PART 6. BOUNDARY SECTIONS 16-17

INTRODUCTION
6.1 The objections here can be most conveniently reported under the following headings:

- Land north of Hale
- Redlych, Bohemia and Lover
- Land at The Earldoms
- Land near Whiteparish Village
- Area of contention between the A36 and A27

LAND NORTH OF HALE

Case for the objectors
6.2 J Woolley (104) and Mrs K Wormington (137) propose that the boundary should follow the bridle way north of Hale House and then the minor road to Hatchet Green and North Charford. In Mr Woolley’s view these areas have scenic value but are not New Forest areas and do not need to be within the NFNP to be protected.

6.3 Mr P Newman (234) objects to the exclusion of a smaller part of the above area north of the Hale to North Charford road. He owns former agricultural land and buildings on the Hampshire/Wiltshire boundary at Woodfalls Cross and is concerned that inclusion of the site in the NFNP could introduce an additional bureaucratic dimension into future consideration of any development proposals, possibly for affordable housing. In his view the NFNP would lose none of its integrity if it followed his suggested line because the boundary follows an obscure twisting route at this point.

6.4 On the other hand, a number of organisations seek extensions of the boundary in this area. The New Forest Commoners’ Defence Committee (106) and the Ramblers’ Association (226) request an extension of the boundary in this area to include the land as far north as Lode Hill between Downton and Morgan’s Vale (as described under section 15). In the latter’s view this would provide a more easily identifiable boundary. The New Forest Committee (378) seeks a smaller extension of the boundary as far as the bridle way south of Church Close Copse.

Case for the Agency
6.5 The boundary in this area has been drawn to include high quality landscapes of the ancient forest farmland type, with its extensive areas of deciduous woods and remnant wood pastures and exclude land of the chalk river valley landscape type. The
The proposed line approximates closely to the point at which the change in geology occurs and is easily distinguishable on the ground. The chalkland landscapes around Ryehill Copse have an open rolling character that contrasts strongly with the intimate wooded character of the land to the south. The boundary also includes traditional New Forest settlements like Hatchet Green and North Charford but excludes the larger mainly modern and suburban settlements of Woodfalls and Morgan’s Vale which make no significant contribution to the special qualities or rural economy of the Park. The proposal by Messrs Woolley and Newman and Ms Wormington would split North Charford, leaving it part in and part outside the NFNP.

6.6 The areas here included within the NFNP contain a number of footpaths and bridleways, including a section of the Avon Valley Path which crosses a wooded valley. These offer opportunities for users to enjoy the special landscape character and qualities of the New Forest.

REDLYNCH, BOHEMIA AND LOVER

Case for the objectors

6.7 J Woolley (104) and Mrs K Wormington (137) suggest the omission of land north of the minor road running through these villages from North Charford in the west to Timbury Land in the east.

Case for the Agency

6.8 This area is part of the ancient forest farmland landscape type stretching up to the edge of the Wiltshire chalk downs and accessed by a variety of rights of way offering opportunities for open-air recreation and enjoyment of the special qualities of the New Forest.

LAND AT THE EARLDOMS

Case for the objector

6.9 Mrs K Wormington (137) is concerned with land centred on The Earldoms and Bagfield Copse and, in this boundary section, seeks the exclusion of land north of these features between Moors Land and the A27. The objector is the owner of Earldoms Estate, extending to about 80ha, half of which is grassland supporting beef cattle and half woodland which has been planted and managed by the owner and her father over 84 years. It has never been part of the New Forest or the New Forest economy and it is better for the future of its habitats that it continues to be managed privately rather than as part of a public National Park. The prospect of public access for ‘recreation’ would be at odds with this conservation objective.
Case for the Agency

6.10 The NFNP has been drawn to include the sequence of ancient semi-natural woodlands (Landford Wood, The Earldoms and Langley Wood), remnant woodland pasture commons (Whitechapel Common and Cowesfield Green) and a medieval deer park (Loosehangar Park). These stretch in an almost unbroken chain from Hale Purlieu to the A27 and form an important series of habitats and ancient landscapes on the claylands to the north of the main heathland zone of the Forest. Many of these woodlands are SSSIs and form part of the New Forest cSAC. These are high quality landscapes in excellent condition with little fragmentation, distinctive forest character and few incongruous features.

6.11 There is a good network of footpaths and lanes offering access to this area and the opportunity to understand the special qualities and characteristics of this part of the New Forest in an exceptionally high quality landscape.

LAND NEAR WHITEPARISH VILLAGE

Cases for the objectors

6.12 There are suggestions for both extension and retraction of the boundary in this area.

6.13 Ms C Thackray (96), Mr & Mrs Newton (100), the New Forest Commoners’ Defence Association (106), the New Forest Association (111), Ms A Bowry (123), Mr B Wilson (125), Ms A Wilson (126), Brockenhurst Parish Council (224), the Ramblers Association (226), T Radford (320), J Thackray (322) and the New Forest Committee (378), suggest that the boundary should be extended northwards. Some advocate a precise boundary following Moor Lane to Newton and then Newton Lane and the A27 (although omitting properties in the village on the south side of this road) rejoining the Agency’s boundary at Cowesfield Green. The Ramblers Association refers to this as an area laced with footpaths and small fields which it would be illogical to exclude. The New Forest Committee considers that Moor Lane is an attractive feature in its own right with high hedge banks and wooded views to the south. In their view it provides a clear northern boundary and a gateway into the NFNP.

6.14 On the other hand Whitechapel Parish Council (143) suggests that the NFNP should exclude all land within the parish boundary which runs from the A36 to the A27 crossing Whiteparish Common and skirting to the north of Woodfalls Farm and Temple Park. Salisbury District Council (172) makes no comment on this issue but supports the right of the parish to raise it.

6.15 In the Parish Council’s view Whitechapel is a chalkland village. It has no historical or economic connection with the New Forest or sense of common identity with it. Its inclusion would be artificial and unwarranted. There is no evidence that the included parts of the parish need to be managed with the New Forest. The designation order boundary has little logic, meandering through fields and around
boundary fences, and should be retracted to the parish boundary south of Park Water Road.

Case for the Agency

6.16 That part of the parish included in the NFNP is part of the ancient forest farmland landscape type, characterised by strong sense of enclosure, ancient woodlands, winding leafy lanes and scattered farmsteads. The boundary here follows the NFHA perimeter, including the remnant wood pasture commons at Cowesfield Green and Whiteparish Common which are part of the sequence of ancient landscapes described above (in relation to ‘Land at the Earldoms’). The landscape has evolved in a similar way to the New Forest and demonstrates visual and historical continuity with it. Whiteparish Common and Cowesfield Green are good quality landscapes without incongruous elements and in good repair. The former is an SSSI and part of the New Forest eSAC. The included areas are part of the extensive tract of ancient forest farmlands stretching from Redlynch to Wellow and Landford and can be clearly distinguished from the chalk downlands landscape to the north. The good network of footpaths and lanes in this area offers access to the woodlands and commons within it giving the public the opportunity to understand the special qualities of this part of the New Forest.

6.17 The quality of the landscape in the areas suggested by the Ramblers Association is too variable to merit inclusion. Near Whiteparish the land is mainly large scale open arable fields in contrast to the more enclosed wooded landscape within the National Park and its quality undergoes a gradual change as the chalk is approached. The village itself does not have New Forest vernacular character and the suburban extension to the south makes the Ramblers’ Association’s boundary impractical. Near Newton a small stream forms a suitable boundary and there are no grounds for moving the boundary further north.

Land at Herrington House, Whiteparish

6.18 Mr G Downes (53) points out that the NFNP boundary goes through his house. The Agency has accepted this fact and has proposed an appropriate change to the Designation Order that would be agreeable to both parties.

AREA OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE A36 and the A27

Introduction

6.19 Many objectors seek the extension of the NFNP to include all the land within an area of contention bounded by the line of the A3090, Gardeners Lane and the A27, rejoining the designation order boundary west of Sherfield English. In their view the A27 forms the natural divide between the New Forest landscapes to the south and the chalk downs to the north and provides a clearer and more defensible boundary.
6.20 These objectors are: Col P Sweet (1); New Forest Consultative Panel (89); C Thackray (96); J Newton (100); New Forest Commoners’ Defence Association (110); Mrs E M Newman (113); Ms A Bowry (123); B Wilson (125); Ms A Wilson (126); S J Hunt (169); Test Valley Borough Council (175); A Hunt (180); Brockenhurst PC (224); the National Trust (228); S J Hunt (232); L Hunt (238); T Radford (320); J Thackray (332); the Association of National Parks (356); New Forest Committee (378).

6.21 Three other objectors generally agree with the above approach but seek an extension to the area of contention to include land east of Gardeners Lane as far as the A27/A3090 junction: the New Forest Association (111); Mr & Mrs Sutton (185); and the Ramblers’ Association (226). The latter also suggests a further extension east of the A3090 to Wade Bridge via Ridge Lane.

6.22 Other objectors seek more limited extensions north of the A36 in the Wellow parish and Embley Wood & Embley Park areas: Wellow PC (81); Ms J Eddlestone (164); S Field (332); and Roy Perry MEP (374).

6.23 On the other hand, a number of objectors suggest retraction of the boundary in this area, usually pointing to the A36 as the most appropriate boundary. These objectors are: A Dunning (71); K Cromar (73); J Woolley (104); Mrs K Wormington (137); P & S Newby (242).

6.24 Romsey Extra Parish Council (245) also supports this view with certain reservations as reported beneath.

**Objections seeking extension to include the main area of contention**

**Cases for the objectors**

6.25 [Test Valley Borough Council put the fullest case for extension to the A27. The report therefore summarises their case, adding supplementary points made by other objectors.]

**Natural beauty**

6.26 The area of contention is wholly within the New Forest Countryside Character Area. All was classified by LUC as within New Forest landscape types, mainly ancient forest farmland with heathland estates at the eastern end. However, the local landscape types may be subdivided into 4 local landscape types as described below and defined at 175/1/1/A fig 16.

6.27 ‘Historic parkland’ landscape is centred around the extensive grounds of Embley Park School within an area designated on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Historic maps and records and existing vegetation indicate the heathy characteristics of this area. Today it is dominated by mixed woodland and parkland as well as the former C19 gardens, a pond and stream and the grade II listed school buildings which were once the home of Florence Nightingale. There are good views over the Blackwater valley towards the New Forest. There are
no significant intrusive elements although there has been some landscape neglect and invasion by alien vegetation. However, the school has engaged consultants to prepare a historic landscape appraisal and management proposals (175/0/1-3 & 6). Overall this is an attractive landscape with the potential for restoration and management to regain some of its former glory.

6.28 ‘Heath associated estates’ occupy much of the eastern part of the area of contention (and the historic parkland referred to above is really a sub-set of this). The area is mainly former commonland and woodland, as shown by historic maps and records, and retains heathy characteristics. Today the area is dominated by mixed woodland (primarily Embley Wood) and open grassland with some vineyards in the north and a number of scattered lakes and ponds, some used for private fishing. Embley Park Golf Course lies south of the school.

6.29 The key characteristics of this area include an undulating estate landscape; extensive mixed heathy woodland; remnant features of former common land; lack of settlements and roads; strong sense of enclosure; views to the south-west towards the forest; strong evidence of a designed landscape including woodland rides; part of the New Forest pastoral system.

6.30 The landscape is in generally good condition and well-managed, although there are pockets of industry and neglect. Embley Park golf course occupies a historically more open area, is not intrusive and has been sympathetically developed according to an agreement and management plan (175/0/5 & 7). There is a strong sense of tranquillity and rural isolation. The small industrial estates have very local impact and the transmission line is often lost from view. Landscape quality is mainly good. Views are varied but generally enclosed by woodland. Remnants of former historic landscape features can be seen, eg the boundary planting to Woodington Common, parkland features such as Kentford Lake, the lodges on the A3090, Embley Manor and Romsey Common Farm. There is considerable local ecological interest with typical New Forest habitats and ancient woodland.

6.31 Embley Wood contains a range of habitats that have largely developed from the former Romsey Common and have clear ecological and historical links with the New Forest. It currently includes 4 SINCs but its scientific importance has only very recently been recognised at national level by English Nature (175/3/2) who have determined that it qualifies for selection as an SSSI for its assemblage of dragonflies, 23 species of which have been recorded. In addition 57 species of birds have been recorded there including 17 amber and red list bird species, 14 of which are thought to breed on site. Many of these are species for which the New Forest SPA has been classified. Likewise, the wood contains habitats among those for which the New Forest cSAC has been identified, ie ‘North Atlantic wet heath’ and ‘dry heath’. This is likely to be a key site for objective 3 of the New Forest Natural Area Profile (CD230), ie “to maintain or enhance the nature conservation value of the wider New Forest and to restore ecological links and corridors between semi-natural habitats.”

6.32 The scientific importance of Embley Wood is summarised in a statement of evidence presented at a recent planning inquiry (175/3/1) concerning the extraction of sand and gravel from land between Gardeners Lane and the A3090 to the east of Embley Wood. The appeal was dismissed by the First Secretary of State (185/1/6) on
the grounds that although there was a need for local sand and gravel to maintain a 7 year land bank and this was a preferred area for extraction in the minerals and waste local plan, too much harm would occur to the nature conservation value of Embley Wood and the mitigation measures in relation to the potential hydrological and hydrogeological effects would be inadequate.

6.33 The site has been added to the programme for new SSSI notifications to be implemented in early 2005 although further surveys of invertebrates are needed to determine a boundary. The wood repeats the combination of woodland, heath, valley mires and seepages which make the New Forest unique, leaving little doubt that it once formed part of that landscape. The New Forest supports the same species of dragonflies as recorded in Embley Wood but the latter is exceptional in supporting so many species within such a small area.

6.34 *Ancient forest farmlands* are found south of Sherfield English and The Frenchies. The key characteristics of this area are a farmed wooded landscape; small scale irregular pasture and woodland; scattered farmsteads and attractive hamlets; nature conservation value; commoning links with the New Forest; extensive views to the forest; grazing; undulating south-facing topography; and a network of winding leafy lanes.

6.35 The area is generally in a very good condition and well maintained. Hedgerows have been diminished immediately around Birchwood House Farm, allowing open the views to the south, but that impact is localised. The Agency has over emphasised the effect of development along the A27 and the need not to split the very small and scattered settlements of Sherfield English and Sootash which have no obvious cores. In any case, the former is already split to some extent by the designation order boundary and the latter is mainly to the north of the road. The A27 retains a strong rural character dominated by woodland and tree belts. Isolated commercial premises occur in some places but they do not undermine the dominant characteristics of the area. Once away from the road, the landscape quickly returns to quiet rural seclusion. The area south of Sherfield English and at The Frenchies is particularly intimate and tranquil. The landfill site near Birchwood House Farm closed in June 2002 and is being restored and landscaped to a form and use (agriculture) that will be sympathetic with National Park purposes (175/0/4).

6.36 *Ancient Forest Arable Farmlands* occupy the centre of this area, north of East Wellow. Key characteristics include blocks of woodlands; large wavy arable fields (assarts of medieval or post medieval origin); remnant hedgerows; intervisibility with adjacent areas of the New Forest; strong sense of enclosure on a larger scale; scattered large farmsteads on the periphery; a transmission line; and relative openness.

6.37 With the exception of the hedgerows the landscape is well maintained and in good condition but due to the openness of the area the transmission line and pylons are more conspicuous. Apart from some polytunnels the only other non-traditional structures are typical modern farm buildings located unobtrusively near farmsteads. This is a tranquil and very rural landscape and merits inclusion in the Park as part of the extensive tract including the ancient forest farmlands to the north, west and south and the heath associated estates to the east.
6.38 **Commoning issues**: As indicated at 175/1/1A Fig 19, rights to graze adjacent commons exist within two parts of the area of contention (centred on Embley Park and Plaitford Green). In addition, some 9 members of the New Forest Commoners Defence Association have addresses within or adjacent to the area of contention. The Cox and Reeves Report (CD219) showed the whole of the area to the A27 as being within the area of summer straying prior to gridding and recommends that the NFNP be extended to include the whole of it. As indicated by Col Sweet (1), before 1964 there were pounds for collecting straying stock at Birchwood and Bryces Farms in Sherfield English, Plaitford, Pinns Farm, Embley Manor Farm and Ryedown Farm as well as others further north at Awbridge and Romsey.

**Opportunities for open-air recreation**

6.39 The area contains a particularly attractive network of winding lanes penetrating the quiet rural landscape, with subtle changes in character and views of wide panoramas (as at Sootash) and intimate river glimpses where roads cross the Blackwater and its tributaries. These routes, together with the A27, form a gateway role into the forest from the north.

6.40 There is also a number of footpaths, especially at the western end, linking into Melchett Park and the existing NFHA. The area around Embley is less well served due to its estate history. However existing private rides, tracks and informal paths present enormous potential for very good walks if access could be negotiated. The draft CROW map includes an area of open country south of Withybed Copse and west of the golf course.

6.41 The lightly used attractive lanes are enjoyed by cyclists and horse riders in some peace and the area is very well used for paddocking and grazing.

6.42 Other opportunities in the area are private angling lakes, the golf course, and Wellow Vineyard.

6.43 At present provision for the general public is low but it has the potential to provide for additional quiet recreation and access including alternative camp sites and picnic sites.

**Additional points made by Mr & Mrs Sutton**

6.44 Mr and Mrs Sutton are opposed to NFNP designation in principle for similar reasons to those expressed by Romsey Extra Parish Council (see below). They fear concentration of development pressures into areas outside the Park, especially if the large urban area of Wellow is included. It is utterly illogical for that area to be included and Embley Wood and land to the east of it to be excluded. As a pragmatic fall-back position (if designation occurs) support is therefore given to the inclusion of additional land in the Sherfield English and Embley areas, including land to the east of Gardeners Lane. Ideally the Wellow area should be excluded. Alternatively support would be given to the Test Valley Borough Council case with the addition of land east of Gardeners Lane.
6.45 As owners of a substantial part of Embley Wood Mr & Mrs Sutton have made prolonged and sustained efforts over more than 20 years to maintain and enhance the ecological interest of the wood through rhododendron clearance, tree planting, creation and management of scrapes and water bodies and other measures. As a result it has achieved candidate SSSI status (see the Test Valley BC case above) and been awarded a commendation in the CLA’s Wildlife Sites Awards 2002. One of the reasons why the wood has achieved such interest has been the lack of public access, allowing wildlife to flourish without disturbance, although special arrangements are made from time to time for scientific and other purposes. In future it is envisaged that the wood may be passed to an appropriate trust to safeguard its on-going management.

6.46 Embley Wood has a special timeless and tranquil sense of place supporting many notable species of flora and fauna and with an exciting and diverse range of habitats as detailed in the Test Valley BC case and the documents referred to. In addition to the ecological case the Wood is strongly associated with Embley Park since the two were part of the same Embley Estate into which Romsey Common was enclosed at an early date. Before that Romsey Common belonged to Testwood Estate near Totton, emphasising its New Forest connections. At one time Embley Estate stretched down into Forest areas at Wellow and Paultons Park. It was not finally broken up until 1946 and surviving remnants from the unified estate (lodges, rides and other features) can still be seen in the landscape today. Forest stock strayed into this area until 1964.

6.47 The NFNP should also include the triangle of land to the east of the wood bounded by the A3090, A27 and Gardeners Lane. This is a summit plateau, falling away quite steeply on both flanks. If it is omitted there is a danger that development could proceed here free of National Park constraints but with the potential for catastrophic impact upon (and visual intrusion into) the Park.

Case for the Agency

Natural beauty

6.48 LUC found that the northern part of the Forest posed some of the greatest difficulties in defining a boundary for the NFHA. The Agency has been faced with similar difficult judgements in defining the NFNP. An indication of this is the late inclusion of land (after the local authority consultation stage) beyond the former NFHA at Melchet Park & Cowesfield Green and at Moor Lane south of Newton. Melchet Park was included for its landscape quality and historic links and the Cowesfield Green area as an extension to Whiteparish Common (although it is not part of the SSSI). In comparison, there is good quality landscape of a type to be found in many parts of Hampshire in the tributary valley at Dandy’s Ford but the landscape contains no features of outstanding national importance and the links to the New Forest are not particularly prominent.

6.49 The area of contention is one where the transition in terms of New Forest character and historical links is so gradual that “even more emphasis” has to be placed on quality.
The area of contention is within the New Forest Countryside Character Area and was within the area of search for the National Park. However, the landscape connections with the New Forest are not clear cut. For example there are landscape continuity issues between the objection area and the landscapes to the north of the A27, both of which are placed in the ‘South Hampshire Lowland and Heath’ landscape character area in ‘The Hampshire Landscape’ (CD220). The main landscape types in the objection area (the wooded farmland mosaic around Embley and the lowland small scale mixed farmland around Sherfield English) extend well to the north beyond the A27. Thus there is a very gradual transition form New Forest to non New Forest landscapes north of the Blackwater.

This is particularly so in the east where a similar surface geology to that of the forest (Bracklesham Beds and plateau gravels) continues northwards along the ridgeline above the Test. Similar landscape characteristics extend up to the well-wooded area of Awbridge around 4km north of the designation order boundary.

Further west, around Sherfield English and Wellow, topography and land cover again offer very few clues as to the extent of the Forest. However, in the area further west, beyond Plaitford Green (within the designation order boundary) obvious changes in topography and land cover do occur. Here the land on the north side of the Blackwater is generally higher and more wooded. For example Langley Wood and Whitepaprish Common are part of the New Forest cSAC and hence clearly belong to the Forest.

Therefore the upper reaches of the Blackwater show noticeably greater continuity of character with the New Forest than land to the east within the objection area. Moreover, in the north-eastern part of the area there is little or no logic in landscape character terms for extending the boundary to the A27 because very similar landscapes continue northwards for some distance.

In terms of landscape quality (which is a function of distinctive character; the presence of key characteristics and absence of atypical characteristics and incongruous features; the state of repair of the landscape; and its intactness) the area of contention is not uniformly of sufficiently high standard as to merit inclusion in the NFNP. Around Woodington landscape condition and quality are particularly poor being affected by arable intensification, large-scale agricultural buildings, and intrusive electricity transmission lines. The suggested ‘ancient forest arable farmlands’ landscape type is not accepted as a subset of ancient forest farmlands. The area said to be covered by this subset has no strong sense of enclosure and none of the ancient features characterising such forest farmlands within the New Forest. While assarts are indeed New Forest historic landscape types, they are also characteristic of many landscapes throughout Hampshire particularly the South Hampshire Lowland and Heath county landscape character area to the north of the New Forest.

Moving east towards Embley Park and Embley Wood the landscape becomes a larger scale mosaic of arable land, parkland and woodland, while Ryedown Farm is affected by golf course development. This area was never within the Large Bounds and was historically associated with Romsey Common.
6.56 In the north and west of the area of contention along the A27 east of Sherfield English, the large scale agricultural landscape contains detractors such as mineral extraction and landfill, scattered linear residential development and commercial development. These areas of more open countryside do not compare with the much higher quality arable landscapes of the coastal plain within the South Hants AONB. There are pockets of better quality landscape within this part of the area of contention, for example around Pilgrim’s Farm and Lower Sootash Farm but these are isolated by the poorer quality landscapes.

6.57 Generally there are few views towards the main New Forest plateau from within this undulating tract of countryside. The occasional obtainable glimpses are not comparable with those from the western side of the Avon Valley.

6.58 Turning to ecology, the area of contention lies within the New Forest Natural Area but its importance for nature conservation is very limited compared with most other areas around the New Forest margins. There are no confirmed sites of national importance for nature conservation, which is in marked contrast to land further west beyond Melchett Park which includes extensive ancient woodland and wood pasture that is part of the New Forest cSAC. Although there are a number of SINC's these may contribute to landscape quality at a local level but do not alter the conclusion that the area of contention is not of outstanding landscape quality.

6.59 With regard to Embley Wood, the boundary study would have taken account of the SSSI-standard nature conservation interest of this area if more information had been available at that time. However, this factor would not affect the landscape quality judgement. It cannot be said whether the boundary would have been extended to include an outlier north of the Blackwater at that point since to do so may have undermined the rationale for the rest of the boundary in that area. Embley Wood is remote from the Forest core and part of a swathe of countryside to the north of the Park where landscape quality is not sufficient to merit designation.

6.60 In terms of history, the area of contention has some links with the Forest but there are also significant differences. Most of the land was within the Forest of Melchet, one of a group of Royal Forests that lay north of the New Forest (384/3/4/175/a/app1). The exception is the Romsey Common/Embley Wood area which belonged to neither. It is recognised that the New Forest and the Forest of Melchet were managed as one in medieval times and considerable parts of Melchet are included in the NFN. However, research shows that the later history of the area of contention differs from that of the New Forest, the Forest of Melchet having been enclosed and put to agricultural use from 1577 onwards. At this time tenants of the manors of Plaitford, Whiteparish, Sherfield English and Landford surrendered their rights of common and by 1614 the land was no longer owned by the Crown.

6.61 This different history weakens the area’s historical connections with the New Forest. More importantly the objection area contains very few of the outstanding historical features that might support its inclusion. Although Embley Park is listed Grade II on the English Heritage Register its condition is poor and the description of its historic merit and characteristics makes no mention of the New Forest. Moreover, it is some way to the north of the main landscape transition away from the Forest.
6.62 Turning to commoning, these historical differences have resulted in different patterns of activity here. Land with common rights is generally more fragmented than elsewhere around the perimeter of the Forest and in most cases does not extend as far north-east as Gardeners Lane or the A27. Such rights only apply to the adjacent commons, a relict of the Forest of Melchet (although vicinage applies).

6.63 The parishes in this area have very low numbers of practising commoners and little land within the area is used as back-up grazing.

6.64 Overall, the area of contention does not constitute an extensive tract meeting the outstanding natural beauty test. Although much consideration has been given to possible intermediate boundaries there is no suitable alternative that would include only areas of land meeting the test. The rationale for the present NFNP boundary is that it follows the Blackwater at the eastern end (as the limit of the Large Bounds). At Wellow Mill it takes to higher ground to include the Florence Nightingale Grave and a tributary valley with attractive woodland, although the landscape is becoming larger scale and more arable at this point. The boundary then follows a minor ridge beyond which the countryside tends to face northwards towards the chalk downs rather than south over the wooded ridges of the New Forest. At Plaitford Green the boundary extends north to include Melchet Park and Cowesfield Green. This boundary is not as obviously identifiable on the ground as the A27 but it mainly follows the river, roads or paths (and occasionally field edges). It is “not obvious, but legible”.

Opportunities for open-air recreation

6.65 The rights of way network within the area of contention is very limited. There are short sections of footpath in the western part of the area but the longest crosses open arable fields near Woodington and walkers here do not enjoy a markedly superior recreational experience. Further east, in the Embley area, public access is very limited with no rights away at all in Embley Park and Embley Wood.

6.66 There are remarkably few views of the New Forest from within the area of contention. Where such views exist they gave a clear impression of viewing the Forest from outside because it is seen as rising, wooded ground in the distance. This visual relationship makes no strong contribution to visitors’ enjoyment.

Boundary setting considerations

6.67 The national park boundary in this section follows the River Blackwater as far west as Wellow Mill. It then turns northward onto higher ground above the river to include the village of East Wellow (the site of Florence Nightingale’s grave). West of Cross Oak Farm it follows the crest of a low ridge above the river, and then turns north to the A27, thereby including the higher ground around Melchet Park.

6.68 The boundary meets boundary criterion 2e by following the river and then a series of minor roads, all of which are easily distinguishable. Referring to 2g, the boundary does not divide any settlements, whereas the A27 would split the villages of Sherfield English and Sootash. As for 2j, the historic feature of Embley Park might have been significant had it lain closer to the river. On criterion 4, the key transition
in landscape quality and recreational experience occurs north of Wellow Mill which is why the boundary has been drawn at this point.

**Objections seeking inclusion of the whole of Wellow Parish**

**Cases for the objectors**

6.69 [Inspector’s note: Wellow Parish lies partly within and partly without the designation order but entirely within the area of contention. These objections therefore constitute a variation of the main case and many of the same principles apply in the arguments for and against. A few additional points were also made.]

6.70 The Parish Council considers the entire parish to be a Forest parish. The names of well known Forest families can be found in the parish records and their descendants still live here today. Gypsy communities, so typical of the Forest, can be found in West and East Wellow. The Blackwater is a Forest river and the Blackwater electoral ward includes Sherfield English, Awbridge, and Melchet Park & Plaitford. Wellow and Canada Commons (within the perambulation) are owned by the Parish Council. Sadly, views on these commons are degraded by transmission lines. Recovery of such degraded landscapes would be assisted by inclusion of the whole parish in the NFNP.

6.71 It is incorrect to say that the landscape changes subtly beyond the first Blackwater ridge. There are large fields to the south of the A36 as well as to the north of the village and views of chalk downland can be experienced from well within the Forest, not just north of the ridge.

6.72 It is inconvenient in administrative and social terms to include one part of the parish and not another.

**Case for the Agency**

6.73 The general case within the area of contention applies here. It is only justifiable to include those parts of the parish meeting the designation criteria. The statutory role of Parish Councils will not be changed.

**Objections seeking retraction of the boundary**

**Cases for the objectors**

6.74 A number of objectors suggest the A36 as the most appropriate boundary. These are A Dunning (71); K Cromar (73); J Woolley (104); Mrs K Wormington (137); Mr & Mrs Sutton (185); P & S Newby (242). All these objectors question the existence or sufficiency of any connection between the New Forest and any area north of the road.

6.75 P & S Newby (242) would prefer the line of the perambulation to be used as the boundary for the NFNP. Failing that, the south side of the A36 is the logical
boundary. This would avoid the inclusion of East and West Wellow. These are pleasant pieces of modern suburbia superimposed on an ancient small settlement bordered to the north east by relatively low grade countryside blighted by several power lines. Together, all these features represent incongruous features in the landscape. The rights of way in this area are not particularly good and pass through not very remarkable countryside. They would add nothing to (and gain nothing from) the designation of the National Park and are adequately protected already.

6.76 Any extension of the Park beyond the A36 should not go beyond the line of the ‘yellow route A’ bypass proposal for Wellow put forward in 1993. Although bypass proposals were dropped at that time after the consultations caused much controversy, traffic problems continue on this important trunk route and the bypass proposals could be revived especially if Wellow is included in the NFNP. The Agency’s route appears to assume that the bypass will never be built, or alternatively seeks to sabotage the only sensible alignment generated by the earlier consultations.

6.77 A Dunning (71) shares the view that use of the A36 preserves the possibility of a route for a bypass.

6.78 Romsey Extra Parish Council (245) is opposed to the principle of the NFNP. It is concerned that the small town of Romsey (together with Romsey Extra Parish) could become squeezed between the heavily protected areas of the New Forest and South Downs National Parks and thus be subjected to the full force of the strong growth pressures generated by the Southampton area. Ideally, if the NFNP designation is confirmed the whole parish should be included. Drawing a line along the Blackwater includes the less valuable western side, including the Wellow area and excludes the more valuable eastern side (Embley Wood). In all these circumstances the A36 may form an appropriate boundary.

Case for the Agency

6.79 Wellow is part of an extensive belt of typical New Forest ‘ancient forest farmlands’ and ‘heath associated estates’ landscapes stretching south to Landford, west almost to Redlynch and east to Wellow. The boundary here includes high quality typical forest landscapes, including a superb ancient wood pasture, a wood pasture common, a historic designed parkland landscape which originated as a medieval deer park, an exceptionally secluded and attractive small river valley (the upper Blackwater), sunken lanes and satellite commons which could be brought back into use for grazing. This whole area has a good network of paths and lanes and offers outstanding opportunities to experience the diversity of the mosaic of New Forest landscapes. Consequently it makes an essential contribution to the markedly superior recreational experience offered by the New Forest as a whole. It would make no sense to sever this extensive tract of land by using the A36 as the National Park boundary.

6.80 Wellow village itself is a typical example of the linear roadside developments common to the heath associated estates landscape type. It is one of the more accessible settlements in the New Forest and provides recreational facilities for visitors and residents alike. Although it is suburbanised and to some extent
incongruous it is a sprawling settlement with large open gaps within it. Exclusion of the village would involve omitting areas south of the A36 in order to avoid splitting it.

6.81 As for the possible future bypass, no such proposal is contained with the development plan so there is no basis for exclusion of the area on grounds related to boundary-setting criterion 2i.

6.82 As for the views of Romsey Extra Parish Council, fears about increased pressure for development around a National Park do not form part of the statutory designation criteria and the future views of the NPA or any other local planning authorities cannot be predicted. The Council’s views do not coincide with those of neighbouring Wellow Parish Council.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSOR’S CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS ON NATURAL BEAUTY

LAND NORTH OF HALE

6.83 The River Avon at this point flows close to the main break of slope that runs north-south on the east side of the valley and here lies west of the designed landscape of Hale House which includes substantial areas of woodland on the steeper ground. I find the landscape character in this north west part of the NFNP as defined in the Designation Order quite diverse with River Floodplain, Ancient Forest Farmlands, Historic Parkland and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings landscape types all present in a relatively small area and closely associated with the Heathland type to the east which also comes right down to meet the river floodplain at Godshill Inclosure. At the same time the landscape rapidly moves towards true downland landscape character as one travels north and west. This is evident by observing the rolling convex slopes of the farmland to the north of Hale towards Downton and in the chalky soil widely evident in fields especially north of Searchfield Farm.

6.84 While recognising the landscape character transition from the New Forest landscape mosaic to that of chalk downland, I find that the whole of this area is of high landscape quality with no incongruous features and amply meets the natural beauty criterion for National Park status. In deciphering a suitable boundary for the NFNP I appreciate that there may be several possibilities, but I find that the boundary as defined in the Designation Order is robust and legible by following the edge of woodland, footpaths or farm tracks from Searchfield Farm to North Charford.

6.85 However I would recommend one minor revision. This is the small area of woodland south of Searchfield Farm that is excluded from the boundary and which I recommend is included as it forms the northern extremity of the woodland associated with Hale House and is more decipherable on the ground than the small stream that runs through the wood at this point.
REDLYNCH, BOHEMIA AND LOVER

6.86 I find that the area north of the minor road between North Charford to Timbury Lane Farm contains villages with a typical New Forest settlement layout, set within a landscape that is intrinsically part of the wider tract of country that exemplifies the Ancient Forest Farmland landscape type. This is in good condition with high landscape quality and therefore qualifies for NFNP status under the natural beauty criterion. I therefore find no reason on natural beauty grounds to recommend any boundary revision in this area.

LAND AT THE EARLDOMS

6.87 This area lies well within the New Forest Countryside Character Area and is composed of Ancient Forest Farmlands which are very typical of this landscape type and found elsewhere in the NFNP. I am also of the view that the area of contention is in good condition with high landscape quality and forms part of an extensive sequence of New Forest habitats dominated by ancient semi-natural woodland from Loosehangar to Whiteparish Common. A considerable part is also recognised for its nature conservation value with SSSI and cSAC status. Consequently I have no hesitation in concluding that this area fully meets the natural beauty criterion and should be included within the NFNP.

REDLYNCH TO NEWTON CROSSROADS

6.88 From Redlynch the NFNP boundary follows Grove Lane and Moors Lane via Titchborne Farm which I find is a robust line which divides landscapes which have distinctly different character and orientation with downland to the north and New Forest character to the south. Due to the increasing downland character to the north of Grove and Moor Lanes I do not find it appropriate to recommend any extension to the Designation Order boundary in a northerly direction here. Even though there are two large scale nondescript arable fields south of Moor Lane to the south east of Moor Farm, overall they are dominated by the surrounding landscape New Forest quality and form part of the extensive tract of countryside that satisfies the natural beauty criterion.

6.89 The NFNP boundary departs from Moors Lane at Lowdens Copse to follow a line with which I concur as the land south of Newton Farm crossroads on the A36 displays less decisiveness in landscape character and the landscape quality is fairly poor. However, for completeness, I would recommend that the boundary should include the whole of the mire and woodland SSSI south of Newton Farm and follow the footpath south of the smallholding adjacent to the SSSI leading directly to the A36.

LAND NEAR WHITEPARISH VILLAGE

6.90 Looking to the area between Newton crossroads and the western edge of Whiteparish I find that the landscape character and quality changes from larger poorly defined fields nearer to Newton Lane, to an intricate field and hedgerow pattern which runs to the southern outskirts of Whiteparish village. This change is reflected in the NFNP boundary in the Designation Order which here follows a minor stream through
a sequence of the smaller enclosures in undulating terrain. I also find that the
countryside to the north of both Moors Lane and Newton Lane has a definite
downland quality seeping in from the north. Even though this area is classified by the
Agency as of the Ancient Forest Farmland landscape type, I am not convinced that the
landscape character is particularly distinct or that landscape quality is consistently
sufficient to meet the natural beauty criterion.

6.91 The meandering boundary leaving the A36 north eastwards to Whiteparish is
not well defined on the ground, following little more than a ditch in places and,
especially in the drier months, is not particularly easy to follow. While I accept that
the natural beauty criterion is met to the south, I would still recommend that this
boundary be re-aligned for legibility, to follow the footpath leaving the A36 in a
northwest direction from the camping ground across to the southern tip of
Whiteparish village where it rejoins the Designation Order around the south western
built edge of the village.

**Whiteparish Village to Cowesfield Green**

6.92 I find that the village of Whiteparish demonstrates more affinity with
downland villages than those within the New Forest to the south, especially in terms
of settlement pattern and, in the older village core, the use of local vernacular
architectural styles and building materials, so that I consider it wholly appropriate that
the village is excluded from the NFNP.

6.93 The countryside immediately to the south of Whiteparish across to
Whiteparish Common shows some elements of New Forest landscape character
through features such as small woods with smaller scale pasture fields and hedgerows.
However, predominantly it is farmland with larger scale arable fields without
substantial boundary definition with an element of chalkiness beginning to appear in
the soils of some fields closer to the village. In contrast the character and quality of
Whiteparish Common woods is totally in keeping with those of the New Forest
landscape of the core area, with a physical and historical connection to the Langley
Woods complex and offers an easily recognised and meaningful NFNP boundary in
this area.

6.94 Overall I find that between the southern edge of the village and the NFNP
boundary the landscape varies in character, degree of intactness and consistency of
landscape quality. Nevertheless all of these qualities do tend to strengthen from north
west to south east across the area, so that at Whiteparish Common and Cowesfield
Green the landscape is most affiliated to the NFNP landscape characteristics with
good landscape quality. However Cowesfield Manor shows a marked orientation to
farmland north of the A27, in a way similar to the older buildings in Whiteparish
village which greatly reduces any viability for inclusion of the Manor and grounds in
the NFNP.

6.95 With regard to the parish as a whole, while I agree that Whiteparish is a
downland village, I find no reason to exclude the whole of the parish area as I find
that New Forest landscape character and quality is present within its boundary, and is
especially evident at Whiteparish Common which satisfies the natural beauty criterion
for NFNP status.
6.96 I therefore recommend no major boundary revision in the area south of Whiteparish, except for the small deviation (agreed by the Agency) to exclude the Herrington House property which, although adjacent to Whiteparish Common, is essentially part of the farmland landscape surrounding the village.

**LAND BETWEEN A36 AND A27**

6.97 Looking at the area as a whole it is evident that the landscape from the A36 northwards changes gradually from typical New Forest character towards chalk downland countryside, until north of the A27 where it becomes wholly downland in character. At times the band of transition is wide and occasionally contains incongruous areas and features which deplete the otherwise good landscape quality of this area.

6.98 As this is an extensive and intricate area of landscape it is more readily comprehensible to deal initially with the assessment of the landscape and its adherence to the natural beauty criterion in three blocks from east to west between the north and south confines of the A36 and A27 and then to return to look at the area as a whole for boundary recommendation purposes.

**Between Whiteparish Common and Plaitford Green**

6.99 I find Whiteparish Common to be the most northerly extension of the New Forest ancient woodland SSSI which has typical New Forest pastoral wood character with a sense of remoteness and considerable landscape quality, forming part of a complex of woods stretching south west into the Perambulation including Langley Wood and Loosehangar Copse. This area has consistently formed part of the NFHA with recognised natural beauty fulfilling the criterion.

6.100 This is contrasted with the adjacent Melchet Park which was not included in the NFHA or the pre-consultation draft boundary for the NFNP. This area was brought in after the NFNP consultation exercise mainly on the premise of further evidence on links with the New Forest through past use as a deer park and the presence of the historic parkland.

6.101 I appreciate that the A27 forms a well defined boundary in this area and that this land falls within the Ancient Forest Farmland landscape type identified by both LUC and the Agency, stretching from Redlynch to Wellow, and that the historic parkland landscape at Melchet Park is found on the Hampshire Register, with Melchet Court listed as a Grade II* building.

6.102 Whilst recognising that the previously extensive Forest of Melchet once had a close connection with the New Forest in both being Royal Forests used for hunting, which possibly merged in this area between the A36 and A27, today the situation is very different. I find that the limited extent of the parkland together with the surrounding agricultural land makes this area far from typical of the Ancient Forest Farmlands landscape type. I saw that the designed parkland landscape possesses a network of woodland and specimen trees nearer to the house, but individual fields
within the parkland are more often than not under arable production and completely contained within a swathe of larger arable fields which isolate the parkland from the more wooded land to south, east and west. The argument of strong historical connections to the New Forest as a former deer park does not in my opinion alter the fact that this fairly extensive area is in itself not a good example of the landscape type and has a distinctly different landscape pattern which is not well integrated with the landscape further south at Landford. The landscape character is compromised by the intensity and scale of agriculture and, apart from the historic parkland core, appears to be similar to other areas outside the NFNP boundary which have been excluded by reason of the dominating presence of arable agriculture.

6.103 Moving south of Melchet the NFHA boundary followed Park Water as far as Gunnsfield Piggeries and then found its way by various features such as a footpath, field boundaries, the western edge of Boulder Wood and a small stream to meet with the NFNP boundary, where this minor tributary of the Blackwater crosses the road north of Plaitford Green. My reason for describing this line is to demonstrate that I appreciate that the A27 north of Melchet Park offers, according to the Agency, “a more robust alternative boundary” for this northern area of the NFNP. I agree that there is no doubt that it is otherwise difficult to delineate a clear and tangible alternative in this complex and transitional area between the A36 and A27. However, it has to be queried how far land not meeting the natural beauty criterion can be included in the NFNP in order to establish a strong boundary.

6.104 In the southern section of this westerly block, from Barnsell Copse across to Bowles Farm on the minor road between Plaitford Green and Plaitford to the A36 I find an area of mixed landscape character with a variable degree of field amalgamation and non-agricultural enterprises and a consequent loss of “Forestness”, which is more frequent as one travels towards the A36. While the area closest to Whiteparish Common has the most intact landscape character and quality, this too fades as one moves south and east towards Plaitford.

6.105 In conclusion, although I can see that overall this area is part of the Ancient Forest Farmland landscape type, I find that apart from the section from Whiteparish Common to Landford Wood Farm, there is uneven intactness and distinctiveness of character, which affects the overall landscape quality of this tract. As a result I am not convinced that all the land in this subsection meets the natural beauty criterion consistently enough to merit NFNP status.

Plaitford Green to Woodington

6.106 Between Plaitford Green and Wellow Mill the NFNP boundary follows a series of small lanes, as did the NFHA. I find that the Heath Associated Small Holdings and Dwellings landscape close to the A36 changes abruptly into Ancient Forest Farmland just north of Wellow.

6.107 It is evident that across this area there is a variation in landscape quality resulting from such factors as the semi-suburban housing in parts of Wellow, intensive market gardening polytunnels, and subsidiary buildings associated with various farming practices such as poultry production units and vegetable cropping arrangements, as at Gardiners, Pinns and Gauntletts Farms. All of this contrasts with
the deeply rural landscape from Cross Oaks Farm to Sherfield English and at The Frenchies.

6.108 While I recognise the original core of West Wellow as a traditional Forest settlement with a linear arrangement of long narrow plots, I find that today the extended village has more of the feel of a commuter settlement spreading along the A36 with many larger scale individual dwellings with large gardens, demonstrating an altogether more low-density suburban housing pattern than a traditional Forest village. The same is true of Ham Down but to a lesser extent as here the original layout is more intact.

6.109 On the north side of West Wellow I find that a substantial amount of field improvement and amalgamation has taken place through to the River Blackwater, with less New Forest landscape character than other areas further north, beyond the Designation Order boundary, such as that south of Sherfield English. This contrasts with the south facing slopes north of the Blackwater, which here forms the boundary in the Order, where the pattern of field enclosure is predominantly small scale around Bower’s Farm, with rationalisation occurring as one moves eastwards. However, even where the old field pattern has been retained this is adversely affected by large areas of polytunnels and plastic sheeting on higher ground which appears to be increasing in area. Here local topography also imparts greater visibility of this incongruous feature over wide areas, thereby reducing the landscape quality of the surrounding countryside.

6.110 A substantial area of large arable fields also occurs around Woodington, covering an area from the fishery on the river Blackwater in the south to The Frenchies in the north. This shows little connectivity to New Forest landscapes and presents fairly ordinary countryside that can be found in many parts of southern England.

6.111 I conclude that overall this subsection has a loose affiliation with the landscape character types that they form part of, often lacking a sense of being in the New Forest. In addition several areas offer very inconsistent landscape quality with some of the best qualifying areas found beyond the NFNP boundary, such as south of Sherfield English. Consequently I find considerable parts of this subsection to be unexceptional and unable to satisfy the natural beauty criterion that is required to warrant National Park status.

**Woodington to the A3090**

6.112 The Designation Order boundary, and the NFHA before it, follows the course of the River Blackwater through the middle of this subsection suggesting that the area to the north does not satisfy the natural beauty criterion. I do find that the topographic orientation of the whole of this northern area is mainly to the east except for the Embley Wood section which is orientated southwest, and also the historical and cultural focus tends towards Romsey and the Test Valley.

6.113 However looking at the area beyond the NFNP boundary to the A27 and east to Gardeners Lane I find that, in terms of landscape character and quality, the southern part is a strong contender for inclusion as it shares many common
characteristics with other Forest landscapes and is in good condition with few incongruous features. In contrast the land east of Gardeners Lane shares none of these qualities. Even though there is a sizeable area of woodland at Burnt Grove, it has no particular affiliation with the New Forest.

6.114 I saw that the attractive historic landscape of Embley Park provides a long distance panoramic view into the New Forest core area from the terraces at Embley House, the Park having a Grade II listing on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. However I do not find the parkland landscape sufficiently intact to be outstanding in natural beauty terms or warrant NFNP status. Parts of this historic parkland design have been altered to cater for the needs of the school, while a larger part of the grounds to the south of the main house have been redesigned as a golf course, which is very different from the original intended parkland landscape concept. Even though there are several sizeable woods and copses surrounding the parkland the aforementioned changes have affected the quality of the landscape which collectively means that the natural beauty criterion is not met as required for NFNP status.

6.115 Contrasted to this I find that Embley Wood and land associated with Kentford House, both once part of the wider Embley Estate, have stronger New Forest landscape character and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity. The unique assemblage of species and habitats in Embley Wood itself is closely related to the biodiversity of the New Forest and is now recognised as of national ecological importance with possible SSSI designation in preparation. The resulting high landscape quality does satisfy the natural beauty criterion albeit rather isolated from other areas of the New Forest. Despite this, the ecological connectivity of Embley Wood to other areas within the NFNP is inarguable and on grounds of natural beauty this area north to Ryedown Lane does warrant being given NFNP status.

6.116 Turning to the area south of the River Blackwater which is within the Designation Order boundary, I find the countryside from Ham Down to the roundabout at Ower to be of the Heath Associated Estates landscape type with a common geological base to areas further south. This area is in reasonable condition, but I find that there is a decline in quality towards Ower with detracting features such as pylons, a works yard, roadside service area, nursery and workshops. However, apart from the pylons, these are mostly well screened and do not unduly affect the attractiveness of the countryside.

6.117 I find the landscape here displays the expected features of small scale irregular field pattern, well structured by hedgerows and small woods and ponds, with remnant features of heaths and previous commons. It is also similar to areas of the same type south of the A36. This landscape is marginal in terms of meeting the natural beauty criterion but qualifies on the basis of being part of the extensive tract to the east and south which does meet the criterion very ably.

**Overall conclusion on the area between the A36 and the A27**

6.118 Having initially declared that this northern area of the NFNP forms a transition zone between New Forest and downland landscape character, it is also transitional in terms of landscape quality with pockets of high quality isolated from the extensive
tracts of country that do meet the natural beauty criterion. In conclusion I find that
the landscape situation is extremely complex and diverse, with a mixed standard of
landscape quality throughout and markedly varying degrees of intactness of New
Forest character. Within the Designation Order boundary I find there are sizeable
areas of farmland which do not meet the natural beauty criterion, posing the question
of how an “extensive tract of countryside” is defined.

6.119 The challenge is to define a meaningful boundary that includes all the land
meeting the natural beauty criterion well, with a robust, legible and coherent boundary
without compromising National Park standards. The question that has to be answered
is to what extent can areas that do not meet the criterion be absorbed into the areas
that do, without reducing the overall landscape quality and still legitimately forming
part of an outstanding landscape of national importance qualifying for NFNP status by
reason of its overall natural beauty.

6.120 In the northern boundary zone, certain areas do qualify on natural beauty
grounds but are not necessarily of sufficient New Forest landscape character, while
other areas have strong Forest characteristics but lack the standard of landscape
quality needed to satisfy the natural beauty criterion. After examining this area at
length I conclude that between A36 and A27 there is an intricate patchwork of areas
that do and do not qualify for NFNP status on natural beauty grounds. Due to this
variability it is unavoidable that areas which would otherwise qualify will be excluded
by reason of isolation or lack of physical connectivity to the New Forest in order to
arrive at a legible and meaningful boundary for the NFNP.

**Recommended Boundary for Sections 16 and 17**

6.121 In order to achieve the above I recommend that the NFNP boundary should be
as set out beneath.

6.122 **Section 16** From Searchfield Farm the boundary should follow the
northern edge of the woodland including the currently excluded small area of
woodland just to the south of the farm. It would then follow the Designation Order
boundary to Moor Lane. Where it leaves Moor Lane the boundary should follow the
whole of the northern edge of the woodland mire SSSI, meeting the A36 via the
footpath that follows the southern edge of the smallholding.

6.123 After crossing the A36 the boundary then picks up the footpath from the
camping ground that leads northeast towards Whiteparish village, rejoining the
Designation Order boundary at the built edge of the southern end of the settlement
and continuing as far as Park Water Cottage, except for a minor deviation to exclude
the grounds of Herrington House as agreed by the Agency. I then recommend that the
boundary should turn south following Park Water stream as far as the track that
crosses it coming from Landfordwood village, thereby excluding Melchet Park and
Landford Manor farmland, but including the whole of Whiteparish Common and
Landfordwood village. From here I recommend that the boundary follows the track to
the village, circumnavigating it by the southern built edge and then following Stock
Lane to the A36 at The Beeches.
6.124 **Section 17** I recommend that the boundary then follows the A36 to Plaitford and West Wellow, turning north at Palmer’s Bridge between West Wellow and Ham Down along the stream that separates the two as far as Romsey Road, then west to Wellow Mill to rejoin the Designation Order boundary at the River Blackwater. From here I recommend that the boundary continues southeast along the river until it meets a small tributary on the southeast side of Bellconey Copse, then turns north along this to meet, after a short distance, the footpath that leads to Ryedown Farm on Ryedown Lane. It should then turn east along Ryedown Lane to Gardeners Lane, turning south along this lane to meet the A3090, where the boundary turns south towards the Ower roundabout to meet the boundary recommended for section 1.

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

**LAND NORTH OF HALE**

6.125 I agree with the Landscape Assessor’s conclusions and recommendations on the natural beauty criterion and find no reason to support either (a) an extension of the boundary as suggested by the Ramblers Association and the CNP or (b) retraction of the boundary as suggested by J Woolley, Mrs K Wormington and P Newman.

6.126 As was generally accepted, it is difficult to draw a really firm boundary related to strong features on the ground in this corner of the NFNP. However, in my view the boundary in the Order (with the minor amendment suggested by the Landscape Assessor) reasonably clearly defines the edge at which land of New Forest character and quality shades off into land having more relation to the chalk downs. Although there is attractive quiet countryside to the north of the Designation Order boundary I do not support the inclusion of further lengths of the Avon Valley Path. After dropping down into the Lodge Farm valley (where another path going west has strong downland character) the Avon Valley Path quickly rises to a point near Woodfalls Farm where the horizon opens out to clear downland countryside with extensive views over Downton, the Avon Valley and (beyond these) the Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire AONB. Nor is it appropriate to include the suburbanised villages of Woodfalls and Morgans Vale which have no relation to the second designation criterion.

6.127 Turning to the objections concerning land within the Designation Order boundary, the north-sloping land between the Hale Park, Home Farm and Hatchet Green forms part of the immediate and highly attractive setting to the Avon Valley Path and the other byway climbing from the valley to Home Farm. In my view this land contributes to the markedly superior recreational experience obtainable by users of these paths.

**REDLYNCH, BOHEMIA AND LOVER**

6.128 I agree with the Landscape Assessor’s conclusions on the natural beauty of the area surrounding these three almost interconnected small villages within heavily
wooded countryside forming part of the ‘heath associated smallholdings and dwellings’ landscape type on the edge of the Designation Order.

6.129 Recreational facilities in this relatively small area are limited to the path descending from Woodfalls, paths in and around Tinneys Firs with its new woodland car park, and the path descending from the cemetery. However, there is considerable variety of experience in this attractive undulating area. Walks along the lanes and paths present a constantly changing scene of mainly small fields and wooded valleys threaded with the linear villages containing many simple traditional Forest-style cottages. In addition, the recreational opportunities mesh well with others nearby at Hatchet Green, Hale Purlieu and the deeply wooded areas to the east of the villages. I therefore conclude that they merit inclusion in the NFNP against the second statutory criterion.

REDLYNCH TO NEWTON CROSSROADS, INCLUDING THE EARLDOMS

6.130 I agree with the Landscape Assessor’s conclusions and recommendations concerning the natural beauty of this area.

6.131 The NFNP boundary generally follows Moor Lane between these two points. The area south of Moor Lane, as far as the perambulation, mainly comprises plantations and ancient woodlands clothing undulating countryside feeding some of the tributaries of the Blackwater. I saw that this is a quiet area crossed by few roads and with a number of opportunities for lengthy walks offering a prolonged sense of contact with the natural world and ‘getting away from it all’. In my view there is no case to support the objection suggesting exclusion of The Earldoms and Bagfield Copse since these areas are an integral part of this area (and partly within the New Forest cSAC), albeit relatively near the edge of this tract. The apparent fears of the objector about take-over by ‘public recreation’ seem to be based on misunderstanding of National Park purposes and the role of an NPA.

6.132 South of Newton Farm the Designation Order boundary follows a footpath between the A36 and Moor Lane. This path follows a poorly defined (but interesting and mildly adventurous) line across a very boggy area forming an SSSI, including some parts of it and excluding others. In my view it would be more logical to include the small area of land within the mire to the north of the notional line of the path, creating a more logical and recognisable boundary. I also support the Landscape Assessor’s recommendation for a minor boundary change at the eastern end of the Moor Lane to A36 footpath.

6.133 I do not support the Ramblers Association’s suggestion of inclusion of the neglected triangle of fields and farm buildings north of the mire (except insofar as the boundary footpath runs along the edge of some of the fields).

LAND BETWEEN THE A36 and A27 (NEWTON CROSSROADS TO OWER ROUNDABOUT)

6.134 The submitted objections place into contention the whole of the area between the A36 and the A27/A3090 from Newton Crossroads in the west to Ower Roundabout in the east.
6.135 The Landscape Assessor has explained her view that most of this extensive area does not meet the natural beauty criterion consistently enough to merit inclusion on natural beauty grounds. She recommends only (a) the continued inclusion of land centred on Whiteparish Common at the northern end and (b) the extension of the boundary to include land at Embley Wood at the southern end.

Central areas (Plaitford Green to West Wellow and Woodington)

6.136 Leaving aside for the moment the two areas at the extreme western and eastern ends of boundary sections 16-17 (and therefore considering the areas recommended by the Landscape Assessor for exclusion from the Order on natural beauty grounds), I find that the extensive central areas between Plaitford Green and West Wellow/Woodington do not meet the second designation criterion any better than they do the first. West Wellow is a large low-density suburban area and does not provide open-air recreation opportunities relevant to National Park purposes. North of the village, there are some footpaths and quiet lanes but this part of the Blackwater Valley and the Woodington area are dominated by arable cultivation within a landscape of unexceptional quality and the open-air recreational opportunities are well below the level required to merit recognition as a markedly superior recreational experience of national importance. For example, while the footpath from Chapmans Lane to Kitts Merries Farm has a continuous length of nearly 4km it passes no points of really substantial interest or quality, other than the valley near East Wellow Church (with the Florence Nightingale Grave).

6.137 In the more northerly area, towards the A27 (near Sherfield English and The Frenchies), there are notably few footpaths other than short disconnected lengths. Some quiet lanes wend through undulating countryside with an attractive intimate quality (such as found at Dandys Ford) and there are many isolated (often traditional) farms and houses, but elements of strong New Forest character and associations are becoming weaker. Where south-facing views become available towards the main New Forest plateau this seems to be a considerable distance away. Overall, this area does not qualify against the second criterion.

Western areas (Plaitford Green to Whiteparish)

6.138 Returning to the western end of boundary sections 16-17, beyond the road running from Plaitford to Sherfield English, there is a large block of quiet countryside stretching as far as Whiteparish with relatively few roads and many footpaths. This is an area presenting a number of opportunities for walks through countryside of varied character. This includes a patchwork made up of Melchet Park and the extensive arable fields which surround it; some medium scale pastures and arable fields south of Park Water between Landfordwood and the Blackwater; former pasture woodlands at Whiteparish Common and Cowesfield Green; some more recent plantations; and an area of farmland between the A36 and Whiteparish. However, I agree with the Landscape Assessor that much of the landscape resource in this area is not of strong enough quality and/or New Forest character, which of course has an impact on the quality of the recreational experience. Within most of the landscape types in this area it is in varying degrees pleasant rather than markedly superior.
6.139 Focussing particularly on the area recommended by the Assessor as meeting the natural beauty criterion, this can be considered in two sections, firstly the agricultural land north of Whiteparish Common and secondly the common itself together with Barnsell Copse and other nearby woodland. Dealing with the former, I am not convinced that the agricultural land bounded by the A36 to the south-west and Whiteparish Common to the south-east has New Forest natural beauty to a sufficiently strong degree. This land is rising away from the New Forest and in my view the recreational experience for users of the two footpaths to Whiteparish from the camp site and Chadwell Farm respectively is neither ‘markedly superior’ nor particularly New Forest related. In addition, walks on these paths (particularly that from Chadwell Farm) are adversely affected by noise intrusion from busy traffic on the A36 at the foot of the slope.

6.140 Turning to Whiteparish Common and the other nearby wooded areas recommended for retention in the NFNP by the Landscape Assessor, the common itself is ancient wood pasture forming an outlying part of the New Forest cSAC. The paths branching out from the A36 to the common, Barnsell Copse and the other woodlands and the attractive countryside at Landfordwood can be seen as a further extension of the long routes available through The Earldoms, Langley Wood, the Hamptworth area and the woodlands south of that linking up with the perambulation. In short, I consider that an area bounded by the western and northern limits of the Whiteparish Common cSAC, Park Water, and the boundary recommended by the Assessor in the vicinity of Landfordwood can be considered to meet both of the criteria. However, on balance, I recommend that this area should not be included in the NFNP. This is because the busy A36 (which is in cutting along some of this length) forms such a robust and clearly identifiable boundary between the extensive tract of qualifying land to the south and the land to the north which (with the exception of the relatively small area described above) does not meet the designation criteria.

**Eastern areas (West Wellow to Gardeners Lane)**

6.141 I now turn to the extreme eastern end of the land between the A36 and the A27. This includes (a) the Embley Park area, north of Ryedown Lane, (b) the Gardeners Lane triangle and (c) the Ham Down/Shelley Common/Embley Wood area, the last being an area recommended by the Landscape Assessor for inclusion in the NFNP on natural beauty grounds.

6.142 I agree with the Landscape Assessor’s conclusion that the Embley Park area, north of Ryedown Lane, does not have the required degree of natural beauty even though the original designed parkland and associated structures can still be discerned in places and the school’s trustees are working to retain and enhance important aspects of these features where possible. However, there is no public access to this area other than to the raw landscape of the golf course and a very small area identified on the draft CROW map. As for the Gardeners Lane triangle, this mainly comprises a flat arable plateau without public access. Although the wood-topped hillside overlooking Romsey at Pauncefoot Hill is highly attractive this seems to have no connection with the New Forest and is also without public access.
6.143 Turning to the Ham Down/Shelley Common/Embley Wood area, Ham Down and the former Shelley Common lie within countryside of the Heath Associated Smallholdings landscape type but in my view are of unremarkable quality. Ham Down is bounded by ribbons of varyingly consolidated development on all sides and offers little in the way of recreation appropriate to National Park purposes. The Shelley Common area is affected by some intrusive detracting features, as identified by the Landscape Assessor. The only recreational resource here is the footpath running from a point south of Wellow Mill to the A36, emerging as Shelley Lane. From my visit I concluded that it ran through countryside of only moderate quality. Thus, overall, the Ham Down/Shelley Common area cannot be described as providing a markedly superior recreational experience.

6.144 I agree with the Assessor that Embley Wood provides a high quality landscape and a remarkable ecological stronghold of New Forest-related habitats and species although its historic connection with the New Forest-related historic dispersed pastoral system seems weak. There is no access to this area for the general public (and indeed this, and the careful management by its owners) is partly what has given it its immense interest and diversity. Nonetheless, it is possible to conclude that the area centred on Embley Wood has the potential to offer a markedly superior recreational experience at some stage in the future if it is managed under a regime that permits limited and carefully controlled access subservient to its nature conservation interest.

6.145 However, even under those circumstances, Embley Wood would still be separated from the more Forest-like areas south of the A36 by the Ham Down/Shelley Common area which in my view do not meet either of the designation criteria. Tempting as it may be to stretch the qualifying ‘extensive tract’ to embrace Embley Wood I do not consider that it would be appropriate to do so, particularly as it lies beyond the Blackwater which has traditionally been seen as the limit of the New Forest in this area, from the Large Bounds onward.

Overall conclusion

6.146 My overall conclusion is that, with the exception of the area between Whiteparish Common and Landfordwood, none of the land north of the A36 meets both of the designation criteria sufficiently consistently to reach a qualifying standard for inclusion in a National Park. However, even in the case of the Whitechapel Common-Landfordwood area, I do not recommend inclusion. The busy A36 trunk road forms such a strong potential boundary to the NFNP between Ower and the recommended boundary south of Newton that I consider it inappropriate to extend the NFNP beyond this very strong feature to include this limited extent of land located quite a distance from the core area of the New Forest.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION (Boundary sections 16-17)

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