PART 4. BOUNDARY SECTIONS 11 & 12

4.1 The objections within these sections can be most conveniently considered under the following sub-areas:

- the town of Lymington and surrounding areas
- the ‘Barton-Milford gap’
- land between Barton and Mudeford
- land west and north of New Milton
- land at Hinton Park
- Cranemoor Common

THE TOWN OF LYMINGTON AND SURROUNDING AREAS

Introduction

4.2 Hinton Estate (Meyrick Estate Management) (162); Lymington Precision Engineers & Co Ltd and S J Fuller Ltd (190); New Milton Sand & Ballast (186); Quarry Products Association (220) RMC Aggregates (UK) Ltd; and Tarmac Southern Ltd (351) object to the inclusion of the town of Lymington and some of the undeveloped land around its perimeter.

4.3 Lymington Precision Engineers & Co Ltd and S J Fuller Ltd (190) seek the exclusion of the built-up area of Lymington together with an area of land to the north-west of the town which is currently excluded from the NFHA as defined in the adopted local plan. The objection area is indicated on the map at 190/1/1A App14.

4.4 The Quarrying Consortium suggests exclusion of the same area plus the tract of land south of the town from Lymore Lane in the west to the mouth of Lymington River in the east, as defined at 186/1/4A & B, Fig QPA8.

4.5 Hinton Estate seeks the exclusion of a similar area, including the town and land to the north and south of it, as well as land on the coast, mainly between MHW and MLW. Under the estate’s suggestion some coastal areas above MHW including Pennington Marshes, Keyhaven and Hurst Castle Spit would remain within the NFNP.

The case for Lymington Precision Engineers & Co Ltd and S J Fuller Ltd

General conceptual matters

4.6 The Landscape Assessor’s report deals with the following submissions made by the objector concerning general conceptual matters relating to the ‘natural beauty’ criterion:

- that the Agency needs to justify why certain areas are now included in the NFNP when they were previously excluded from the NFHA and AONB against the same test of outstanding natural beauty;
that it is questionable whether townscape can exhibit ‘natural’ beauty as required by the Act;

- that a large town such as Lymington cannot be included in the NFNP because the Act only provides for the inclusion of ‘extensive tracts of country’, an interpretation which is reinforced by the way in which the Act and the Hobhouse boundary-setting criteria have been applied elsewhere;

- that the connectivity of the AONB with other areas of the National Park is insufficient and the extent of the area meeting the natural beauty criterion has changed since AONB designation; and

- that the landscape quality of the landscape setting of the town is variable so that the extensive tract fails to meet the natural beauty criterion, making inclusion of the town itself questionable.

**Site specific matters**

4.7 Tracing the evolution of the NFNP concept from its outset, Dower and Hobhouse never conceived of including land outside the New Forest core within a National Park. In 1983 the Countryside Commission (375/1/1A/app2) expressed continuing concern about the need for a New Forest National Park but again did not refer to land outside the perambulation or the South Hants AONB. This same approach was again reflected in the Countryside Commission report ‘The New Forest Landscape’, published in 1986 (CD207) which dealt only with the perambulation.

4.8 Although the draft consultation report for the NFHA concept (1987) covered a more extended area (375/1/1A/app3) Lymington was still excluded. In 1990 the LUC report (CD206) found that neither the town nor the Mount Pleasant plateau area to the north between Lymington and Sway met the natural beauty criterion. The plateau was said to have a somewhat degraded urban fringe character as part of the type 7 ‘urban fringe lowlands’ landscape type. Although the plateau was recommended for inclusion in the NFNP on the basis of its value for back-up grazing, the land within the objection site has been progressively excluded through a series of decisions by the District Council and two Local Plan Inspectors.

4.9 In ERM’s landscape character assessment of New Forest District (CD127) Lymington and Ringwood are described as landscape type 4 (Urban Areas) as follows. ‘These tend to be large settlements which are inward-looking towards a town centre and which have a large area of residential development around their core which acts as a barrier between the town centre and surrounding landscape’.

4.10 Such large settlements are inappropriate for inclusion in the NFNP. The statutory criteria only provide for the inclusion of extensive tracts of ‘country’. Although the agency reviewed its guidance on the application of the criteria in 2000 (CD114) this contains nothing to suggest that large urban areas should be included. Indeed revised criterion 2g at CD104 Table 2 suggests the opposite.

4.11 It is accepted that the inclusion in National Parks of villages and small market towns may sometimes be justified where they are embedded within a national park and their character is inseparable from the surrounding countryside. However, the inclusion of Lymington, a substantial town with a population of 14,400, is inconsistent with the natural beauty criterion as it has traditionally been understood and interpreted.
4.12 The original Hobhouse criterion 2d states that ‘Towns or villages should not normally be cut in two by a national park boundary. The inclusion or exclusion of a marginal town or village should be dependent on its character and beauty and its present or potential value for the accommodation of visitors’. By reference to existing Parks it is possible to see how this guidance has been interpreted in individual cases and to show that small urban areas embedded in national parks tend to be included whereas large urban areas on the periphery of national parks tend to be excluded. Although size of itself may not be a determining factor in exclusion or inclusion it is interesting to note that:

(a) the Peak District National Park excludes both Ashbourne (pop 7,700) and Buxton (pop 21,560) despite their cultural and historic associations with the area of the Park and their important functions as visitor centres;

(b) the Lake District National Park excludes Kendal (pop 24,430) and Penrith (pop 15,089), again despite strong links;

(c) Yorkshire Dales National Park excludes Richmond (pop 8,760), Settle (pop 2,350) and Skipton (pop 13,950) although all are important gateways to the Park and have strong cultural, historic and tourism links;

(d) North Yorkshire Moors National Park excludes Whitby (pop 14,120), Scarborough (pop 53,730) and Pickering (pop 6,710) despite similar considerations; and

(e) Dartmoor National Park excludes Oakhampton (pop 6,215) and Tavistock (pop 11,227) despite similar considerations.

4.13 The Agency’s officers’ report concerning the modern development of the Hobhouse criteria (CD116) recommended that new criterion 2g should read ‘Towns or villages should not normally be cut in two by a national park boundary. The inclusion or exclusion of a town or village should depend on whether it contributes to the character of the park, including its economy and community life, and its present or potential role for visitors; eg provision of accommodation, access to public transport, information or other services. Large settlements should generally be excluded as a National Park Authority should not be overburdened with responsibility for planning in urban areas’. [Objector’s emphasis]. The last sentence was drawn from the Hobhouse report but was deleted by the Board and does not appear in criterion 2g in table 2 of CD104, or in the relevant footnote. The matters raised in 2g and the footnote are nothing to do with natural beauty.

4.14 The Agency has allowed itself to be distracted from the central statutory purposes of National Parks. Although Lymington has some cultural, historic and functional links to the New Forest these are not themselves aspects of natural beauty as defined in the statute. The second bullet point of table 1 of CD104 is wrong in law in stating that in addition to the statutory criteria (ie including flora, fauna, geological and physiographic features), ‘archaeological, historic, cultural, architectural and vernacular features are also included (in accordance with guidance and precedent)’. Guidance and precedent (in whatever terms may be referred to here) cannot rewrite the law.

4.15 The Act refers to ‘extensive tracts of country’. A town such as Lymington does not and, as a substantial town, could not itself possess attributes of natural beauty to the necessary outstanding national degree. Nor does it provide material opportunities for open-air recreation of the appropriate types. The designation criteria therefore cannot be satisfied. At the same time the Agency has not considered the potential negative effects that restrictive National Park
policies would have on the social and economic development of the town or the extra burden placed on the authority in administering the planning functions of a complex urban area.

4.16 The ERM boundary study (CD126) recommended that the inclusion of the town of Lymington was justified on grounds of the high quality of its townscape, its strong visual links to the surrounding countryside, its very strong historical links with the forest as its principal port, its status as one of the foremost yachting centres of the Solent, and its high level of visitor accommodation on a par with Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst. However, the report presented the Agency with the alternative option of excluding the built-up area of the town.

4.17 In considering the ERM report the Agency’s officers advised that Lymington should be excluded on the basis that ‘...it is inappropriate to include a town of this size within the National Park, not least because (the) burden of responsibilities for planning and development control may distract the National Park Authority from its main priorities in the rural heart of the area’ (CD117, p3). However, the Agency’s Board departed from this recommendation and included the town.

4.18 Looking at these alleged justifications for inclusion taken from the ERM report and CD103, the town has an attractive core centred on the Conservation Area but this occupies only a comparatively small part of the overall built-up area. Except for the sections alongside Lymington River and (to a certain extent) the marshes, the town largely turns its back on its landscape setting. There are strong historical links based on its port function, smuggling and the salt trade but these bear very little weight in any assessment of natural beauty.

4.19 As for the objection land to the north of the town, this was identified in the District Landscape Character Assessment (CD127) as falling within the ‘Lymington and Pennington Coastal Plain’ landscape character area. However, it has almost none of the key environmental features identified for that area and, though pleasant, is certainly not an outstanding landscape.

**The case for the Agency**

4.20 The Agency’s approach to defining national park boundaries is that the inclusion or exclusion of settlements needs to be based on an assessment of (a) their contribution as a whole to the rural economy and community life of the park and to the park’s special qualities and purposes; and (b) their contribution as a whole to the character and purposes of the National Park, particularly where on the edge of the park. This approach is only applied once it has first been determined in broad terms that an area of land, including its settlements, meets the statutory criteria. In making this judgement the qualities of both the tract of land in which the settlement sits and also the qualities of the settlement itself are considered in relation to the statutory criteria.

4.21 Settlements within a National Park therefore need to be considered within the context of the surrounding countryside. The closeness of the relationships between town and country need to be considered rather than simply divorcing settlements from the countryside in which they sit.

4.22 With regard to the examples of settlements excluded from other national parks, these towns are not integral to the designated areas and there is no evidence to suggest that they form precedents relevant to judgments on settlements in the New Forest. Lymington has been assessed in the light of the statutory criteria and the Agency's current approach to defining national park boundaries.
4.23 The inclusion of Lymington is a finely balanced issue. The weight to be afforded to the various relevant factors needs particularly careful assessment. The town lies within a broad sweep of qualifying landscape which is clearly part of the New Forest (the South Hampshire Coast) and is not on the periphery of the designated area.

4.24 The reasons for including Lymington are explained at CD103, p9. It has a high quality townscape and a strong relationship with its landscape setting. It also has cultural and historic importance as the principal port for forest products from the mid-17th century and a centre for the salt trade and piracy. It is a popular and busy tourist destination and one of the main centres of visitor accommodation in the forest. It is an important sailing centre and has footpath links with Keyhaven. Its inclusion would assist the proactive management of access and visitor pressures on the coast.

4.25 With regard to the land to the north-west of Lymington this should not be excluded merely because it is not within the NFHA. This area is regarded by ERM as a typical ancient forest farmland landscape the condition and quality of which does not affect the quality of the broad sweep of the countryside to the point at which designation would be unjustified. Gordleton Industrial Estate is a small element within the wider landscape with only limited visual impact.

**The case for the Quarrying Consortium**

**General conceptual matters**

4.26 As indicated in relation to boundary sections 3-10, these objectors made submissions on a number of general conceptual matters which are dealt with in the Landscape Assessor’s report. Additional conceptual matters were raised by the Consortium in the context of boundary sections 11-12, as set out below, and are also dealt with in the Landscape Assessor’s report:

- that land is included not on the natural beauty criterion but on concern for the isolation of certain areas, resulting in inappropriate interpretation of the principle of “extensive tracts of land”;

- that there has been inadequate assessment of landscape quality to justify inclusion on natural beauty grounds;

- that limited recognition has been given to detractors and their impact on landscape quality;

- that the existence of restoration proposals for damaged land is not sufficient to make land qualify under the natural beauty criterion. The quality of the proposals has to be proven and land should not be included until restoration is complete (perhaps requiring a later boundary revision).

**Natural beauty**

4.27 The area is within two LUC character types – ‘urban fringe coastlands’ and ‘coastal fringe’, while the ERM landscape types describe the same zones as ‘coastal plain estates – small Parliamentary enclosures’ and ‘coastal fringe’. However, the description of ‘coastal plain estates’ as a ‘well-managed large-scale country estate landscape’ ignores the influence of an extensive area of 135ha of working gravel and clay pits and waste disposal and recycling sites. It also ignores the major influence of Lymington, which is predominantly a modern 20th century
town with substantial residential and industrial areas, as well as various other detractors such as the agricultural research station, a garden centre and a caravan site.

4.28 The area of objection was excluded from the NFHA, as were the whole of the ‘urban fringe coastlands’ on the basis that this landscape type was nowhere present within the perambulation and displayed few of the characteristic features of New Forest landscape beauty. Pennington and Keyhaven Marshes were also excluded since they did not demonstrate the essential relationship between New Forest landscapes and the sea necessary to justify inclusion.

4.29 Although much of the area south of Lymington is within the South Hants Coast AONB, it does not appear that the AONB has been critically reviewed since its designation in 1967. Even then the designation documentation noted that ‘Mineral extraction and landfill operations at Efford are having a significant effect on the landscape.’ Since then the active working area for mineral extraction has increased substantially. A further permission was granted in the month after designation and another in 1979. As indicated at 220/1/6 app 32, most of the area between the Avon Water, the marshes, and Lower Pennington Lane has been, is being, or will be worked and infilled and incorporates a large urban sewage works.

4.30 This area has lost its land form, land use, vegetation and inherent structure through extensive works over 40 years. Its condition and quality are now poor and it has no features that relate it to the New Forest. It has no sense of wildness or tranquility; rather, it is highly disturbed. Even if there were cultural or historic associations these can carry little weight in the light of all the other circumstances. Although landfill operations are due for completion by 2007 the land will then be managed as a restored site with gas and leachate collection and treatment units in place for at least 30 years. Before extraction the land was farmed intensively and as the plans indicate it will revert to agriculture incorporating some wetland habitat creation.

4.31 The coastal marshes within the AONB have remained largely unchanged since designation but the Hurst Castle and Lymington River SSSI are part of the wider Solent Ramsar/SPA and cSAC. All these designations confer protection for their own purposes and increased recreation would damage those purposes. As LUC indicated they have importance in their own right. However, they do not display the characteristics of the New Forest cSAC (186/1/3 app 2).

**Opportunities for open-air recreation**

4.32 There is no open access land in the locality. There are a few public footpaths but these are dominated by extraction/landfill operations, especially the main north-south footpath (Iley Lane) which passes right through the working area. Even after restoration they will not offer a markedly superior recreational experience, just one no more than typical of much of rural Britain with other more minor detracting elements of landfill remaining.

4.33 Lymington does not itself offer opportunities for quiet outdoor recreation. It offers accommodation within a built-up area and marinas. The former does not meet the National Park criterion while the latter is related to nautical activities in the Solent and not to the sequestered enjoyment of the New Forest. The marinas service power boats and large sea-going yachts, not Hobhouse’s ‘small-boat sailing’ while Royal Lymington Yacht Club would not fall into his category of ‘inexpensive yacht clubs’.
The case for the Agency

Natural beauty

4.34 The coast south of Lymington is very quiet and surprisingly remote with a strong pastoral character and many ancient features such as winding lanes enclosed by tall hedgerow trees. There are stunning views across the extensive coastal salt marshes to the Isle of Wight from Keyhaven, Hurst Point and a series of coastal footpaths. Lymington itself has the qualities described in response to the previous objector. The valley of the Avon Water affords some of the best outward views. Landscape quality within the area is generally very good.

4.35 Although there are some detractors, notably the landfill sites, these are small elements within the wider qualifying landscape and there would need to be very good reasons to exclude the outstanding coastal landscapes lying beyond the minerals and landfill sites. Large areas have already been restored and restoration will be fully complete by 2007. After that time the land will be similar in character to that on the other side of the Avon Water, ie large scale open fields with generally north-south footpaths and lanes and long views across the marshes to the Isle of Wight.

4.36 A substantial proportion of the objection area is of national or international importance for Nature Conservation. The Hurst Castle and Lymington River Estuary SSSI has SPA, Ramsar and cSAC designations and includes the lower reaches of the Avon Water adjacent to the minerals and landfill sites. The SSSI is also of geomorphological importance, having a unique system of shingle ridges and an outstanding shingle spit feature at Hurst Beach. Hurst Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

4.37 Before 1964 the coastal grazing marshes and the dispersed commons at Pennington were closely linked to the Forest by a series of drove roads and the area fell within the range of summer straying. There is still some grazing by forest stock today. This provides an ongoing connection to the Forest system and supports the inclusion of the area on natural beauty grounds.

Opportunities for open-air recreation

4.38 The recreational case for inclusion is strong. There is an excellent network of quiet lanes and public footpaths in the area south of Lymington, notably the Solent Way, which runs all along the edge of the marshes and offers outstanding opportunities for quiet enjoyment, solitude and bird watching. This path connects Hurst Point and the coastal marshes to Lymington and then, via the perambulation, to Beaulieu and Hythe passing through a particularly wide range of forest landscapes. There are also north-south footpath links on both sides of the Avon Water and ultimately to the perambulation north of Lymington.

4.39 A letter from English Nature (394/3/4/220/a1) supports the view that a holistic approach to the management of land use and recreation in the coastal marshes would be beneficial.

4.40 Lymington is an important visitor destination and a centre for interpretation of the forest and forest life. It also has a special role as a centre for sailing on the Solent and has clubs catering for all sections of society, not only the rich and privileged.
The case for Hinton Estate

General conceptual matters

4.41 The estate raised a number of matters noted below at paragraph 4.111. These are dealt with in the Landscape Assessor’s report.

Designation matters

4.42 The coastal areas that the estate seeks to exclude from the NFNP are within the South Hampshire Coast AONB and therefore have an existing acknowledged landscape quality. However, access to the intertidal marshes is limited to a path along the top of Hurst Beach Spit and the Solent Way along the high water mark. Any greater extent of access would be physically difficult to arrange and detrimental to the international nature conservation value of the area.

4.43 The inclusion of Lymington is incompatible with its urban nature. Also, if the NPA have to deal with detailed development control matters in the town this would undermine its ability to deal with other issues of more importance to the National Park.

The case for the Agency

4.44 The matters raised in relation to Lymington Precision Engineers and the Quarrying Consortium also apply in this case.

LAND AT THE ‘BARTON – MILFORD GAP’

4.45 The following 53 objectors are concerned with the area between the designation order boundary and the coast between Barton on Sea and the area east of Milford on Sea, or some smaller part of that area. Most are concerned to see the NFNP extended to include all or some of the area, although a small number seek minor retractions of the boundary

Col P Sweet (1); Miss H Hainsworth (2); Ms S Bander (3); J Matthews (5); J Bonney (6); D & G Fearis (10); Mr & Mrs Lane (21); C & P Fisher (31); M Cooper (52); Milford on Sea Parish Council (57); Mr & Mrs Thomas (58); W Milton (67); R Bush (76); N Begg (85); New Forest Consultative Panel (89); B Bedford (94); C Thackray (96); Mr & Mrs Newton (100); P Thackray (102); New Forest District Council (106); New Forest Commoners Defence Association (110); New Forest Association (111); P Twaits (112); Ms A Bowry (123); G & K Batten (124); B Wilson (125); A Wilson (126); J Townsend (127); Mr & Mrs Phillips (133); J Chase (134); B Halliday (142); Prof P Kelly (146); V Kelly (147); G White (155); A & H Swales (160); Miss M Shrimpton (176); J Hood (196); J Reynolds (200); Ms J England (204); Desmond Swayne MP (211); Brockenhurst Parish Council (224); the Ramblers Association (226); H Philipson (230); M Bayliss (237); T Firth (240); J Jaques (243); T Radford (320); J Thackray (322); Ms P Perry (324); Mrs A Kenefik (347); Tarmac Southern (351); Irene White (372) and the New Forest Committee (378)
The case for those seeking boundary extensions

The whole of the area of contention

4.46 The New Forest Commoners’ Defence Association (and about 20 other objectors including the New Forest Consultative Panel, Brockenhurst Parish Council and the Ramblers Association) seeks the inclusion of the whole of this area of contention. In the NFCDA’s view this is the most important of the 6 areas where they seek a change of boundary. The area has a long and well established connection with the New Forest and the rich mosaic of small farms still provides bases and back-up grazing for a relatively small number of active commoners who nonetheless turn out relatively large numbers of stock onto the Forest. Hordle is recognised by the Agency as one of the core commoning parishes turning out some 354 animals in 2000. It is also a parish where numbers have been increasing recently.

4.47 The Association is concerned that exclusion of this area would omit substantial areas of land with forest grazing rights which could then acquire development potential with every likelihood that the area between Lymington and Christchurch would become a large conurbation.

4.48 The Ramblers Association and others consider this whole area to be a very valuable area of small fields, woods and streams typical of the New Forest countryside, inextricably linked to the Forest historically and in terms of commoning and recreation and providing many aspects of natural beauty in miniature. The Barton-Hordle cliffs have great geological and wildlife value and offer fine opportunities for walking. There are links (and potentially even better links) to the New Forest and to nearby towns, thus assisting visitor movement by sustainable public transport. Inclusion would enable pressure to be taken off more sensitive areas in the Forest and make it possible to relink the core of the Forest with this part of the Solent Coast and with Christchurch Bay.

4.49 The deleterious impact of traffic along the A337 and other B roads through the area and the presence of suburban development in Hordle and Everton is overstated as a reason for concluding that the area lacks the necessary natural beauty, peace and tranquillity for designation. These features have not prevented the inclusion of land in other areas.

4.50 Col P Sweet (1) considers that the land to the east of New Milton and Barton resembles the included areas east of Lymington. The route from Becton Bunny up Angel Lane, that following the Dane Stream from Taddiford Gap to Downton, and the footpaths criss-crossing the tranquil and remote Ashley Clinton Estate resemble those in the NFNP, as do those behind Milford running up to Sway and Burley. The Agency has exaggerated the effect of the incongruous features to which they refer.

4.51 19th century writers about the New Forest such as Lewis, Gilpin and Wise consistently described this area as an integral part of the Forest in every sense. There are deep continuing commoning links and animals strayed throughout this area before the gridding in 1964, including upon Barton golf course and Barton cliff top lawns. The coastal lanes were much used by smugglers from the 13th to the 19th centuries, their activities contributing significantly to the Forest economy at that time. Battles between smugglers and the authorities took place at Milford Green and Mudeford in the late 18th centuries. Hurst Castle has been a key point in the national defence.
The beaches and cliff tops from Barton to Keyhaven have been a principal centre of recreation for the Forest for 200 years. Activities here include swimming, boating, surfboarding, sailboarding, angling, hang-gliding, walking, bird-watching and golf.

The area north and east of Hordle and Everton

4.53 New Forest District Council (106) in association with the New Forest Committee (378) seeks an extension including only part of the area of contention covering a swathe of land including the Cottagers Lane area, land north of Hordle and Everton around Arnewood House, and land at Efford, as defined at 106/3/3 HE01. Other objectors partially share the District Council’s view about the land north and east of Everton Road, putting forward various specific detailed variations of the boundary here – ie M Cooper (52); M and M Thomas (58); W Milton (67); G & K Batten (124); and A & H Swales (160). In addition Prof P & V Kelly (146-7) share the Council’s view with regard to inclusion of land in the Cottagers Lane area.

4.54 The Council points to the Agency’s view expressed after the local authority consultation stage (CD107) that there is ‘....some merit in extending the boundary southwards to the edge of Hordle and Everton in terms of landscape quality and a better defined boundary’. However this was rejected on the grounds that in this section ‘... the New Forest Heritage Area boundary has stood the test of time, despite the fact that it largely follows field boundaries’. The boundary was also justified on the basis that it marks a ‘subtle but clear change in landscape character and quality, reflecting the transition from the ancient forest farmland landscape type to the coastal plains estate (small parliamentary enclosures) landscape type, and also the increasing urban fringe influences that affect the landscape as one moves southwards.’

4.55 There is certainly a general transition in landscape character between the smaller-scale, more enclosed ancient forest farmlands and the more open coastal plain estates. However, this change is perceived much more strongly to the south of Hordle and Everton. Moving south from these villages towards the coast there is a definite sense of opening up as field sizes increase, arable farming becomes more common and woodland and tree cover reduces. The edges of the villages provide a more easily distinguishable and robust boundary than the complex line chosen by the Agency, which mainly follows field boundaries.

4.56 Much of the area proposed for inclusion consists of the attractively wooded 19th century parkland landscapes of Arnewood House and Efford House, both listed on the Hampshire Register and characterised by a mosaic of open grassland and arable farmland, substantial blocks of woodland, lines and belts of trees, individual mature parkland trees, and some other surviving features of designed parkland. Substantial parts of the woodlands are of ancient origin and/or designated as SINCs (Icehouse Plantation and Arne Wood). The area is well-served by rights of way and offers opportunities for quiet recreation and enjoyment of the peaceful and unspoiled landscape.

4.57 Arnewood House has strong historical links with the New Forest. Research (124/1/1B) shows that the house may have been the setting for the mansion of ‘Arnewood’, the centrepiece of the 19th century novel, ‘The Children of the New Forest’ by Captain Marryat, first published in 1847 (124/1/1A). Although acknowledging that the links between the house and the novel may never be definitively resolved Mr & Mrs Batten consider that the literary associations of the house and its surroundings have gained significant importance and should be taken into account in drawing the NFNP boundary since they offer opportunities for interpretation of the book.

4.58 To the west of Arnewood House, in the Cottagers Lane area, the land is of similar character and quality to the adjacent ancient forest farmlands included in the NFNP to the north,
having a strong sense of enclosure, narrow leafy lanes and occasional thatched cottages. The small to medium fields in this area are typical of the 17th and 18th century small enclosures that dominate the ‘Sway Pastures and Smallholdings’ landscape character area defined in CD127 and share many of the characteristics described in CD127: ‘.... an historic farmed landscape displaying a small-scale pattern of medieval assarts and small Parliamentary enclosures. The present day land uses are varied; mixed agricultural fields, paddocks, garden centres, poultry houses and private gardens are scattered throughout the area and contribute to the urban fringe character. The area is important for back-up grazing land. A strong sense of enclosure is provided by remnants of ancient woodland alongside water courses and lush hedgerows with hedgerow oaks... this settlement pattern is particularly distinctive; linear ribbon settlements have spread along minor lanes.’ For their part, the District Council acknowledges that the case for the Cottagers Lane sub-area is marginal in that there is some rather ordinary development off Silver Street and the central areas are visually contained and offer little to wider views. However, Prof and V Kelly consider this to be a pocket of high quality landscape as good as or better than that to the north and where all the fields are grazed, some by commoners.

4.59 Turning to the area north of Lymore, the designation order boundary cuts across country on a complicated route following a footpath, tracks, woodland and field boundaries and the edge of Efford Research Station. It does not appear to follow any obvious change in landscape character or quality occurring between Lymore and Everton. The eastern edge of Everton would be a more rational and robust line resulting in the inclusion of land to the north of Lymore which is of equivalent character and quality to adjacent land within the NFNP to the south and is characterised by a strong structure of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries, a minor stream and a small fishing lake which is also a SINC. While this extension would include Efford Horticultural Research Station, which does not itself meet the natural beauty criterion, this can be justified on the basis that it is within a broader qualifying sweep of country and is visually contained by mature hedgerows and woodland. It is difficult to draw a boundary which logically excludes it. In any case horticulture is a characteristic land use in this area and there are many glasshouses and similar features within the NFNP.

4.60 Milford on Sea Parish Council (57), supported by New Forest District Council (106), seeks to secure the inclusion of the whole of Milford parish rather than just that part in the Keyhaven area (see detailed boundary at 57/2/5). About a dozen other objectors share this concern about the designation order’s splitting of Milford Parish including Desmond Swayne MP (211).

4.61 The current national park boundary splits the parish of Milford on Sea by including Keyhaven and excluding the village of Milford on Sea, the cliffs to the west of the village and the open countryside to the north of it. Keyhaven is separated from Milford by only a short stretch of farmland. Keyhaven residents depend on Milford for their shops, school, churches and other facilities while visitors to Keyhaven usually stay in Milford where there is more accommodation.

4.62 It is accepted that national park boundaries may sometimes divide an administrative area but they should not sever communities or virtually co-joined settlements. The arrangements here conflict with criterion 2g of the Agency’s boundary setting criteria. Criterion 2d should mean that Milford on Sea is included. This is one of the very few rural villages along this part of the coast. It is a lively vibrant community, making a considerable contribution to the New Forest.

4.63 However, it is at the heart of the Parish Council’s case that the whole of the parish qualifies in its own right against the statutory criteria. The coastline to the west of the village provides an opportunity to include a magnificent seascape within the NFNP. The cliff top walk
is wild, natural and unspoiled and has spectacular views from the Isle of Purbeck in the west to the Isle of Wight in the east. The cliffs are part of the Highcliffē to Milford Cliffs SSSI, a key geological site providing access to the standard succession of fossil rich Barton Beds and Headon Beds (57/1/6).

4.64 The Parish also includes 12 SINCs (57/1/6), mainly ancient woodlands and unimproved grasslands. Nine of these are outside the current NFNP boundary and one of these (Sturt Pond) is also an SSSI. Newlands Manor is a 19th century landscape park included on the Hampshire County Register.

4.65 The village itself has retained much of its attractive Victorian and early 20th century areas and is centred around a substantial conservation area centred on the green, containing many listed buildings. A village design statement aims to protect this character. If Lymington (a town with a population of 14,400) is included in the NFNP it is difficult to see why Milford on Sea (with only 4600) is not.

4.66 The community works hard to maintain the culture and atmosphere of a rural coastal village and many visitors return to the area year after year and all times of the year. Accommodation is plentiful. There are 6ha of mobile homes and cabins at Shorefield Country Park and Downton Park, further mobile homes at Carrington Park and pitches for touring caravans and tents at Lytton Lawn. There are 3 hotels, numerous B&Bs, self-catering apartments and 4 pubs, 3 of which are listed buildings. Local recreations include rowing, tennis, squash, sea-fishing, riding, the traditional New Forest recreation of carriage-driving, cricket, wind-surfing, sea-bathing and paragliding.

**Land at Lymore Lane**

4.67 J Townsend (127) suggests the inclusion of additional land in the vicinity of Lymore Lane, partly overlapping with the objection by Milford on Sea Parish Council and partly extending further north. The lane is described as passing through an attractive rural area, representing an integral part of neighbouring land included in the NFNP, and providing an important link for walkers and cyclists between the coast and areas and paths to the north. Concern is expressed about past and future aspirations for building on land along the lane.

**The case for the Agency**

4.68 Looking at the area of contention as a whole, it is acknowledged that this landscape type (coastal plain estates) occurs elsewhere within the NFNP, that the area has historically been considered as part of the New Forest and that much land has rights of common and has formed part of the historic dispersed pastoral system. However, there is a gradual deterioration in landscape quality as one moves from the Forest core towards the coast. There are pockets of higher landscape quality including the wooded valleys of the streams, the coastline in the vicinity of Hordle Cliff, and a few of the quieter wooded lanes, but overall the landscape is not of sufficient quality to meet the natural beauty criterion. Landscape quality in the area as a whole is marred by incongruous features such as large arable fields, suburban development, nurseries and caravan parks.

4.69 With the exception of the short section at Hordle Cliffe, the coastline has a fragmented character with a mixture of suburban elements including lawns, golf courses, car-parks, and poor
quality development. In addition, the sprawling settlements of Ashley, Hordle and Everton form a complete physical barrier to the Forest so the area of contention is perceived as a separate isolated block of countryside dominated by the influence and activity of the surrounding urban areas.

4.70 It is not disputed that the area has historic links with the forest but these considerations are outweighed by the variable quality of the landscape.

4.71 Turning to recreation, it is also accepted that the area offers facilities and amenities for tourists and local residents. However a markedly superior recreational experience is seen as having to be intrinsically related to the character and quality of the landscape and the availability of opportunities to enjoy and understand the special qualities of the National Park. In this area the recreational experience is marred by the lack of a strong visual relationship to the forest and the suburban character of much of the landscape. While parts of the coastal path have a wild natural character there are no views to the Forest and the experience of the route through Milford on Sea is degraded by the quality of the local townscape, while parts of the Barton coastline have a manicured rather suburban character. Inland, links to the forest are blocked by the suburban settlements of Hordle and Everton and public access to the wooded valleys (the most attractive and forest like areas) is limited.

North and east of Hordle and Everton

4.72 The landscape here is of relatively poor quality. Between Kings Farm and Batchley Farm arable intensification has created very large fields with loss of the hedgerows and mature hedgerows trees normally found in the coastal plain estates. Along Everton Road there are urban fringe influences such as busy roads, power lines and builders yards. At Efford land use and the landscape is dominated by the horticultural research station, a large caravan park and a hotel.

4.73 The deterioration in quality across this sweep of land is gradual. It is difficult to define exactly where the natural beauty criterion is no longer met but it does not extend to the point suggested by the District Council and others. The presence of some SINCs and county-level historic landscapes does not elevate the sub-area to a landscape of national importance.

4.74 In terms of recreation, there are two public footpaths and a bridleway north and east of Everton and Hordle but these do not provide a markedly superior recreational experience because of the nature of the landscape through which they pass. Additionally there is permissive access to Icehouse Plantation. Further south, around Efford, there are no rights of way except those already included in the NFNP.

Milford Parish

4.75 Keyhaven is a charming small historic village set in the distinctive and outstanding setting of the coastal marshes, an SSSI with superb long-distance views and good public access. On the other hand Milford is in a quite different, undistinguished setting – an enclosed farmland landscape with an urban fringe character. Nurseries, hotels, golf courses, caravan parks and numerous commercial enterprises contribute to the perception of a fragmented landscape separated from the Forest by the sprawling suburban settlements of Hordle and Everton.

4.76 Milford itself also has different qualities from Keyhaven. While it has an attractive historic vernacular core its overall character is dominated by suburban and modern development of variable quality including multi-storey flats and a sequence of bleak car parks along the sea front. Overall Milford is not of sufficient quality to contribute to the character and purposes of
the Park and so does not merit designation. While it is recognised that the relationship between
the two communities is important to local people and they are seen as interdependent,
designation will not affect this or sever community links.

4.77 There are pockets of relatively high quality land within the Barton-Milford coastal plain
but the administrative boundary of the parish omits some of these. The presence of SINCs does
not indicate land of national importance and while the two SSSIs carry some weight, a
judgement on natural beauty has to look at all the factors rather than focussing on the positive
elements and ignoring the negative ones. Likewise, historic links with the Forest including its
historic dispersed pastoral system, cannot in themselves provide reason for designation.

4.78 Referring to the recreation criterion, a markedly superior recreational experience has to
be provided by high quality countryside recreation occurring in a high quality landscape setting.
Many of the facilities mentioned by the objectors relate to Milford’s role as a coastal tourism
resort rather than making a contribution to the National Park purpose of enjoying and
understanding the Park’s special qualities. Recreational experiences in the countryside around
the village are somewhat marred by the suburban character of much of the landscape. The
coastal footpaths are an obvious exception but they have to be considered in the context of the
wider sweep of land in the Barton-Hordle-Everton-Milford area while the coastal route through
Milford itself is degraded by the quality of the local townscape. Elsewhere, public access to the
most attractive parts of the rural parish, the wooded valleys, is extremely limited.

**Lymore Lane**

4.79 The quality of the landscape to the north is affected by the research station, a caravan
park and the fringes of Everton. Further south the area between Lymore Lane and Milford is
excluded from the NFNP because it is dominated by large arable fields, pylon lines and views to
the suburban edges of Milford. The quality of the recreational experience on the local footpaths
is not markedly superior because of the variable landscape quality.

**The case for those seeking boundary retractions in the Barton-Milford gap**

4.80 *H Philipson (230)* seeks the exclusion of land on the west bank of the Avon Water
between Silver Street and Efford Bridge on the A337. In his view the area does not qualify on
natural beauty grounds (for example it has no Forest vegetation such as heather or open heath)
and no historic or cultural links with the New Forest. Fields to the north of Batchley Farm are
mainly sub-divided into small pony paddocks and there is a former tree nursery set out in serried
ranks.

4.81 As owner of Batchley Farm he is concerned that the right of way forming the NFNP
boundary passes right through the middle of the farmyard which is actively used by cattle
passing between fields and overwintering. Use of the footpath and bridleway is moderate, apart
from during the peak summer season, and it would be a matter of concern if increased use were
to be made by people unfamiliar with livestock including possible dangers from matters such as
e-coli infections.

4.82 The objector has managed Batchley Farm with a wider series of local holdings such as
Kings Farm and Yeatton Farm. Having struggled to revitalise the estate through diversification
over the past decade, income is now derived from agriculture, fishing and shooting, and from
letting former agricultural buildings for light industry. A former option for gravel working at
Kings Farm has been allowed to lapse and the aim is to manage the estate in a sustainable
manner. Funds have been ploughed into conservation of the woodlands such as Icehouse Plantation, including permissive access and the erection of bird boxes. However, if the objection area is included in the NFNP it could become more difficult to replace the inadequate house at Batchley Farm with a bold model sustainable farmhouse for the 21st century or to build a house for the farm manager, as has now become crucial.

4.83 J Chase (134) suggests that the boundary be modified to omit the area south of Silver Street between Woodcock Lane and the footpath south of Marlwood Nursery. It is suggested that the area is outside the traditional boundary of the New Forest, lacks natural beauty and recreation facilities and is already partly developed. Additional access as a result of designation would be unwelcome since it would conflict with safe animal husbandry. In addition, there is a main sewer across the land so it would be wrong to include it in the NFNP if this rules out development possibilities in the future.

The case for the Agency

4.84 The area referred to by Mr Philipson consists of small fields and woodland typifying the ‘ancient forest farmlands’ landscape type. The boundary here follows the break of slope and marks a change in landscape character and quality from the somewhat degraded coastal plain estate landscapes further to the west. The landscape is in good repair and has no incongruous features. It forms the setting for the river and there are glimpsed views to Upper Pennington Common. There is a small SSSI (forming part of the New Forest SSSI) between Batchley Copse (which is a SINC) and the river, and there are further SINCs between Wainsford Bridge and Efford Bridge.

4.85 Pony paddocks are very common in the New Forest and are a typical feature of the ancient forest farmlands surrounding the central heathland and woodland. The absence of rights of common at Batchley Farm is not in itself a reason for exclusion. Inclusion of only one side of the valley would divide a natural unit, all of which qualifies against the designation criteria.

4.86 There is no reason to suppose that designation will have any adverse effects on the owner’s plans for development because the area is already subject to NFHA planning policies, which are unlikely to change appreciably. An NPA could well be supportive of sustainable development models.

4.87 The area referred to by Mr Chase is also in an area of ‘ancient forest farmlands’ landscape type, without incongruous features, in good repair and of high landscape quality. The land offers attractive leafy views over small pasture fields with common grazing rights and is in an active commoning area. There are rights of way to the south and east of Belford Farm and there is a riding school at the junction of Silver Street and Woodcock Lane.

LAND BETWEEN BARTON AND MUDEFORD

4.88 The following objectors seek various changes to the National Park boundary covering areas south of the railway extending from the eastern edge of the town of Barton on Sea as far to the west as Mudeford on the edge of Christchurch Harbour:

J Bonney (6); P Twaits (112); G White (155); Miss M Shrimpton (176); and M Mawbey (360).
4.89  [Objections concerning Christchurch Harbour itself, together with Hengistbury Head, are
dealt with under boundary sections 13-15.]

The cases for the objectors

4.90  These objections vary in extent but most centre primarily on protection of this attractive
stretch of coastline which forms a narrow corridor of undeveloped land between the high water
mark and the cliff top settlements of Barton, Highcliffe, Friars Cliff and Mudeford. In terms of
natural beauty objectors point to the cliff’s recognised geological and botanical interest as part of
the Highcliffe to Milford SSSI; the fine seascapes from the continuous coastal promenade
towards the Isle of Wight, Hengistbury Head and the Purbeck Hills; and to other points of
interest such as Chewton Bunny, Highcliffe Castle, Steamer Point Nature Reserve and Mudeford
Quay/Christchurch Harbour.

4.91  The quiet recreational resource of the long sandy beach (from which little nearby
development is visible above the cliffs or through the cliffside trees) is regarded as a major asset
of immense interest and value to New Forest residents and visitors who divide their leisure time
between the twin attractions of the forest and the sea. There is easier access to this area at times
of the year when the Forest itself is too wet underfoot and the coast is also more readily
accessible to the old, the less mobile and the very young. It is therefore seen as adding to the
range of leisure pursuits potentially available in the NFN and contributing to the economy and
life of the Park.

4.92  Fear is expressed that the coastal area is coming under intense pressures for development
and redevelopment to higher densities with the danger that its pleasant established character may
be eroded. National Park designation is seen as a counter to that pressure.

4.93  Some objectors suggest that the Park would benefit from the inclusion of a narrow inland
link along the Walkford Brook which has features in common with the New Forest. This would
leave the coast at the narrow valley of Chewton Bunney (which runs between residential
development to the west and a holiday caravan park to the east), before opening out slightly
north of the A337 in the vicinity of Chewton Glen Hotel. It would then cross the railway to join
the land west of New Milton discussed below.

4.94  Some objectors also suggest the inclusion of specific parts of the urban areas behind the
coastal strip. Mr White appears to suggest the inclusion of the whole area up to the coast
including all the towns between the Avon and Milford. Mr Mawbey suggests that Highcliffe be
included in its entirety, while Mr Twaits suggests the southern and eastern parts of the town
including the remaining areas of common land contained within the urban fabric. Mr Twaits
also suggests the inclusion of defined parts of the developed areas at Mudeford, Friars Cliff and
Barton.

The case for the Agency

4.95  It is acknowledged that the coast between Barton and Mudeford has an attractive
character, earth science and ecological interest, and good views and recreational opportunities.
However, it does not meet the natural beauty criterion because its landscape quality is variable.
Moreover it is only a narrow strip between the sea and the adjacent extensive urban areas, not all
of which are of the best townscape quality. It is therefore only tenuously connected with the
New Forest and is not part of a qualifying ‘extensive tract of country’.
4.96 While the coastline offers many recreational activities these are outweighed by the marginal location of the area and its failure to meet the natural beauty criterion.

4.97 As for other areas referred to by objectors, the seafront in Barton has a relatively suburban character with manicured lawns. Highcliffe has attractive parts but it is impossible to consider designating isolated parts of the otherwise large and non-qualifying continuous urban area within which they stand.

4.98 Chewton Bunney is an isolated fragment of relatively attractive countryside but has no sense of connection with the core Forest lands. It is hemmed in by development and separated from any relevant ‘extensive tract of country’. North of the main wooded bunny the generally open area around Walkford Brook between the A337 and the railway has an urban fringe character with playing fields, hotel grounds, and a large complex of glasshouses.

**LAND WEST & NORTH OF NEW MILTON**

4.99 The following objectors are concerned with the area to the west and north of New Milton, or some part of it.

Col P Sweet (1); J Bonney (6); D Osgood (26); D Willrich (37); New Forest Commoners Defence Association (110); P Twaits (112); B Halliday (142); Bransgore Parish Council (153); G White (155); New Milton Sand and Ballast (186); Peterhouse, Cambridge (223); Brockenhurst Parish Council (224); the Ramblers’ Association (226); CPRE (357); and M Mawbey (360).

**The cases for the objectors**

4.100 Most of the above objectors refer to the whole area of countryside west and north of New Milton and consider that the NFNP should be extended up to the edge of the built-up area of the town. The currently excluded area is felt to have particular value for its existing north-south footpaths (Walkford Lane and the footpaths near Hinton House) which provide important pedestrian links between the urban areas south of the railway and the National Park further north. Objectors refer to the potential for improved access to the wooded valley of the Walkford Brook (a SINC including ancient woodland); concerns that the landscape impact of development along Stem Lane has been overemphasised; fears that these undeveloped areas will otherwise be at risk from revivals of past pressures for gravel extraction and/or the urban expansion of New Milton. Some feel that the boundary here is generally too circuitous and not sufficiently robust compared with the line represented by the railway and Stem Lane. It is also pointed out that rights of common are attached to most of the land west of New Milton and claimed that this area is important to the commoning economy.

4.101 Within the overall area of contention a more local focus of objection concerns a site between Dark Lane, Ringwood Road and the railway, comprising Meetinghouse Plantation/Cranemoor Wood and an arable field fronting Dark Lane. New Milton Sand and Ballast Company and Peterhouse, Cambridge (together with Hinton Estate - see below) seek exclusion of this area from the National Park boundary. Although Cranemoor Wood is a SINC these objectors consider that the large arable field, crossed by a power line, has no great qualities of natural beauty. Also, there is no public access to the area, nor any opportunities for recreation within it.
4.102 These objectors point out that the 1993 Local Plan Inquiry Inspector recommended exclusion from the NFHA of the area to the south of Hinton House (west of New Milton) on the grounds of its low landscape value. This area (known as Walkford Farm) has several times been considered as a candidate for gravel extraction and was recommended by the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Inspector for inclusion as a preferred area for sand and gravel extraction, although the recommendation was not accepted by the County Council. The landowners are again proposing its inclusion as a preferred area in the forthcoming review of the minerals plan. They state that it is now clear (whereas it was not in 1993) that the necessary haul route from the extraction area south of Hinton House would have to pass in a westerly direction to join Dark Lane via a corridor through Cranemoor Wood and the arable field. The landowners’ contention is that the parcels of land affected by the haul route have no more case for inclusion against the statutory criteria than the land to the east recommended for exclusion from the NFHA by the 1993 Local Plan Inspector. Inclusion of these parcels in the National Park could inhibit exploitation of the minerals reserves on the adjoining land.

4.103 On the other hand, other objectors (eg J Bonney, D Osgood) are particularly concerned that this part of the wider area of contention should be included in the Park, because of fears of renewed pressures for gravel extraction.

4.104 Another local focus of objection within the wider area concerns land south of Beckley Common where Mr D Willrich and Bransgore Parish Council consider it illogical for the NFNP boundary to make a local detour northwards from the B3055 to omit land bordered by that road and two minor lanes.

**The case for the Agency**

4.105 Dealing with the totality of the land to the west of New Milton, the Agency considers that the quality of the landscape in the Walkford Brook area does not merit inclusion. This is a nondescript, predominantly large-scale intensive arable landscape with much evidence of hedgerow and tree removal. Consequently the west-east electricity pylons and cables are more intrusive here than is sometimes the case in other areas around the Forest. Industrial and suburban developments are dominant visual features in some views.

4.106 While the corridor of the Walkford Brook is of high landscape quality and has connection with the New Forest it is not accessible to the public via rights of way and the path known as Walkford Lane does not offer a superior recreational experience.

4.107 Near Hinton House the boundary has been drawn to exclude the area of large-scale arable fields and include the higher quality land with more New Forest affiliations. All the boundaries (a public right-of-way, a woodland edge and a field boundary) are distinguishable on the ground and are the same as those followed by the NFHA in the adopted local plan.

4.108 Referring specifically to the objection area at Dark Lane/Ringwood Road, this is part of the well-wooded heath-associated estates around Hinton Park, a landscape characterised by former heathland, pine and oak plantations and intensively farmed land comprising large fields enclosed by hedgerows and woodland edges. The “access field” and its setting have a high landscape quality despite the presence of overhead power cables. Dark Lane is a quiet rural lane fringed with dense hedges containing mature hedgerow oaks; it is used for walking, riding and cycling and is linked to nearby public footpaths. The as-yet unknown content of a future Minerals and Waste Plan is not relevant to the National Park issue.
4.109 As for the objections concerning the B3055 as a boundary, the National Park, like the NFHA, excludes a single large arable field (formerly 3 fields) crossed by dominant pylons. Instead it follows minor lanes (C-roads) that are easily distinguishable on the ground.

LAND AT HINTON PARK

The case for The Hinton Estate (Meyrick Estate Management Ltd) (162)

4.110 The objector suggests that the NFNP boundary should be retracted to exclude the whole of Hinton Park and other land to the south of the A35 between Roeshot Belt (west of Hinton Admiral Station) and a point east of North Hinton Farm. The area of contention is indicated at 162/1/2A SMR09.

General conceptual matters

4.111 The Landscape Assessor’s report deals with the following general conceptual matters raised by the objector:

- While nearly all landscape in England is heavily influenced by Man, natural beauty is not defined in S114(2) of the Act in a way which incorporates the cultural or historical influence of Man in itself. Under the 1949 Act, as amended, the essence of natural beauty is that it must apply to countryside, it must be principally ‘visible’ and ‘natural’ (derived from nature) and it must be outstanding. Insufficient attention to these requirements has led the Agency into giving too much weight to inappropriate factors such as history, cultural associations, commoning considerations, archaeology and nature conservation interests (such as the presence of a rare species or habitat) even where this is unrelated to scenic landscape beauty. Such factors may be relevant to the process of landscape character assessments but they are not relevant to judgements on the quality of natural beauty required under the Act. In considering designation of the NFNP the Secretary of State must confine herself to the strict terms of the designation criteria in S5(2). The extended definition of natural beauty in S114(2) only relates to the statutory purposes set out in S5(1), as does the reference to ‘cultural heritage’ in S5(1), although flora and fauna may be relevant to designation if they have a major influence on the landscape. This is a very different situation from that applying in Scotland where more recent (and perhaps arguably more ‘modern’) legislation in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 provides at S2(2)(a) that an area may be designated for ‘outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or a combination of its natural and cultural heritage’.

- Some of the boundary-setting criteria in table 2 of CD104 also extend beyond the scope of the designation criteria, eg the following references:- at 2(d) to whether settlements contribute to the rural economy and community life of the Park and to its special qualities and purposes; at 2(g) to whether or not towns contribute to the character and purposes of the Park; at 2(j) to including features of historic or architectural value at the margins; and in the footnote to 2(g) to matters such as visitor accommodation, public transport etc.

- CD126 states at para 4.2.1 that ‘in general the approach (to developing the boundaries) of the National Park was a more generous and inclusive one than was used in defining the
boundary for the New Forest Heritage Area’. However, in reality the tests should be harder and the area more tightly defined.

- The absence of detailed field notes produced by the Agency’s consultants has made it difficult to obtain evidential verification of the claims made about the merits of including various areas. This is in conflict with the advice given in CD229 and the Franks principles of openness.

**Natural beauty**

4.112 The Hinton Estate runs from the boundary of the perambulation to the Avon Valley north of Christchurch as defined at 162/1/2A/SMR01 embracing grazing land on the flood plain, arable production on the river terraces, intensive dairy farming, and a mix of smaller fields and woodland on the higher slopes nearer to the perambulation.

4.113 Within boundary sections 11-12 the relevant parts of the estate are those centred around Hinton Admiral House, a Grade 1 listed building, its surrounding parkland (which is ornamental rather than ‘wild’ or remote), two dairy farms, and areas of woodland and heathland.

4.114 The estate is closely involved with agriculture, forestry, sport, wildlife and employment. It has been estate policy for many years to manage the land in a sustainable manner to provide high income while maintaining and where appropriate conserving environmental quality. Burton Common and Poors Common are both SSSIs that have been managed to promote their nature conservation value, as have the ancient woodlands. It is also estate policy to encourage maintenance of hedgerows, tree belts, watercourses and (where appropriate) species rich grassland.

4.115 The estate’s holdings possess common rights but these have not been exercised within living memory either by the estate itself or by its current long-term agricultural tenants. It is only in the last year that the estate has let grazings to commoners. This letting comprises about 80 ha at Burton Common and Poors Common. The land in question is let to two commoners under the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme for wet heathland for which English Nature pay 100% for the capital works. The land is grazed under the scheme with a low stocking density and no additional fertilisers. These back-up grazing areas do not play a significant part in either the New Forest grazing system or the estate agricultural system. It was with some difficulty that the estate managed to secure lettings since local graziers were reluctant to take up the opportunities because of the poor quality of the grazing.

**Opportunities for open air recreation**

4.116 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) indicates the current Parliamentary view about which parts of the countryside have a character that lends to open-air recreation. The ‘access land’ referred to in S2(1) of CROW for the purpose of ‘open-air recreation’ is defined in S1(1) as being limited to ‘open country’ defined on the appropriate statutory map (predominantly mountain, moor, heath or down) or registered common land. According to the draft CROW map there is no such land or proposed land within the area that the estate seeks to exclude from the NFNP.

4.117 With regard to the Agency’s interpretation of the statutory recreation criterion at CD104 Table 1, the first and third bullet points are accepted. Turning to bullet point 2, access or open-air recreation facilities should either exist now or there should be a realistic potential for them to be provided within the land to be included in the NFNP. Vague or unrealistic aspirations are not
enough. On point 4, opportunities could sometimes be more than quiet enjoyment. As for 5, it is open and exposed uplands which are at the heart of the National Park concept and it is accessibility to such areas that should be considered. Accessibility as a concept in its own right, such as to land not possessing openness, wildness, remoteness or tranquillity, is not relevant to designation.

4.118 Against the above background the extent of rights of way within the estate is somewhat limited. There are no public access rights within the central part including Hinton Park and the adjacent woodlands of Allensworth Wood, Holmhill Wood and Poors Common. The estate would not welcome pressure to provide access to the areas which it wishes to exclude from the NFNP apart from the present occasional opening of the private parklands around the house for certain special events. Access to the dairy farms at East Close and North Hinton Farms would be incompatible with management needs while shooting to control deer sometimes takes place within the woods. Only small parts of the whole area are visible and even then only from the A35 and some other flanking roads. A visual experience of this kind from a moving car is not a markedly superior recreational experience.

**The case for the Agency**

**Natural beauty**

4.119 Hinton Park is historic parkland set within the ‘heath associated estates’ landscape type that occurs in a number of areas around the perambulation. The area of contention is all within the NFHA and comprises extensive areas of mixed woodland within the valley of Sheers Brook, parkland forming the setting to Hinton Admiral House, and a mosaic of mainly arable land and large blocks of woodland east and south of the A35.

4.120 The landscape here is very clearly part of the New Forest. Heath associated estates are described in the District Landscape Character Assessment as enclosed wooded estate landscapes, often on undulating ground, around the fringe of the Forest. They are closely associated with former heathland and retain a heathy character. Pine and oak plantations are interspersed with tracts of intensively farmed land consisting of large fields enclosed by hedgerows and woodland edges. All these characteristics occur within the objection area, the landscape quality of which is very high, with few if any detractors. The high degree of woodland cover imparts a strong sense of being in the Forest.

4.121 Hinton Park itself is of high landscape quality and included on the Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Hinton Admiral House is listed as Grade 1.

4.122 In the Hinton Park area the boundary follows the clear transition in landscape character and quality that occurs south and east of Hinton and Beckley beyond which the land is adversely affected by arable intensification, transmission lines and urban fringe development.

4.123 Much of the estate and its parkland have grazing rights and some land is let to commoners. In this sense it is an integral part of the historic dispersed pastoral system.

**Opportunities for open-air recreation**

4.124 The tract of country including Hinton Park makes an important contribution to visitors’ experience of the New Forest. Although there are no rights of way across the park, the woodland and parkland can be seen and enjoyed from surrounding areas such as the A35 and Ringwood Road. In the southern and eastern parts of the area of contention, around Hinton House and
Beckley, there are a number of footpaths, a bridleway and quiet rural lanes that offer excellent opportunities for walking, riding and cycling and for enjoyment of the special qualities of the New Forest. The footpath network provides links to the south, giving residents of Highcliffe easy access to these opportunities.

Cranemoor Common (south of the railway at Hinton Admiral)

The case for the objector

4.125 S Coombs (368) seeks inclusion within the Park of this remnant common comprising woodland, a watercourse and small water body. The land is accessible at a number of points from nearby residential roads and affords access under the railway embankment to the countryside. The area is rich in wildlife and is used as a resource by local schools. A local group has been established to assist in caring for the area. The landowners (Meyrick Estate) have no interest in this area and have attempted to get planning permission for development.

The case for the Agency

4.126 This area is valued by local people for its landscape, nature conservation and recreation but is essentially a local open space enclosed by residential development and the railway embankment. The latter forms a logical boundary to the NFNP, cutting the land off from any ‘extensive tract’. The nature of the land does not make for a markedly superior recreational experience.

Landscape Assessor’s Conclusions & Recommendations on Natural Beauty

The Town of Lymington and Surrounding Areas

4.127 In considering the diverse landscapes of the town and surrounding countryside it is apparent there are major variations in landscape quality. The boundary of the NFHA excludes Lymington and land to the south while to the north the NFHA boundary has had a chequered history. The AONB covers the coastal area to MLW from Lymington River to Keyhaven but does not include a band of land from Lower Pennington and north of Normandy Lane to the town’s southern periphery. The NFNP boundary in the Designation Order covers the whole of this area including the town and land extending from the river as far west as Milford-on-Sea and north to Lymore and Efford, thereby including land not previously recognised as possessing natural beauty.

Lymington

4.128 Looking first to the built-up area of Lymington I find that the town centre has a fine, historic core centred on the High Street which rises from the river valley, providing a view east towards the New Forest and with other outlying architecturally attractive residential areas such as that south of Buckland and alongside Pennington Common.
Lymington also has some nineteenth century housing, but otherwise the majority of the urban area is composed of 20th century development, most recently on the west side of town, where there are extensive areas of modern housing of a type and form which is mainly suburban in character and has no particular relationship with town’s landscape context. In addition on the eastern periphery of Lymington, a string of light industrial and utility sites are found along the riverside mainly north of the road bridge, such as that associated with Lymington Precision Engineers (190). The townscape quality generally decreases from the central Conservation Area outwards and the relationship between urban and rural is not always one of harmony.

According to the Agency’s landscape assessment the town is located within character area 16 (CD 127) which is made up of 4 landscape types: the Urban type of Lymington itself, Coastal Plain Estates, Coastal Fringe and Historic Parkland, the latter being found only on the east side of the river. Even though the townscape possesses a high quality urban environment with plenty of mature gardens and open spaces with mature trees, these are not key characteristics of any other New Forest landscape. In addition I find only one strong visual link with the New Forest, as mentioned above, and the town’s main focus is inward or towards the river and not to the Forest.

Despite its size, it is extremely difficult to get an overall visual impression of the town from the outside, except from the coast due to the local topography and screening by vegetation within and throughout the urban area preventing inter-visibility. This is least evident at Pennington Common where heathland blends into the urban layout.

In conclusion I find that the town is contained within its own urban character area of Lymington townscape, and the physical relationship with the surrounding countryside is predominantly exclusive of the New Forest.

While I accept that the central area of Lymington is a high quality urban setting and historically there were strong links with the New Forest through past associated activities, such as the export of Forest products, I do not find that the wider urban area relates to the rural hinterland today, but is more oriented to the coast as a ferry port and centre for sailing.

In conclusion I find that the quality of the townscape of Lymington is variable, is not part of the typical landscape character of the New Forest, does not form part of the extensive tract of country and does not meet the natural beauty criterion that is necessary for consideration as part of the NFNP. In conclusion I recommend that the town is excluded from the NFNP on natural beauty grounds.

Land south of Lymington

The land between the urban edge and the coast to the south of Lymington to Milford-on-Sea contains considerable diversity both in landscape character and landscape quality. This area was not included in the NFHA mainly because the relationship between the New Forest and the coastal landscape was not as strong as that east of Lymington River. However the previous AONB designation had recognised the intrinsic natural beauty of this part of the coast and its hinterland north of Keyhaven Marshes.

The NFNP boundary in the Designation Order includes land right up to Milford-on-Sea, including Keyhaven village and land on the west side of the Avon Water beyond the AONB. In looking to this area I find there is an extensive area of land west of Lower Pennington which is adversely affected by incongruous land uses and devoted to mineral extraction, landfill and
refuse recycling, which impose a highly negative impact on the landscape quality of this area which is not in keeping with that expected of AONB or NFNP designations.

4.137 Even with the relatively short time horizon of 2007 for initial land restoration I am of the opinion that this area will not for many years, if ever, meet the standard required to satisfy the natural beauty criterion for NFNP designation purposes.

4.138 The landscape structure has been essentially broken between Keyhaven and Efford to such an extent that even with a careful and well designed restoration scheme, the landscape will appear artificial and over time is likely to achieve no more than an ordinary status of landscape quality. Between the Avon Water and Lymore Lane the landscape is an agriculturally intensive one of cereals and maize, interspersed with occasional remnant Forest features such as in the vicinity of Agarton Lane but much more evident around Keyhaven village. At Efford, apart from Great Newbridge Copse, the land around the Horticultural Research Station contributes little to New Forest landscape character offering only a tall exotic conifer linear boundary, and associated strictly regimented plots which tend to over power the semi-abandoned narrow valley between that and the refuse site.

4.139 In contrast, to the south of this disturbed and ravaged landscape I find that the Coastal Fringe landscape type is one of high quality with outstanding views east and south across the marshes and the Solent to the Isle of Wight. A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity prevails regardless of the industrial activity to the north, in an open coastal marsh environment appropriately recognised for its natural beauty by the AONB designation and containing important nature conservation designations, all of which extend to Hurst Spit. In addition, immediately south of the built-edge of the town, between Lower Pennington and Waterford and inland of the Coastal Fringe, I find the Coastal Plain Estates landscape type is still very evident and intact, containing a typical pattern of small irregular fields with hedgerow trees and small areas of woodland connecting with the coastal landscape pattern of marshes and woods further east across the river. This area has a close intimacy with and forms part of the assemblage of coastal landscapes of the New Forest running along this part of the Solent between Keyhaven and Calshot. As a result I find that this area demonstrates a typical New Forest landscape assemblage, is of high quality and fully meets the requirements of the natural beauty criterion.

4.140 In my overall conclusions on the assessment of land which qualifies as part of the extensive tract and meets the natural beauty criterion, I recognise that the situation south of Lymington is complex, that the landscape conditions and character have and continue to change and therefore require particularly careful consideration in order to arrive at a robust and legible boundary for the NFNP that will stand the tests of time.

4.141 I therefore recommend that to include all the land south of Lymington which does meet the natural beauty criterion and is therefore suitable for NFNP designation the boundary should be as follows:-

On the east side of the river estuary below Lisle Court Farm, where MLW meets the perambulation, the NFNP boundary would cross the river directly south west to meet the west bank close to the southern edge of the outer marina at Waterford. It would then follow the footpath and Solent Way which follow a bund beyond the western edge of the marina, reaching the built edge of the town at the end of Westfield Road. It would then follow the boundary of the built up area (as shown in the Local Plan) along All Saints Road to Delaware House, then turning south to Normandy Mead via Viney Road. It would then leave the defined built-up edge of the town just before Normandy Mead, and continue south to the junction with Normandy Lane where it would then follow Poles
Lane west to Ridgeway Farm (omitting areas of formal public open space on the edge of the town which do not meet the natural beauty criterion) where it then picks up a footpath north of the farm going west to Lower Pennington Lane and crosses it, via a track to meet the AONB boundary and cycleway north of Sadlers Farm.

From here I recommend that the boundary turns south to join and then follow Lower Pennington Lane to the road end on Pennington Marshes and then follow the byway west to Keyhaven Marshes as far as Illey Lane including the triangle of recently restored land. The boundary would then follow the eastern ditch running north and parallel with the Avon Water as far as the ditch and dyke crossing the watercourse and then return south towards Vidle Van Farm track.

From this point my recommendation is that the NFNP boundary should skirt the built-up area of Keyhaven as closely as possible to join MHW south of Salt Grass Cottages and then include Hurst Castle Spit before returning east along MLW. In my view it is important to include the whole of the small coastal village of Keyhaven, centred on its harbour and historic core, but the area of qualifying natural beauty does not extend into the large-scale open arable fields to the north and west of the village. The boundary shown on the map attached to Appendix 1 attempts to indicate this but it is difficult to do so entirely clearly at the scale of the Designation Order, especially as Keyhaven is not a village with a built-up area defined on a Local Plan Inset Map. It may be that this area should be covered by a specially prepared Inset Map attached to the Designation Order so that the boundary can be clearly indicated at a more appropriate scale.

**Land north and west of Lymington**

4.142 In the area west of Lymington and north of Efford Bridge around to Buckland and Bowling Green to the edge of the town I do not find the landscape character and quality of the Ancient Forest Farmlands type consistently intact and the resultant landscape quality is limited. This is due partly to the loss of hedgerows and field rationalisation especially west of Buckland Manor Farm, but also to the mixed standard of ribbon development along Ramley Road where several glasshouse complexes, some of which are disused, and the medium scale and occasionally visible Gordleton Industrial Park together impart an urban fringe feel to this landscape which is not outstanding in natural beauty terms. The land between Yaldhurst Copse and Cowley Farm is of marginally better landscape quality, having retained a typical irregular field pattern with a more wooded character than that to the east, but still has an urban fringe quality and is otherwise isolated.

4.143 In my opinion this is contrasted by the landscape quality and condition of the mainly wooded valley of the Avon Water south of Batchley Copse and Wainsford Bridge which, together with the heathy character of Upper and Lower Pennington Common, I find contains a good blend of New Forest landscape character and a true sense of being on the edge of the Forest. This is despite the encroachment of recent housing development on the western outskirts of Lymington, which is fortunately well screened from view.

4.144 In conclusion I recommend that the boundary for the NFNP in this area should be retained as for the NFHA in the Local Plan from Walhampton on the east bank of the Lymington River, crossing west at the road bridge and continuing around the north side of the town, including Buckland Rings, then west along Sway Road, excluding Gordleton Industrial Park turning south to Upper Pennington to meet the edge of the built up area before swinging away again to reach the A337 at Efford Bridge.
LAND AT THE BARTON – MILFORD GAP

4.145 In considering the whole area of contention between Milford-on-Sea and Barton I recognise that from the coast northwards the area does have landscape associations with the New Forest. The NFNP boundary follows the NFHA continuously between Efford Bridge and Hinton House thereby recognising that the area to the north of the boundary line met the natural beauty criterion for the NFHA designation.

4.146 I agree that the landscape character of the open countryside is one of the Coastal Landscape Estates landscape type with small parliamentary enclosures, with the Historic Parkland type present at Newlands Manor and Ashley Clinton House, but also at Arnewood House and Efford House, interspersed with the larger urban areas of Milford-on-Sea, Barton, Ashley and New Milton together with the sizeable villages of Everton and Hordle.

4.147 I also recognise the various typical New Forest landscape type features of small fields, woods and streams that are present in certain areas such as around Lymore, the often wooded corridor of Danes Stream and its tributaries, from Noah’s Ark Farm in the north through Taddiford Gap to the edge of Milford-on-Sea, and in the vicinity of Leagreen and Newlands Manor, which together with the other historic landscapes in this section, all display a degree of natural beauty giving pockets of high landscape quality. There is also visual access to a coastal landscape with fine views across the Solent from Hordle and Barton cliffs with the associated geological interest at the latter.

4.148 Notwithstanding the past literary and land management links with the New Forest, I also find that this landscape has changed considerably in recent times due to the dynamic pace of suburban expansion of the late 20th century evident in all the settlements across the this swathe of countryside, especially visible at Barton and Ashley. In looking to Milford-on-Sea I find a pleasant seaside village focused around the village green and historic buildings of the Conservation Area, but with considerable newer development on all sides. This effectively divorces the historic village from its original combined country and seaside setting. The village has retained a not surprising orientation to the coast being a popular haunt with locals and visitors alike, but has not retained the small scale charm of Keyhaven which is well integrated into its waterside and coastal marshland landscape setting.

4.149 Even though the landscape types present are found elsewhere in the NFNP it is evident that here landscape intactness has in places been markedly infringed, mainly by the raw edges of suburban residential development and changes in agricultural practices, but also by incongruous features such as Efford Horticultural Research Station and the large holiday park south of Downton.

4.150 In assessing this area I find that, even with the higher quality areas as mentioned above, the strength of landscape character and the overall landscape quality diminishes as one moves south from the NFNP boundary in the Designation Order to a level not worthy of National Park status between the main settlements and south of Everton and Hordle. This landscape is not, in my opinion, outstanding in a New Forest sense and the natural beauty criterion is not met in the majority of the countryside of this area.

4.151 North of Everton and Hordle up to the NFNP boundary I find the situation slightly different in that the landscape here is at the upper end of the transition spectrum of land that would qualify under the natural beauty criterion. There are few detractors but the landscape character is compromised by extensive arable fields where field boundaries have been comprehensively rationalised so my conclusions would still apply.
4.152 However I do find there are two exceptions to this conclusion which lie close to the NFNP boundary. The first is at Arne Wood/Arnewood House which I find has physical affinity (and may yet have proven literary connection) with the landscape to the north and would make a more robust boundary in this area. The second is at Cottager’s Lane north of Hordle where the field pattern, boundary vegetation and vernacular buildings have an obvious connectivity with the Ancient Forest Farmlands landscape to the north to such an extent that I believe this area would be more appropriately classified as of that landscape type.

4.153 In drawing conclusions for this section I find that the boundary does define the land which meets the natural beauty test for NFNP designation and provides a legible boundary for the National Park. I also conclude that the wider contention area is isolated from the New Forest by the surrounding settlements, though shows some affinity with the Forest, but that affinity is patchy and shows unevenness in landscape quality. The combination of isolation, and inconsistent character and quality is such that the area does not form part of the extensive tract of countryside that does meet the criterion of natural beauty.

4.154 The boundary of the Designation Order is robust and meaningful along this section except at the two locations described above, namely Arne Wood and north of Hordle where NFNP boundary revisions are recommended. Both of these areas satisfy the natural beauty criterion and form part of the extensive tract of country which qualifies for National Park status.

4.155 The boundary recommended is therefore as the Designation Order from Efford Bridge to the wood north of Batchley Farm where it would depart from the NFNP boundary turning west around the wood and include the two small enclosures between it and Arnewood itself. The boundary would then continue along the southern boundary of Arnewood including Arnewood House and the small paddocks and grounds around the house returning to meet the NFNP boundary at the footpath coming from the west side of Arnewood.

4.156 At Hordle I recommend that the boundary should include the Cottager’s Lane area, departing from the NFNP boundary from Hollybush Farm and continue south along the lane to follow the built edge of Hordle towards the crossroads on the north side of the village where it would rejoin the NFNP boundary just east of the road junction.

LAND BETWEEN BARTON AND MUDEFORD

4.157 While accepting that the coastal area between Barton and Mudeford is attractive and forms a valuable landscape resource in the otherwise heavily developed area east of Christchurch, I find that the area has little connection, either actual or perceived, to the landscapes of the New Forest.

4.158 Apart from the shore between MHW and MLW and occasionally the narrow strip behind, I find the area is thoroughly urbanised and has no New Forest landscape character. The narrow open area at Chewton Bunny is encroached upon by holiday chalet development and the urban development of Highcliffe, while north of the A337 are the rather manicured grounds of Chewton Glen Hotel and a heavily modified series of fields and a large nursery complex closer to the railway. As a result I find this essentially urban fringe area has a very tenuous connection to the landscape north of the railway, which anyway is not within the NFNP boundary in the Designation Order.

4.159 In conclusion I find that the area of contention is isolated, has little connection with the landscapes of the New Forest, does not meet the natural beauty criterion and therefore cannot
qualify for inclusion in the NFNP. I therefore recommend that the boundary here is retained as in the NFNP Designation Order.

**LAND WEST AND NORTH OF NEW MILTON**

4.160 In looking to the land in question west and north of New Milton I agree that the landscape character is of the Coastal Plain Estates type as defined by the Agency but contains a simple composition of two main elements. The first is the wooded valley of Walkford Brook running north to south and the other the large arable fields either side of the valley which lack field boundary definition but are crossed by pylons and overhead lines.

4.161 Consequently I find the landscape here is simple and ordinary, and without the landscape pattern framework typical of this type resulting in poor landscape quality. By its very nature Walkford Brook has connectivity to the New Forest landscapes further north but only as a limited corridor and not forming part of the extensive tract of countryside north of the B3055. Considered as a whole this area does not have outstanding landscape quality, and does not satisfy the natural beauty criterion and is therefore not of National park status.

4.162 In the vicinity of Dark Lane and Hinton House I find the NFNP boundary alignment is correct in that it excludes the large arable fields associated with the area west of New Milton considered in the last section, but includes land more typical of the Heath Associated Small Holdings and Dwellings landscape type which is evident around Hinton House and Hinton Park. Here the larger scale field system is also well wooded with mature hedgerow trees throughout the farmland with former heathland evident in places.

4.163 I find that all the land associated with the Dark Lane objection area has the character of this typical New Forest landscape type, is intact and of good quality satisfying the natural beauty criterion and so should be included in the NFNP.

4.164 I therefore conclude that I do not find it necessary to recommend a revision to the boundary in this area.

**LAND AT HINTON PARK**

4.165 I find that the contended land at Hinton Park and the surrounding associated countryside has long been recognised for its natural beauty, having been part of the NFHA.

4.166 While accepting that the landscape of Hinton Park is not often visible from surrounding countryside due to the extensive layout of woods beyond the central parkland area and the mosaic of smaller woodland within, I do find that the wider landscape setting is appreciable at various locations in the surrounding countryside and from longer distance viewpoints. The landscape character is one that is redolent of the New Forest, markedly intact and of a very high quality, which typifies a well-managed estate that is intrinsically part of the wider New Forest landscape and amply meets the natural beauty criterion.

4.167 Beyond the highly regarded designed landscape of the parkland, which is recorded and detailed on the Hampshire County Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, with English Heritage Grade 1 listing for the buildings it contains, I find the wider landscape within which it sits consistently includes all the characteristics of its Heath Associated landscape type which is a classic New Forest type found elsewhere within the NFNP.
4.168 I therefore have no hesitation in recommending that this area should be included in its entirety within the NFNP as it more than adequately satisfies the natural beauty criterion and I see no reason on these grounds for a boundary revision in this area.

CRANEMOOR COMMON

4.169 I find Cranemoor Common is an attractive, well used and locally valued landscape resource for the nearby residential neighbourhood. However it is now dislocated from the NFNP quite emphatically by the railway and its embankment, both visually and physically. While I accept that it must have once been part of the New Forest commons it no longer forms part of that system and does not logically form part of the extensive tract of countryside to the north.

4.170 I conclude that it would be inappropriate for the NFNP boundary to divert from the robust boundary that the railway provides in order to include this small parcel of land which is now a local open space. Therefore I do not recommend that the NFNP boundary be revised to include Cranemoor Common.

INSPECTOR'S OVERALL CONCLUSIONS ON THE TWO DESIGNATION CRITERIA

NATURAL BEAUTY

4.171 With two small exceptions I agree with the Landscape Assessor’s conclusions on the applicability or otherwise of the natural beauty criterion within the various areas of contention in boundary sections 11-12. I deal with these exceptions in paragraphs 4.183 – 4.186 below, in which I cover both of the designation criteria together for ease of reference.

4.172 There are also two other areas about which I need to make some comments in relation to natural beauty.

4.173 Firstly, Lymington would be by far the largest town in any English National Park. While it may contain limited aspects of ‘natural beauty’ an urban area of this size does not (and probably could not) meet the designation criterion to anything like a sufficient extent. It is not a small town blending into or penetrated by the surrounding countryside like Lyndhurst or Brockenhurst and in my view its inclusion would be manifestly inappropriate, as well as requiring too much of the NPA’s resources to be devoted to urban planning issues irrelevant to proper National Park purposes. In my view none of factors raised by the Agency under boundary-setting criteria 2d and 2g (or the accompanying footnotes) concerning the inclusion or exclusion of towns (see table 2 of CD104) come near to outweighing these fundamental points.

4.174 Secondly, the area south of Lymington is one where particularly careful judgement is needed as to whether the area should be included in the NFNP or excluded from it. I have no doubt that the area meets both of the designation criteria, but its remaining connectivity with other areas qualifying for inclusion in the NFNP is much more open to question.

4.175 This area is physically isolated from other areas recommended for inclusion except for its loose attachment (across the mouth of Lymington River) to similar Coastal Fringe and Coastal Plain Estates type landscapes on the eastern side of the estuary within the NFHA/AONB and the NFNP designation order. However, although this link is somewhat tenuous (and inclusion of the land south of the town would result in a long projection from the main body of the National Park) I recommend that this coastal land is included in the NFNP. This would have the
pragmatic merit of taking into the NFNP all the land within the South Hampshire Coast AONB which the Assessor and myself still consider to qualify on natural beauty grounds, thus enabling the AONB to be revoked in its entirety. If this area is not included in the NFNP its current level of landscape protection would be undesirably reduced since it could hardly be feasible for such a small area to be retained as a separate AONB in its own right.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OPEN-AIR RECREATION

The town of Lymington

4.176 Lymington is clearly a popular visitor destination for recreation based on coastal pursuits such as sailing and more casual enjoyment of its scenic waterside and attractive town centre. It is also a starting point for walks along the marshes. However, the developed urban area as a whole does not provide a markedly superior recreational experience based on landscape resources of National Park-standard natural beauty.

Land north of Lymington

4.177 The area in contention north of Lymington, recommended for exclusion by the Landscape Assessor, is penetrated by footpaths but I found that these cross a generally flat plateau of unremarkable, somewhat degraded countryside. Some paths appear to be little used and the recreational experience here is certainly not ‘markedly superior’.

Land south of Lymington

4.178 I consider that the area considered by the Landscape Assessor to warrant inclusion and exclusion south of Lymington on natural beauty grounds coincides with the extent of the area meeting the second designation criterion.

4.179 The coastal area comprising the on-shore marshes and salterns (and the quieter pastoral areas behind these approaching the southern edges of Lymington) contains a network of quiet lanes and rights of way passing through tranquil countryside with occasional traditional buildings. Hurst Castle (accessed on foot along the lengthy spit or by boat from Keyhaven, and representing a historic feature right in the middle of the Western Solent) offers an additional point of very great interest, as does the highly attractive coastal village of Keyhaven. Overall, this area provides ‘markedly superior’ recreational opportunities for walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, bird-watchers and more casual visitors.

4.180 By contrast, the recreational experience available elsewhere south of the town is inevitably affected by the different (much lower) quality of the evolving landscapes found on the extensive former and current extraction sites and the large-scale arable landscapes west of the Avon Water. In my view the open-air recreational opportunities in these areas, though pleasant in places, are not ‘markedly superior’.

The Barton-Milford gap

4.181 I have agreed with the Landscape Assessor, and the Countryside Agency, that this tract of land (between the coast to the south, Barton and Ashley in the west, and the Designation Order boundaries in the north and east) does not have sufficiently consistently outstanding natural beauty to merit inclusion in the NFNP. As a result, this sizeable tract of land (taken as a whole) does not provide the opportunity to experience sufficiently continuous episodes of ‘markedly superior recreational experience’.
4.182 The cliff-top walk from Barton to Milford is certainly an uplifting experience in any weather, and full of great interest, and there are a number of sub-areas where lanes and other rights of way pass through pleasant countryside, providing short interludes reflecting aspects of the New Forest. However, too often the presence of the generally encircling built-up areas (Barton, Ashley, Hordle, Everton and Milford) and other detractors such as caravan sites, busy roads, Efford Research Station, and areas of extensive arable cultivation, break up the continuity of the available open-air recreational experience, reducing it below the level required for National Park designation.

4.183 I now turn to the areas where the Landscape Assessor has suggested small-scale additions to the NFNP. First of all, I agree with her (and the Agency) that it is difficult to draw hard and fast boundaries in this area where the quality of the landscape and the available recreational experience is in gradual transition away from designation quality from north to south.

4.184 Dealing with the Arnewood House/Arne Wood area, it seems to me that the literary associations of the House are unproven. More particularly, even if they exist, there appears to be little about the present house to bring these associations alive to visitors, were they to have access to the house, which at present they do not. Arne Wood offers an attractive footpath through woodland but this is only a short length in a wider route most of which passes through countryside that is not of outstanding quality. The paths leaving the wood to the north and west pass over land which (although partly within the NFHA) appear to me to be less intact, well-maintained or high-quality than would be necessary to merit inclusion in the National Park. To the south of the wood the recreational experience undergoes a change in character. The paths from Arne Wood to Batchley Farm and then onwards to Everton via Icehouse Plantation appear to be popular and provide a very pleasant route but the landscape here is opening out into a larger scale than that found along the north-south path along the western side of the valley of the Avon Water.

4.185 Turning to the second area, the triangle based on Cottagers Lane, I agree that this area would be more appropriately characterised as being of the Ancient Forest Farmlands landscape character type but it seems to me that its ability to meet the natural beauty criterion is at best marginal. Also, there is no public access to this area and although part of Cottagers Lane has a pleasant rural character I do not consider that the addition of this triangle to the NFNP could contribute to the necessary ‘markedly superior recreational experience’.

4.186 My overall conclusion in this area is that land south of Silver Street between (in the west) the built-up edge of Hordle and (in the east) the north-south footpath along the western rim of the valley of the Avon Water (passing the development known as Broadmead) does not meet the two designation criteria. Silver Street is a busy straight road used by a considerable amount of traffic and fronted (especially on the south side) by a considerable amount of development, much rather utilitarian in quality and including commercial uses. There is little opportunity to see into the land within the NFHA on the south side of Silver Street and the only footpath into this area (opposite Marlwood Nurseries) does not afford a markedly superior recreational experience. Silver Street therefore presents an obvious robust boundary to the NFNP at this point.

**Land between Barton and Mudeford**

4.187 This is an attractive coast with considerable appeal to visitors but the inland setting is urban, most of the land between the sea and the railway being developed. Although the urban area contains pleasant open areas such as the grounds of Highcliffe Castle, a number of remnants
of former New Forest-related commons, and Chewton Bunny this is primarily a developed tract not offering National Park-type opportunities for open-air recreation.

**Land west and north of New Milton**

4.188 As described by the Landscape Assessor, this area does not provide a landscape resource of National Park quality. Moreover it is one to which there is little public access. Walkford Lane falls far short of providing a ‘markedly superior recreational experience’. The same is true of the paths extending north from the railway line towards the Designation Order boundary.

4.189 However, the Dark Lane area is a quiet backwater where recreational links on foot or cycle can begin to be made between the urban areas to the south and the New Forest landscapes which have begun to emerge strongly in this area. On balance I recommend the inclusion of this land within the NFNP.

**Land at Hinton Park**

4.190 Turning to the large area of contention based on Hinton Estate, I agree with the Landscape Assessor that this area meets the natural beauty criterion. From our extensive accompanied visit I am satisfied that the area has a very high quality, intact, well-maintained landscape containing considerable elements of variety from broad parkland to intimate wooded valleys to the well-ordered woodland-fringed fields of the dairy farms.

4.191 This area of Heath-associated Estates landscape is extensive and forms an important and integral part of the highly attractive ring of landscapes immediately surrounding the perambulation. The various elements of this landscape provide the foreground for those travelling through the area on the A35 and the various other minor roads, including that leading to Forest Lodge, and there are also occasional longer distance views into the landscape. These visual opportunities all add greatly to public enjoyment of the area by considerably extending the experience of being in the Forest.

4.192 Although there is little public access to this particular section of the area within the Designation Order south west of the perambulation it is not necessary for such access to exist across every part of a qualifying tract. The estate has a track record of granting and considering access to other nearby areas within the same tract of ‘heath-associated estates’ landscape type although it has expressed a current desire not to provide access to the area in contention other than, as now, to the Hinton Admiral parklands on special occasions. However, circumstances can change and, given the quality, scale and tranquillity of the landscape resource here, I do not consider it unreasonable to conclude that the general question I have posed in relation to ‘potential opportunities’ for open-air recreation offering a markedly superior recreational experience (at paragraph 15 of Appendix 2) could be answered in the affirmative.

4.193 Overall, therefore, I recommend inclusion of this area in the NFNP.

**Cranemoor Common**

4.194 I agree with the Landscape Assessor that this remaining open area south of the robust boundary formed by the railway embankment is of local value rather than meriting inclusion in the NFNP on natural beauty grounds. Similarly, while it forms a valuable recreational resource for local people, the tunnel under the railway does not appear to link with any legally established rights of way on the north side and this small site does not offer a markedly superior recreational experience of national importance.
OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS (Boundary sections 11-12)

4.195 I recommend that the NFNP boundary for these sections be modified as indicated on the attached maps and described in the summary of recommendations at pages 5-6.