27 (and the adjacent transmission lines) and the A326 as detractors, these also have a localised impact since both roads are in cutting in this boundary section and do not intrude unduly into views or one’s experience of the landscape.

2.49 Overall, the landscape within the area is of good quality and has a number of important and valued features. Its topography and views are of strategic benefit to the New Forest National Park and it retains a wealth of ancient features within a landscape framework which is still largely intact. Despite the presence of localised detractors there is a strong sense of being in the Forest. These are the primary natural beauty reasons for inclusion of this area. However, other factors support inclusion on the natural beauty grounds – conservation interests and the area’s role as part of the historic dispersed pastoral system.

2.50 In terms of conservation interests, the land to the east of Hillstreet has been recognised as having features of national landscape, wildlife and historic interest through its inclusion in the Test Valley ESA. Within this area the Testwood Lakes area is currently managed for nature conservation and appreciation and for quiet recreation such as walking and angling.

2.51 In terms of commoning, the area of contention is an especially valuable part of the commoning system. Much of the land is ancient enclosure, probably dating from around 1670 and has rights of common attached. Before the gridding the area was within the range of summer and winter straying for stock making their way down to the Blackwater and Test. There is a very active commoning economy in this part of the Forest with high numbers of commoners and stock and a shortage of affordable grazing due in part to development pressure and recreational horse keeping. According to the Way report (CD205) a considerable amount of land within the area of contention is in use as present or past back-up grazing and the area west and south of the Blackwater is generally potentially ‘highly suitable’. This is because of the amount of land in use for grazing and for hay production, the area’s good access to the open forest at Cadnam, and the existence of relatively lower cost housing in a locality that is popular with commoners.

2.52 The tenant quoted by Barker Mill Estate (Mr Maton) may not use his rented land at Hillstreet as back-up grazing because it is too far away from his farm at Minstead. However, he is a commoner and by some definitions it could be said that his tenancy and use of this land contributes to maintenance of the commoning economy.

Opportunities for open-air recreation

2.53 There are clear recreational grounds for including the area of contention in the NFNP. Its views, wealth of ancient features, and generally high landscape quality offer scope for understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Forest, especially its relationship to the adjoining landscape of the Test Valley and the role of commoning in maintaining New Forest landscape character. Its position as a gateway for visitors entering the area from the east means that it could have a particular role in starting to introduce an understanding and appreciation of the New Forest landscape.

2.54 There is a number of rights of way, notably bridleways along Wade Hill Drove (which links to the Test Way), Green Lane and the lane south of Calmore Croft Farm and the footpath at
Testwood Lakes. In addition there is permissive access to the lakes for quiet recreation and for
nature study and interpretation. This is a good network of access opportunities providing for a
range of different recreational activities, all of which will benefit the Park.

2.55 While the A326 does constrain access links to the rest of the New Forest, such links do
survive, notably at Calmore Croft where a subway links the bridleway to an extensive network of
footpaths and quiet lanes to the west. Inclusion of the area of contention in the NFNPs offers
particular recreational benefits for the nearby urban population of Totton which has easy access
to this part of the park.

Boundary setting issues (Table 2 of CD104)

2.56 Criterion 2(d) indicates that boundaries should include land and settlements which
contribute to the rural economy and community life of the Park and its special qualities and
purposes. This applies because of the area’s importance for commoning.

2.57 Criterion 2(e) seeks easily identifiable boundaries; in this case the Blackwater is an easily
distinguishable boundary and makes sense in landscape terms.

2.58 Criterion 2(i) states that mineral extraction sites may be included where they will be
restored to a use and quality contributing to Park purposes. This is the case with Testwood
Lakes.

OBJECTION BY SOUTHERN WATER

Case for the objector

2.59 The company owns about 57ha of land in the Test and Blackwater Valleys east of
Hillstreet. This land comprises Little Testwood Lake, Testwood Lake and land beyond that as
far as the M27 including Meadow Lake.

2.60 All the general conceptual points made about the wider area of contention on behalf of
Bovis Homes Ltd, J S Bloor and the Barker Mill Estate are fully endorsed. Clearly, if those
objections succeed, Southern Water’s land will be excluded from the NFNPs. However, the site-
specific case for excluding the company’s land is even more compelling.

Natural beauty

2.61 Before the designation order the company’s land has never been linked with the New
Forest. Although the LUC report recommended that the NFHA should extend to the Blackwater,
Hillstreet was the limit of the NFHA in the local plan deposited shortly afterwards. Although an
objector to the plan suggested that it should extend to the Blackwater the Inspector rejected that
proposal when recommending that the line be cut back to the A326/A36(T).

2.62 The Testwood Lakes complex has been developed as a regionally significant public
supply reservoir, storing water abstracted from the River Test before its treatment at the
neighbouring Testwood Water Supply Works and onward supply to 200,000 people in the
Southampton area.

2.63 At the time of the LUC report (which classified the site as part of the ‘ancient forest
farmland’ landscape type) none of the current development had taken place. The majority of
Southern Water’s land was improved valley floor pasture of comparatively little interest (see 219/1/2 apps 7&8). Since then the landscape has been extensively remodelled in accordance with planning permissions to extract gravel and construct 3 reservoirs and a nature conservation area, subject to a management plan.

2.64 Gravel extraction has been completed and the first stage of reservoir development (Little Testwood Lake and a pumping station) has been implemented. This lake has a two-day storage capacity. The second stage was to have been the construction of a larger reservoir (Testwood Lake) with 5m high embankments, providing a seven-day capacity. This development currently stands postponed on financial and need grounds although the relevant planning permission does not expire until 2004. Instead, a smaller natural filling lake has been created, unconnected with the supply works but providing benefits for wildlife. Extensive re-contouring of ground levels has taken place north of Testwood Lake including a large raised mound, a conservation mere and the creation of Meadow Lake. In addition, an interpretation centre has been built.

2.65 This new landscape is of higher quality as a useable landscape than that which previously existed (which was a broken landscape forming part of the Test Valley) but it is now a man-made landscape forming an atypical part of the valley.

2.66 The management plan (219/0/1) ensures that the site has been carefully landscaped to integrate the artificial landform as sensitively as possible into its setting, maintaining or creating a considerable variety of landscape elements and habitat types and ‘creating an exciting landscape in aesthetic and amenity terms’. However, it will not transform it into one of the most beautiful landscapes in the UK.

2.67 Consequently, this area does not meet the natural beauty criterion. It has none of the necessary ‘striking qualities’, ‘remoteness’ or ‘extensive areas of semi-natural vegetation’ considered to be of paramount importance by the Edwards Committee. It also has no New Forest characteristics since it is within the Test Valley and is dominated by artificial landforms (which can be expected to increase when the second reservoir is built). The ridge to the west of the site has some New Forest characteristics but these have been eroded by the new major roads and their grade-separated intersections.

2.68 The site has no existing international, national or local landscape quality or ecological designations. Part is within the Test Valley ESA but that designation predated the planning permissions for the site and there is nothing to suggest that this small part of the overall ESA should be regarded as part of the New Forest. In particular, there is no evidence to support the Agency’s view that the Testwood Lakes area is perceived culturally to be part of the Forest. If the Large Bounds ever stretched to the Blackwater that was for a limited period some 700 years ago.

2.69 There is no history of the site being used for back-up grazing, at least during the time that Southern Water have been owners (15 years) and it has never been suggested that it should be an objective of the management plan to create such grazing. Although the plan provides for grazing licences to be let across certain parts of the site this will only make available summer grazing at a time when commoning stock would be depastured on the Forest. Specifically, the Blackwater floodplain and land around the conservation mere will accommodate about 4 animals for 3 months during the summer; the slope near Colbury House and land west of Alder Gully may provide for a longer summer grazing season but only for about 4 animals; the slope to the west of Meadow Lake could accommodate about 5 animals, again during the summer; and the new drier raised land to the north and west of Testwood Lake could also accommodate about 5 animals during the summer season.
Opportunities for open-air recreation

2.70 The recreational experience here will be similar to that enjoyed on well-restored gravel lakes and reservoirs elsewhere in the country but will be affected by detractors such as the M27, the pylons and the nearby industrial estate which give the site an urban-edge character. The management plan aims to provide for a range of activities that do not bring conflict between recreation and nature conservation but this has to be done in a way that does not prejudice the primary requirement to provide for a safe and secure water supply. This means that its capacity to accommodate public recreation is limited and the scale and variety of recreational activities may have to be restricted if operational requirements dictate this.

2.71 The existing public footpath across the site will be supplemented by another leading from Hillstreet to the Blackwater, while other permissive paths will operate around the two lakes. Little Testwood Lake is stocked as a coarse fishery (although it has not been particularly popular so far) while Testwood Lake will be used for water sports (sailing and canoeing) during the winter months.

2.72 The northern part of the site will be devoted to nature conservation, centred on the interpretation centre, and there will only be warden-controlled access to the nature conservation area and bird hide within access zone 1 at the northern end of the site. The main intention of the interpretation facilities is to provide an identity for the site as well as an educational and recreation resource for local people. This local basis is reflected in the scheme’s limited parking provision (for about 89 cars and 2 coaches) but enhanced pedestrian access. The interpretation strategy devised by Southern Water and the Hampshire Wildlife Trust is to provide information about the operational role of the site as part of the water cycle, its history, and its existing nature conservation interest and relationship, eg to the lower Test Valley. It has never been suggested that there should be interpretation of the site in a New Forest context and it could not serve as an appropriate ‘gateway’ to the Forest since there is no other way to reach it by road except via an industrial estate. The site’s character, and the recreation opportunities offered here (though excellent in themselves) are not such as to fulfil the statutory purpose of ‘promoting....the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities’ of the New Forest. In any case, a wider role of this kind would be inconsistent with the site’s perceived relatively low-profile local function and could attract visitor numbers beyond the limited recreational carrying capacity of the site.

Other matters

2.73 The Agency’s reluctance to accept that the site is committed within the terms of boundary-setting criterion 2(i) is hard to understand. The land was previously allocated for reservoir development in previous development plans but now that planning permissions have been granted and (except for the embanked reservoir at Testwood Lake) executed there cannot be any doubt about this issue.

2.74 If inclusion in the NFNP is seen by the Agency as a means of introducing stronger planning controls that could militate against the future realisation of the second reservoir, so jeopardising the site’s long-recognised primary function. This would be a matter of grave concern. It would not be desirable (let alone ‘especially desirable’) in the public interest for this to occur. In addition, designation would affect the company’s rights under the GPDO (219/1/5).

2.75 Overall, therefore, designation of the area would create the risk that Southern Water could be prevented from making any use of the site for water supply purposes beyond the present
extent. This would be a serious handicap, given the absence of alternative reservoir sites in the area.

**The response for the Agency**

*Natural beauty*

2.76 The western part of this site lies on the slopes of the New Forest ridge extending to Hillstreet while the eastern part is on the floodplain of the Blackwater. The latter is part of the drainage system and geomorphology of the New Forest and has a different character from the Test, being a typical base-poor flashy forest river, rather than base-rich like its larger and steadier neighbour. There is no sensible intermediate boundary which would include only land forming part of the ridge. However, the Blackwater forms a pragmatic, historic, robust and easily defined boundary to the New Forest in this area, especially as the re-engineered areas of the site are of such high landscape standard, being spacious and tranquil and possessing the restful quality introduced by areas of water. Taken as part of the wider ‘extensive tract’ north of Totton the objection site meets the natural beauty criterion, although it is accepted that it would not do so in isolation.

2.77 The end of the ridge lies within the objection area and is very visible from the Test Valley and the M27 on the approach from the east, creating a definite impression of entering the New Forest, reinforced by prominent wooded skylines to the north and south. This creates ‘both a gateway to the New Forest and a rare opportunity to appreciate the New Forest at a strategic level in its wider landscape context’. It also provides fine outward views over the Test Valley.

2.78 The restoration scheme for the lakes is producing an attractive sequence of lakes and wetlands carefully integrated with the floodplain and the rising ground of the ridge. The site will be well enclosed with belts of native woodland, tree and hedgerow planting augmenting and extending the existing attractive small-scale field patterns on the slopes. The latter are very intact and frame views over the river. The quality of this landscape will be good, albeit immature, and is likely to develop a wealth of nature conservation interest across the whole of the site, not just within the ESA. The landscape masterplan is of a high standard and won an institute award in 1994. The landscape will not be urban fringe in character. Although the power lines and industrial estate are incongruous features their impact is localised and they are outweighed by the merits of the scheme in which views to the M27 and the large warehouse at Testwood House will be completely masked (and motorway noise diminished) by woodland planting. The area will become a good example of the ‘enclosed valley side’ landscape type with the scheme enhancing the sense of enclosure and the riparian character of the landscape. Even if the bunded reservoir were to be built the landscape proposals would mitigate its impact so that it need not be an incongruous feature and there would probably be scope for the objection area to meet the statutory criteria.

2.79 The area’s contribution to the historic dispersed pastoral system strongly supports its inclusion on natural beauty grounds. All the fields between Hillstreet and the Blackwater have forest rights and the area to the Blackwater was formerly within the limits of winter straying. There is an active commoning economy in this area and a shortage of affordable grazing due to development pressures and recreational horse keeping. Since maintenance of the site will require it to be grazed it is reasonable to suppose that commoners will be able to rent this land, especially as the Hampshire Wildlife Trust have shown willingness to offer land elsewhere on a preferential basis.
2.80 The Testwood Lakes site has yielded some significant Bronze Age archaeological evidence which, if displayed at the interpretation centre, may contribute to people’s understanding and appreciation of the impact of the formative Bronze Age clearances on the open forest and associated river valleys.

*Opportunities for open-air recreation*

2.81 In terms of the recreational criterion, the objection site offers a rare opportunity for people to enjoy quiet recreational pursuits such as walking, boating, fishing and bird watching within attractive wetland scenery in a part of the Test floodplain that is otherwise relatively inaccessible. The new interpretation centre with its wardening and bird-watching facilities will provide an excellent opportunity to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the New Forest, especially its relationship to the small-scale landscapes that are so characteristic of the forest edge and form part of the historic dispersed pastoral system. Of particular importance, the enhanced network of excellent footpaths on the site provides good access from the nearby urban area of Totton.

2.82 The management plan makes it clear that there are limits to the recreational use of the site but the provision is generous, imaginative and diverse and will provide a set of high quality uses that contribute to National Park purposes. The formal recreational uses are directed at local people (eg leases to local clubs), as are the informal activities but there is no effective limit placed on the latter.

**OBJECTION BY LAUREL BANK CARE HOME**

*The case for the objector*

2.83 Laurel Bank Care Home (128) is sited at the junction of Salisbury Road and Cooks Lane, just outside the defined edge of the built-up area up area of Totton as defined in the local plan and just inside the designation order. The company seeks a minor redrawing of the NFNP boundary around the site on grounds that it considers itself to be part of the community of Totton, the former home of most of its 35 residents, the current home of most residents’ families and the home’s 26 staff, and the source of most of its supply services.

2.84 The area around the home does not resemble the image of a National Park, considering the proximity of Totton, the South Hampshire Industrial Park, the businesses at Testwood House and the scrubby field on the other side of Salisbury Road. Concern is expressed that inclusion in the NFNP could bring a more restrictive approach to any future developments of the business that may require planning permission.

*The response for the Agency*

2.85 Laurel Bank is surrounded on 3 sides by open countryside of the ‘heath associated smallholdings and dwellings’ landscape type characterised by a strong sense of enclosure, small irregular pastures, winding leafy lanes and distinctive linear settlements. Varying the boundary in response to one-off objections such as this would result in a piecemeal, inconsistent and convoluted boundary which would not be robust or easily identifiable on the ground.
AREAS TO THE WEST OF THE A326/A36T

The cases for the objectors

2.86  **K Buxton** (48) suggests that the land corridor occupied by the M27 be excluded from the National Park together with the area of Paultons Park. In his view the inclusion of a motorway and a theme park could set undesirable precedents for development in National Parks elsewhere.

2.87  **R J Spurr** (367) feels that large areas of the NFHA are unworthy of National Park status because of uncontrolled and unsightly commercialisation of buildings. He makes specific reference to Ower and Cadnam in this respect. In his view such areas should be excluded from the National Park unless they can be brought up to the necessary standards.

The response for the Agency

2.88 Concerning the M27 and Paultons Park, these features are located well inside the boundary within a much broader sweep of land meeting the designation criteria and retaining a strong New Forest character. There are long distance views across the forest from the motorway and it acts as a gateway to the Forest. As for fear of precedents, national policy (including the ‘Silkin test’ contained in legislation) and EU regulations require that any other development proposals would be rigorously examined and only permitted in exceptional circumstances.

TOTTON URBAN AREA

The cases for the objectors

2.89  **Cllr Edith Randall** (417) is a county and town councillor. In her view, and that of the Town Council, Totton should have the protection of inclusion in the NFNP in order to prevent overdevelopment and possible eventual amalgamation with Southampton.

2.90  Totton and Eling are Saxon settlements with more ancient origins than some of the largely Victorian settlements already included in the Order and are less urbanised than Ringwood and Lymington. A number of features in and around the town make it worthy of inclusion – Eling Great Marsh, Lower Test Marshes SSSI and Nature Reserve, Testwood Lakes, Loperwood, Eling Quay and Tide Mill, Hanger Farm and Barn, and listed buildings in the town centre and at Hounsdown.

2.91  **D & G Wallis** (59) support the Order but are disappointed that the Lower Test Marshes have been excluded and ask for this to be reconsidered.

The response for the Agency

2.92  Totton is an urban and industrial area which mainly serves as a dormitory town for Southampton. It is dominated by extensive suburban development of no special townscape quality. The A326 severs it from the New Forest and it does not contribute to its character and rural economy or serve any material gateway function. It does not meet the designation criteria.
THE MANOR LANDS OF MINSTEAD

The case for the objectors

2.93 Minstead Manor Commoners (179) are opposed to the NFNP in principle and seek, in particular, the exclusion from the NFNP of Minstead Manor Estate as indicated on the map at 179/1/2. The manor commoners are in a unique position founded upon the ownership record set out in the Domesday Book which demonstrates that the Manor was never annexed as part of the New Forest. Thus the Minstead commoners enjoy rights over both the Forest and the Manor but those rights are outside the jurisdiction of the Court of Verderers.

2.94 Minstead is not a gem in the so-called Crown Jewels of the New Forest. Apart from its medieval church and oddly-named pub there is little to distinguish it from any other picturesque English village. It is pretty and has a certain number of bijoux residences but some areas have suffered from unwelcome modernisation. The only conceivable area of landscape value is between Robins Bush Corner and Stoney Cross, but this is not remarkable. The remainder is what one would expect in many villages or rural landscapes and does not meet the necessary standard of outstanding natural beauty. While much of the New Forest may meet the statutory criterion the manor lands are separated from it by a number of buffers, eg the major trunk road of the A31, the nondescript lands south of Mill Lane and the eastern side up to the A337 between Lyndhurst and Cadnam. Apart from the ‘wastes’ and the active commoning farms the Manor lands are mainly a mixture of pony paddocks, liversies, stables and shelters.

2.95 Tourism in Minstead has reached a satisfactory level and contributes to local income but any increase will not be generally welcomed. Inclusion of the Manor Lands would not contribute to the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the NFNP. Indeed it has always stood apart from the Forest and intends to retain its anomalous position. It has a certain distinctive character but that is derived from its cultural and historic relationship as a pocket of independence, a position that the commoners are determined to preserve.

The response for the Agency

2.96 Minstead lies within the perambulation. The landscape types within the Manor Lands ('ancient forest farmlands, ancient and ornamental woodland, and historic parkland') are types which occur widely throughout the area of the New Forest, form part of its characteristic mosaic of landscapes, and impart a sense of being ‘in the Forest’. The landscape quality of this area is generally high and in good condition and there are no atypical or incongruous features. It is archetypal ‘New Forest’ landscape and not ‘ordinary countryside’. As the commoners acknowledge it is surrounded by land meeting the natural beauty criterion and thus forms an integral part of an ‘extensive tract of country’ meeting the definition.

2.97 The area is attractive to visitors. Travellers along the minor roads through the area would experience a sense of being in the New Forest and it would make no sense in terms of public enjoyment and recreation to leave Minstead out of the NFNP. The Sandford principle incorporated in S62 of the Environment Act 1995 would ensure that – if the two aims came into conflict – priority would always be given to conservation rather than promoting opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding.

2.98 The legal status of the Manor Lands would not be affected by the establishment of the NFNP.
LANDSCAPE ASSESSOR’S CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS ON NATURAL BEAUTY

Land north of Totton, east of the A326/A36

2.99 Even before construction of the A326 Totton Bypass the 1st Local Plan Inspector concluded that the area of contention did not display Forest-like characteristics in sufficient strength or depth to justify inclusion in the NFHA, either as part of the wider Forest landscape or on the basis of outstanding natural beauty in its own right. This approach has endured through subsequent decisions about the NFHA made by the 2nd Local Plan Inspector and the High Court.

2.100 Since the first Local Plan Inquiry in 1992 the bypass has been built and the Testwood Lakes area has been developed on the Test/Blackwater floodplain and the lower Hillstreet slopes. Another new consideration in the intervening period has been the publication of the Countryside Character Area maps (CD209) which draw an indicative boundary between the New Forest and the South Hampshire Lowlands following the line of the A326/A36 via Ower.

2.101 New Forest landscape character is moving into a zone of transition in this area. In defining the edge of the New Forest National Park it is important to establish an unequivocal and robust boundary that answers without question the natural beauty test, all the more so in an area with a highly visible and heavily used road network. Even allowing for the indicative nature of the Character Area maps and the inevitable difficulty of considering transition zones, the claims of the area of contention for inclusion in the NFNP against the natural beauty test have not increased. The severance effect is now strongly experienced, especially north of Salisbury Road. For instance, views northwards from the A326/A36 junction near Loperwood Lane; eastwards from the A36 between Loperwood and Ower Roundabout; and westwards from the A36(T) between the same two points are of a generally flat pastoral landscape criss-crossed by major roads bearing heavy traffic. In addition the Enclosed Valley Sides landscape character type does not display adequate connectivity to the landscapes of the New Forest.

2.102 In considering the ‘gateway’ issue, I am not convinced by the Agency’s claim that the area around J2 of the M27 presents a strong sense of arrival at the commencement of the New Forest. A westbound traveller along the elevated section of the motorway across the Test Valley would notice the upcoming slopes, especially to the south, but before entering the cutting after Ower there are few real clues of arrival at the New Forest, except to the professional eye. I contend that for the majority there would be little to uplift the spirit and the landscape would appear little different from the small fields and woods on the other side of the Test near Rownhams.

2.103 The unifying factor of topography in this area is not reason enough to include all areas of that landform which is anyway very much on the edge of the topographic unit and where other detracting factors are strongly affecting landscape quality.

2.104 Consideration of the existing powerful landscape detractors in this area and their impact on landscape quality and hence the effect on the area generally meeting the natural beauty criterion, has not I believe been given due weight by the Agency.

2.105 Referring briefly to the area’s contribution to the historic dispersed pastoral system, the area as a whole clearly contributes to the commoning economy in that there is land with common
rights and land used by commoners for back-up grazing. However, these factors cannot elevate the quality of the landscape in natural beauty terms or overcome the pervading influence of the powerful landscape detractors present here.

2.106 Consequently I conclude that although parts of this area do display New Forest characteristics they are not present consistently enough. Where they are present, they are often not of sufficient standard to warrant National Park status. The impact of detractors in this area is considerable to the extent that even in places where New Forest characteristics do exist they are often compromised by incongruous elements, thereby affecting landscape intactness, resulting in the reduction of landscape quality to a level below that necessary for designation.

2.107 For the purpose of description of boundary sections 1 and 2, the area is divided into 5 smaller parcels of land radiating out of Junction 2 of the M27 which are considered individually and then looked at together to arrive at a conclusion on the recommended revised boundary line.

2.108 I start with area 1 around Wade Hill Farm, north east of J2 M27 as far as the River Blackwater. Throughout this area I find that New Forest characteristics, such as mature hedgerow oaks and small scale fields are present to a certain extent, but none the less the area is heavily affected by the motorway corridor and pylon routes both visually and audibly. Even though there are some views possible towards the higher ground and wooded skyline to the west the overall orientation of this area is to the north and east, ie towards the Test Valley and river complex. On the ground I find that the River Blackwater does not constitute an easily recognised and robust boundary for the NFNP being a relatively minor watercourse which is low lying, and hidden by riparian vegetation in an area which contains several strong artificial features in the landscape.

2.109 Area 2 is the land south east of J2 M27 including Brooke’s Hill, Hill Street and Testwood Lakes up to Salisbury Road. The Hillstreet ridge forms an extremity of the New Forest plateau and has some features associated with ancient forest farmland such as small pastoral fields and the linear settlement of Hillstreet. This area displays little overall connectivity to the New Forest either physically or perceptually, except in the settlement form of Hill Street itself, the landform west of Hill Street and the field pattern on the east facing slopes between Testwood Lakes and Hill Street. The landcover and field pattern is generally fragmented and therefore the landscape is not intact, especially around Brooke’s Hill. Testwood Lakes is an artificial, albeit well designed landscape which has replaced the original pastoral format and now has little to really relate it to the landscapes of the New Forest. Functionally the Testwood Lakes area is primarily a partially complete water supply and storage utility site, admittedly with considerable recreation potential, but in an urban fringe landscape context. Due to the higher ground and road cutting in the west of this area the motorway impact is reduced visually to a certain extent, but still very evident audibly particularly at Brooke’s Hill, as is the visual impact of the pylon network. However there are some good quality views north and west into the New Forest.

2.110 Area 3 is south of Salisbury Road to the edge of Totton, east of A326. The area from Crofts Farm to Sharves Hill, but not including the industrial area at Calmore Croft Farm, displays more adequately than any other in this boundary section, both clear landscape character connectivity to the New Forest and reasonable landscape quality which moves towards satisfying the natural beauty criterion. However this area is physically severed from the proposed NFNP by the busy dualled A326 and there are urban edge characteristics and influences evident on the southern edge towards Totton.

2.111 Areas 4 and 5 lie north west and south west of J2 M27 and extend across to the A36 containing Golden Gutter and Wade Park Farm. These are similar in that they are both poorly
differentiated in landscape character terms and completely encircled by the motorway, trunk and A road network, experiencing the attendant intrusion that this brings. Even though there is factual landuse evidence of their connection to the New Forest through commoning use, visually the landscape quality here is poor with little possibility of meeting the natural beauty criterion.

2.112 Areas 1-5 as described above all fail to meet the natural beauty criterion. I therefore recommend that the boundary should follow the A36 from the Ower roundabout, across the M27 meeting the A326 at the Salisbury Road junction, continuing down the A326 to Loperwood Road to join up with the NFNP boundary section 2, following that without any amendment.

**Land west of the A326/A36(T)**

2.113 With regard to the objection concerning Paultons Park site and the M27 corridor I consider that this area is well within the high quality New Forest landscapes west of the A326. The theme park itself is well screened by boundary vegetation and internal plantings typically found within the New Forest. Also, I find that the majority of the motorway corridor west of Junction 2 is in cutting, which reduces the visual and audible impact and where it is not, interesting glimpses of the New Forest are available. I therefore consider that the area of concern is well contained and within an extensive tract of countryside that meets the natural beauty criterion and see no reason for it to be excluded.

**Totton Urban Area**

2.114 While appreciating the considerable historic legacy of the urban core of Totton and its relationship with several areas of interest close-by, I do not find that the town has anything to do with the natural beauty of the NFNP. Totton has expanded massively since the middle of the last century with extensive suburban areas of post war and more recent housing together with industrial sites at the waterside and Calmore. The urban area of Totton does not meet the natural beauty criterion and is not part of an extensive tract of countryside that does meet the criterion. I therefore conclude that Totton does not qualify to be included in the NFNP on natural beauty grounds.

**Manor Lands of Minstead**

2.115 The Manor Lands enjoy a unique legal status in relation to other land within the perambulation. I find that the typical landscape types as assessed by the Agency are formed by local farmlands, woodlands and parklands which are similar to those found throughout the New Forest and integral to the landscape mosaic. The area contains many characteristic features such as small woods and fields contrasted by larger landscape features such as Manor Park and Manor Wood with some tranquil and hidden small valleys with a typical dispersed settlement pattern of Minstead village which contain many vernacular and often historic buildings. I conclude that the Manor Lands of Minstead are situated within the heartland of the characteristic landscapes of the New Forest which are intact and in good condition displaying high landscape quality. I have no hesitation in endorsing the inclusion of this area within the NFNP.

**INSPECTOR’S OVERALL CONCLUSIONS ON THE TWO DESIGNATION CRITERIA**

**Natural beauty**

2.116 I agree with the Landscape Assessor’s conclusions on natural beauty.
Opportunities for open-air recreation

North of Totton

2.117 The landscape quality of this transitional area (crossed by major roads and pylon routes) is not high enough to offer scope for a markedly superior recreational experience derived from the ‘special qualities’ of the area. In any case, existing open-air recreation opportunities are few. Wade Hill Drove crosses two major roads and degraded countryside between Loperwood Lane and the M27 and has no attraction as a footpath with any sense of tranquility until one reaches Wade Hill Farm, near the boundary of the Designation Order. More attractive options for longer walks are available nearby to the south-west in more Forest-like areas or to the north east in the Test Valley. This conclusion is supported by the survey material showing low usage of Wade Hill Drove and by the poor state of the path underfoot during any period of wet weather. The footpath near Calmore Croft has something of an urban fringe character and is adversely affected by the tunnel under the elevated road. The path near Hillstreet is also short and does not make strong links between destinations although there will soon be a better link with Testwood Lakes.

2.118 The facilities at Testwood Lakes offer a variety of good local open-air recreational experiences for the public and guided school parties from nearby parts of Totton and Southampton. The quality of these may well increase further as the new landscapes and habitats mature (depending upon any future decisions about further water supply requirements). However, these experiences take place within an environment that is highly transitional between the last slope of the outlying New Forest topographical ridge and the flat Test Valley. Moreover, as one moves around this site there are constant reminders of its urban fringe nature, exemplified by the many nearby industrial buildings, the site and sound of the M27 – depending on season and wind direction – the presence of pylons and views from the rising ground to tall buildings and dock structures in Southampton. In my view the recreational experience here has very little to do with the New Forest.

Land west of the A326/A36(T)

2.119 There can be no doubt that Paulton’s Park offers substantial existing opportunities for open-air recreation. I accept that their theme park nature may not be of the type suitable for an exposed location within a National Park. However, the site is very well contained within the landscape and the overall quality of the landscape is not reduced in a way that warrants exclusion of Paulton’s Park from the NFNP. Likewise, the M27 corridor is largely in cutting between J1 and J2 and does not warrant exclusion for the same reason.

Totton Urban Area

2.120 Totton is the largest town in New Forest District (27,400), substantially bigger than Lymington and Ringwood both of which I have recommended for exclusion. There may be some attractive open areas around it such as Testwood Lakes, Lower Test Marshes and Eling Great Marsh and Tide Mill but I have not supported the inclusion of any of these in the NFNP. The town itself and the other features mentioned by Cllr Randall come nowhere near presenting the necessary outstanding natural beauty of national importance or opportunities for open-air recreation offering a ‘markedly superior recreational experience’.
The Manor lands of Minstead

2.121 The pattern of generally small fields and contrasting larger-scale parkland and woodland, together with a dispersed pattern of hamlets and isolated buildings, many of traditional character, set along generally quiet lanes, is typical of the kinds of enclosed landscapes found within the perambulation. This highly attractive environment can be appreciated by the visitor from the lanes and footpaths that provide routes through intimate wooded valleys and direct links onto open land within the perambulation. There are also other relevant points of interest such as a field studies centre and Furzey Gardens. In my view the unique legal status of the Manor Lands is a factor that adds to, rather than detracts from, the intrinsic interest of the area for visitors seeking to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the area within the Designation Order.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION (Boundary sections 1-2)

2.122 I recommend that the NFNZ boundary for this section be modified as shown on the attached map and described in the summary of recommendations at pages 5-6.