

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Held at: 10.00am on 11 September 2025 at The Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre.

Present: Heather Baker (Chair), Alun Alesbury, Debbie Curnow-Ford Janet Duncton, Joan Grech, John Hyland, Gary Marsh, Stephen McAuliffe, Robert Mocatta, Andrew Shaxson.

Officers: Robert Ainslie (Development Manager), Rebecca Moutrey (Senior Solicitor), Claire Tester (Planning Policy Manager), Robert Green (Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager) Nikki Allen (CIL Planning Officer), Ruth Childs (Landscape Officer), Vicki Colwell (Principal Planning Officer), Kelly Porter (Major Projects Lead), Richard Fryer (Senior Governance Officer) and Jane Roberts (Governance Officer).

OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and informed those present that South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Members had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthered the National Park Purposes and Duty. That Members regarded themselves first and foremost as Members of the Authority and would act in the best interests of the National Park as a whole, rather than as representatives of their appointing body or any interest groups. The Chair welcomed two new Members to the Committee, Tim Burr and Joan Grech.

ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Daniel Stewart-Roberts, Paul Bevan and Antonia Cox.

ITEM 2: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. The following declarations was made:
 - Alun Alesbury declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 7 as a Stoughton Parish Councillor.
 - Janet Duncton declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 7 as a West Sussex County Councillor.
 - John Hyland declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 7 as a Soberton Parish Councillor.
 - Gary Marsh declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 7 as a Mid Sussex District Councillor.
 - Stephen McAuliffe declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 7 as an Arun District Councillor.
 - Robert Mocatta declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 7 as an East Hampshire District and Hampshire County Councillor.
 - Andrew Shaxon declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 7 as a Harting Parish Councillor.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 JULY 2025

3. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4: UPDATES ON PREVIOUS COMMITTEE DECISIONS

4. The following updates were given by the Development Manager:
 - SDNP/24/05059/LDP - The Springs Edburton Road, Edburton, the Habitat Regulation Assessment conclusion, in liaison with Natural England, led to a refusal that was issued in August 2025. The Lawful Development Certificate was subsequently refused.

- SDNP/24/05114/FUL - Singleton Oilfield, A286 Cobblers Row to Middlefield, Singleton, decision issued on 11 July 2025.
 - SDNP/23/01722/FUL - Upland Park, Garrison Hill, Droxford, decision issued on 15 July 2025.
5. The following update was given by the Planning Policy manager:
- The Local Plan Review Update (PC25/26-10) Appendix 1: Regulation 18 Consultation Summary published on 18 July 2025, had been revealed to contain some errors. No decisions were made on the basis of the appendix. Officers apologised for the errors and noted that they would be corrected in the final Local Plan report to Committee.

ITEM 5: URGENT ITEMS

6. There were none.

ITEM 6: SDNP/25/02137/FUL - HATCH FARM, MILLAND

7. The Officer presented the application and reminded Members of the report (Report PC25/26-14) and the update sheet.
8. The following speakers addressed the committee in support of the application:
- Luke Smith, speaking as the Planning Agent for the application.
 - Jinny Blom, representing the applicant.
9. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC25/26-14), the updates and the public speaker comments and commented as follows:
- Clarification was sought on the depth of the ponds and how the two western ponds would be connected.
 - Queried how the joining pipe would function given the difference in depth between the two ponds.
 - Would support the application.
 - It was noted that boreholes and groundwater sustainability were central to the project.
 - Concern was expressed regarding groundwater, noting the absence of information on the size of the aquifer, the proportion of groundwater to be abstracted, and no groundwater assessment provided.
 - Clarification was sought as to whether there were any flood risk, noting that the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) had raised concerns.
 - Questioned why the application had come before the Committee without full reports and with additional elements that were not part of the original submission.
 - Members observed that there appeared to be little associated infrastructure and queried whether the Environment Agency (EA) could address groundwater issues. Questions were raised about the energy source for water pumps and the potential noise impact.
 - Clarification was sought on the level of consistency in the SDNPA's approach to applications of this type.
 - Clarification was sought as to whether any fish species would be introduced to the ponds and whether the large pond would be opened for commercial use.
10. Members were advised:
- It was confirmed that the depth of the west pond would be 4.25 metres at its deepest point. A pipe would link the two ponds. Hatch Pond would be 5 metres at its deepest point and East Pond 3.5 metres.

- The southern pond would be the higher of the two ponds, with a controlled circulation pipe between them. The pipe could be manually managed to regulate water levels and the soakaway.
- It was noted that abstraction of groundwater through boreholes would fall under the Environment Agency permit process and would be determined by the EA. The aquifer under the application site was not a source protection zone and the sensitivity was related to pollution risk. The applicant was working at providing the necessary information to demonstrate the risk was avoided.
- The principle of the proposal was acceptable, and officers were confident that a technical solution could be achieved without additional reports, ensuring groundwater and flood risk would be managed. Groundwater pollution was identified as the greatest concern, and the proposed pond lining would help address this issue.
- There would be little or no associated infrastructure, with limited fencing and engineering works.
- The matter of powering the pumps, and how this would be done, was covered by the construction management plan and wider pond management. It was not a reason to delay determination. Whilst not a consideration for this application, a separate application outlining the renewable energy proposals for the Hollycombe Estate had been submitted and would be considered at a future meeting of Planning Committee.
- It was acknowledged that water projects could be complex, but with bespoke Conditions, they could be successfully delivered.
- The SDNPA's approach to applications generally focused on the landscape character for the specific site. This landscape character for the application site was historically associated with fishponds which informed this proposal.
- No fish species were proposed to be introduced to the ponds - they would populate biodiverse species naturally.
- Condition 17 would prohibit any commercial or recreational fishing in the ponds.

11. **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That authority be delegated to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee, to grant planning permission subject to:
 - i. The satisfactory resolution of technical matters relating to groundwater and flood risk; and
 - ii. The conditions set out at paragraph 9.2 of the report, update sheet and any amendments or other conditions, as required.
- 2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Planning to refuse Planning Permission, with appropriate reasons, if matters relating to groundwater and flood risk have not been resolved, or insufficient progress made, within three months of the 11 September Planning Committee meeting.

ITEM 7: TO APPROVE THE INFRASTRUCTURE BUSINESS PLAN AND THE SPENDING OF THE 2024/25 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY RECEIPTS

12. The Officer reminded Members of the report (Report PC25/26-15) and the update sheet and provided a verbal update, noting that Lavant River Walk had commenced work on the application following publication of the report.
13. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning report (Report PC24/25-15) and commented as follows:
 - Welcomed the report, noting that it was clear and informative regarding the Authority's activities and the processes involved.

Agenda Item 3

- Clarification was sought as to whether the £10,000 allocated to the Lavant River Walk project could be retained, for up to six months, to enable them to demonstrate progress.
- It was noted that £3.3 million remained unspent over the last four years, excluding allocations to parishes, and concern was expressed that parish allocations appeared not to have been fully utilised and that they were often not well equipped to spend allocations quickly.
- Noted that parishes endeavoured to spend their allocations and that such initiatives enhanced the SDNPA's reputation for supporting local communities.
- Concern was expressed that the SDNPA was not receiving feedback from parishes when requested, and clarification was sought on whether parishes were legally obliged to provide such feedback.
- Consideration was given as to whether it would be beneficial to include a clause to require projects to report on progress where funding had been allocated.
- It was suggested that the process for project funding be discussed further at a future workshop to consider modifications and improvements.
- Clarification was sought on whether the three-year time limit related to the commencement or completion of the project.
- It was noted that Hampshire County Council had been able to spend its allocations quickly, whereas East and West Sussex had not, and clarification was requested on this point.

14. Members were advised:

- As the Lavant River Walk project had commenced, the £10,000 could be held, but the £10,000 would need to come from another project. It was suggested that it could be taken from the Centurion Way Project.
- Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was not included in the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Reserve figures as it was paid directly to parishes who had five years to spend it. Very little was left unspent within the 5 years.
- It was noted that £1.8million of the £7.9million listed in the CIL reserves had not yet been received, and may never be received, due to appeals and changes. This report looked to allocate the £1.3million of CIL receipts as well as re-allocating any funds which had not spent within the allocated timeframe.
- An annual report was requested from any projects which had been allocated funding. It was noted that not all Parish and Town Councils responded.
- It was noted that Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy was subject to a five-year rule, with SDNPA funds ringfenced for three years. Members discussed whether this period could be amended or other measures introduced. It was considered that three years was a reasonable timeframe for completion. Updates were requested by the CIL Planning Officer and Members were encouraged to liaise with their parishes to ensure projects were progressed and updates reported.
- Officers confirmed that there was no legal requirement for projects to provide updates to the SDNPA, but parishes were required to publish the details annually. A pro forma was issued to assist them with this. There was no penalty for failing to publish.
- It was noted that Hampshire County Council had spent its allocations, while East Sussex had made slower progress, although Cycle Route 90 remained on the essential list. West Sussex projects were mainly school-based and often required match funding.
- Some projects required match funding or stage payments, which could make delivery within three years challenging.

15. It was proposed, seconded and resolved that the recommendation be amended to ‘*subject to the ring fencing of the £10,000 payment to Lavant River Walk for a period of 6 months to allow for satisfactory evidence of when works will be completed to be received by the Authority and, if necessary, the removal of the associated clawback set out in paragraph 4.4 and the reduction of project one in table four, Centurion Way.*’
16. **RESOLVED:**
- 1) To approve the Infrastructure Business Plan 2025 (attached at Appendix 2 and 3);
 - 2) To approve:
 - The in-principle allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy 2024 / 25 receipts of £1,874,868.00 to the projects identified in paragraph 4.5 of this report subject to the ring fencing of a £10,000 payment to Lavant River Walk for a period of 6 months to allow for satisfactory evidence of when works will be completed to be received by the Authority, with, if necessary, the removal of the associated clawback set out in paragraph 4.4 and the reduction of project 1 in table 4 (Centurion Way), and to delegate authority to the Director of Planning to undertake any further assessment of the projects prior to the final allocation of funds as detailed within paragraphs 4.7 and 4.8 of this report, to determine the final allocations of funds up to £1,874,868.00 in respect of those projects and to authorise payments accordingly;
 - the ring-fencing of the 2024 / 25 Community Infrastructure Levy funds for three years and should the funding of these infrastructure projects (identified in paragraph 4.5) no longer be required after three years, the money would be made available for other projects within the Infrastructure Business Plan, and
 - 3) To delegate authority to the Director of Planning to make minor amendments to the wording and formatting within the Infrastructure Business Plan 2025 and, if necessary, amendments to the Infrastructure Business Plan 2025 in line with recommendation 2, prior to publication. Any such amendments shall not alter the meaning of the document.
17. The Chair closed the meeting at 11.16pm

CHAIR

Signed: _____

