



South Downs National Park Authority

Public Access Frequently Asked Questions

Version I

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Responsibility Carol A Brown

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Frequently asked questions

Why do I have to register to make comments on a planning application?

In recent times, our Public Access system was the subject of a cyber-attack, and many hundreds of comments were submitted which contained inappropriate references and content. The online comment facility connects to our live systems, and all comments made online are instantly available for public inspection. We have enabled a feature in public access which requires you to register should you wish to make comment on a planning application. This was deemed necessary in order to minimise abuse of the system, and to protect the public, our staff and other users from inappropriate content.

Why can't I find a particular application online?

Firstly, make sure the search terms you are using are correct.

Common search failures –

- wrong /mis-typed reference number
- wrong /mis-typed address
- wrong /mis-typed applicant name

Refer to our document – Public Access Guide

Check that the application is actually submitted – some works do not require a formal planning application, so an application might never have been received.

Why does your website keep crashing?

Sometimes we receive planning applications that command a huge amount of public interest. This is a LIVE site, accessing LIVE data. It is not a copy on delay. There may be many people attempting to access the website at the same time as you, viewing any one of the approximately 1700 applications and associated plans, and documents that are live, active and in progress at any given time. There are also approximately 8000 determined applications also viewable online (figures taken February 2014).

The system may be busier at certain times of day and also be affected by the broadband speed in your area. Our service providers continually monitor performance of our servers, and act accordingly, but when large “contentious” applications are in the public eye, demand may temporarily exceed capacity. Please try again later if you have been unsuccessful.

Is there an alternative way to submit my comments, apart from online?

Our preferred methods for you to submit comments is via the online system but when we receive applications commanding significant public interest we will provide an alternative email address for you to use. This will be detailed in a link relating to the application on the main South Downs website. However, even when there is no specific alternative address provided you can also email the generic planning address for the local authority which administers the application.

Adur and Worthing planning@adur-worthing.gov.uk
Arun (Recovered area) planning@southdowns.gov.uk

Brighton and Hove (Recovered area) planning@southdowns.gov.uk
Chichester dcplanning@chichester.gov.uk
East Hampshire planningdev@easthants.gov.uk
East Sussex devcon@eastsussex.gov.uk
Eastbourne (Recovered area) planning@southdowns.gov.uk
Hampshire County Council planning@hants.gov.uk
Horsham planning@horsham.gov.uk
Lewes planning@lewes.gov.uk
Mid Sussex planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk
Wealden (Recovered area) planning@southdowns.gov.uk
West Sussex planning.applications@westsussex.gov.uk
Winchester sdplanning@winchester.gov.uk

Please do not email an officer directly because you happen to have an email address as they may be on leave or away for the office. You can also put your concerns in a letter and send it to the office of the local authority which administers applications for the SDNPA.

Adur and Worthing Councils, Planning, Regeneration and Wellbeing, Portland House, Richmond Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1LF

Arun District Council (Recovered area), South Downs National Park Authority, Penns Place, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU31 4EX

Brighton and Hove City Council (Recovered area), South Downs National Park Authority, Penns Place, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU31 4EX

Chichester District Council, East Pallant House, East Pallant, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1TY

East Hampshire District Council, Penns Place, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU31 4EX

East Sussex County Council, Planning Development Control - CET Dept, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1UE

Eastbourne (Recovered area), South Downs National Park Authority, Penns Place, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU31 4EX

County Planning, Hampshire County Council, Elizabeth II Court West I, The Castle, Winchester, SO23 8UD

Horsham District Council, Development Management, Park North, North Street, Horsham, RH12 1RL

Lewes District Council, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1BA

Mid Sussex District Council, Oaklands Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1SS

Wealden (Recovered area), South Downs National Park Authority, Penns Place, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU31 4EX

West Sussex County Council, County Development, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RG

Why do links time out?

There are a number of reasons why links/sessions time out.

- Internet traffic – if you access the site at typically busy times, bandwidth may be taken up by other people using the internet in your area.
- Our web site operates the same as any other high volume web site, and sessions may on occasion time out for protection. Some of the plans and documents that are submitted to us have very large file sizes, and occasionally server requests time out. This may be your Internet Service Provider timing out the session as the response is slow.
- You have a lot to write – If you are typing a lot into a comments box, the session you are in may time out. This is similar to making a purchase on line. If you take a long time, the session will expire and your comments may be lost. We recommend using MS Word, Windows notepad or other word processing feature on your tablet, PC or Mac to draft the text offline and then copy and paste it when you are ready to submit your comments.

I made representations online, but I get several letters/emails from you when you notify me of changes to the application or if the application is to be considered by committee. Why is this?

Every comment you submit is recorded as an individual representation. This means that if you press 'submit' several times you will be recorded several times on our system as someone who has made representations.

Why are some neighbour comments repeated ?

This is usually because the person making representations has pressed 'submit' several times thinking that they were not successful in submitting the representation initially. There are also individuals who perhaps purposefully submit the same comments many times.

I have written a letter or sent an email rather than submitting comments through public access the public access system. Why is my representation is not on line?

Comments received other than through public access have to be manually added to our electronic system. Certain details will be redacted (blacked out), such as signatures, email addresses and phone numbers. This manual process can take up to 5 days, but your initial details will be recorded in our system as soon as possible even if your letter doesn't appear on public access straight away.

I think you should change something my neighbour/friend/ relation has recorded against them on your system.

We cannot act on the request of a third party. If someone has any concerns about comments made in their name, they themselves should contact us directly, in writing, with their concerns and we will investigate and address it accordingly.

I made representations online, you have sent me a letter and my name and address is all in lower case.

When you make comments online, your record is fed into our live database. The database record contains exactly what you have typed in.

If plans change after being posted on website could alerts be sent to me to highlight this?

If you register with Public Access, you can sign up for alerts for individual cases, or be notified of any new applications within a defined geographic area, as well as other areas you personally specify.

Often, there is a delay for plans appearing on the web site which reduces the time we have to comment.

At the moment the plans are sent daily to an external scanning agency for scanning and uploading to our web site. When there are large volumes sent, there can be delays in publishing. However, we usually accept comments right up until the application is determined so this should not affect your ability to review plans and information and make comments.

When consultees comment it does not show whether the comment is in support, neutral or objection but for an individual representee it does - why is there a difference?

Consultees provide technical advice and do not necessarily support or object to proposals.

It is time consuming to review documents. Why do I have to open each one individually?

All documents are scanned individually. However, they are indexed which should assist you in deciding which you would like to read.

Some plans are orientated wrong, and they appear to be loading sideways – can you change the orientation?

Some of the plans are submitted electronically through the Planning Portal and unfortunately we cannot amend them. In addition very large plans submitted directly to us sometimes have to be scanned sideways because of their size.

I think you should remove comments which are made against individuals from your system which are not relevant to the application.

Whilst it is regrettable that sometimes individuals use the public access system to make comments about their neighbours or applicants we can only remove comments which contain libellous content, breach decency laws or are likely to have an impact on public safety.

End of document