

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

PLANNING COMMITTEE

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

Present: Heather Baker (Chairman), Alun Alesbury, Paul Bevan, Antonia Cox, Janet Duncton, Joan Grech, John Hyland, Gary Marsh, Robert Mocatta, Tom Nevill, Andrew Shaxson and Daniel Stewart-Roberts.

Officers: Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Rebecca Moutrey (Senior Solicitor), Claire Tester (Planning Policy Manager), Robert Green (Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager), Richard Ferguson (Development Management Lead (West)), Stella New (Development Management Lead), Robert Campbell (Senior Planning Enforcement Officer), 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 a new Member to the Committee, Tom Neville from Eastbourne Borough Council.

The Chairman welcomed Tom Nevill to the Planning Committee.

ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

101. Apologies for absence were received from Stephen McAuliffe.

ITEM 2: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

102. The following declarations was made:

- Andrew Shaxon declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 6 as a Harting Parish Councillor. He also declared a personal interest as a relative owned a similar site some distance away and he was acquainted with two of the public speakers, Cllr Sheila Bramley and Angus Sprackling.
- Daniel Stewart-Roberts declared a public service interest on Agenda Items 7 and 8 as a Lewes District Councillor. He also declared a personal interest as was acquainted with three public speakers on Agenda Item 7 and two public speakers on Agenda Item 8.
- Gary Marsh declared a personal interest on Agenda Item 8, as he was acquainted with one of the public speakers.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2025

103. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

- Apology for absence received from Robert Mocatta.

ITEM 4: UPDATES ON PREVIOUS COMMITTEE DECISIONS

104. The following updates were provided by the Director of Planning:

- SDNP/24/05059/LDP - The Springs, Edburton, a certificate of lawfulness relating to ten pitches under permitted development, had been refused due to conflict with water neutrality requirements under the habitat regulations. As water neutrality requirements had now been lifted, the campsite was not required to demonstrate water neutrality and permitted development rights would apply.

- SDNPA/23/04993/FUL – Elm Rise, Findon, a Section 106 agreement had been concluded and the decision issued was issued on 5 December 2025.
- SDNP/23/05134/FUL – Ditchling Rugby Club, Ditchling, which had been refused, went to appeal and the appeal was allowed. The committee's appeal record remained strong, typically around 78–80%. The decision was being reviewed to identify any lessons for future cases, particularly regarding the sensitive landscape.

ITEM 5: URGENT ITEMS

105. There were none.

ITEM 6: SDNP/25/03104/FUL – CLAREFIELD COPSE, DUMPFORD LANE, NYEWOOD

106. The Officer presented the application and reminded Members of the report (Report PC25/26-28) and the update sheet, which clarified the operational period for the campsite as 1 May to 31 October.
107. The following speakers addressed the committee in against the application:
- Cllr Sheila Bramley, representing Harting Parish Council.
 - Simon Ashby-Rudd, representing Craig Hendricks and Dumpford Park Farm Partnership.
 - Simon Ashby Rudd, representing himself.
108. The following speakers addressed the committee in support of the application:
- Angus Sprackling, the applicant.
 - Kai Penny, planning agent speaking on behalf of the applicant.
109. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC25/26-28), the updates and the public speaker comments and commented as follows:
- Clarification was sought on the number of days the site could operate under permitted development rights without the need for planning consent.
 - Further detail was requested as to what benefits could be achieved by granting permission compared to the site operating under permitted development rights.
 - Concerns were expressed as to whether there was sufficient car parking, noting that each pitch could accommodate more than one tent and up to six people. Clarity was sought on the number of people, pitches, tents, and parking spaces.
 - The effectiveness of the management plan was queried, with reference to previous issues around noise, anti-social behaviour, and lack of on-site control. It was suggested that a robust complaints procedure should be in place for local residents to report issues.
 - The adequacy of toilet and washing facilities was discussed, questioning whether two toilets would be adequate for the potential number of people on site and referencing legal requirements for campsite licensing. Concerns were raised about the capacity of the amenity building to accommodate the required facilities.
 - It was highlighted that several conditions were late in being discharged under the temporary permission previously granted and that the site had operated without full compliance for much of the time. The robustness of the proposed conditions was queried, and assurances were sought that the management plan would be sufficiently robust, detailed, and enforceable.
 - Concerns were raised about campers trespassing on adjacent farmland and accompanying anti-social behaviour, questioning whether the diversification benefits of the proposal outweighed the potentially detrimental impact on neighbouring landowners.
 - The possibility of granting a further temporary permission was discussed, given the previous issues with compliance. Some Members suggested that a further period of

temporary consent might be justified to test whether the strengthened management plan and conditions would prove effective.

- The importance of protecting the landscape and ensuring that the proposal would not adversely affect local residents was emphasised. The fallback position of permitted development rights was considered, with Members weighing the benefits of greater control through planning conditions against the risks of continued non-compliance.
- It was noted that a draft management plan was already available on the planning website, but a preference was expressed for a more detailed and robust plan to be submitted for consideration before permission was granted.
- Advice was sought on giving weight, as a material consideration, to the planning history, and to previous land management issues and breaches.
- Clarification was sought regarding the inclusion of roof lights in the amenity building, given the importance of dark night skies.
- The impact of the proposal on the tranquillity and character of the landscape was discussed, with Members seeking assurance that the conditions and management plan would be sufficient to protect these qualities.
- The issue of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was raised, with Members asking whether the proposed conditions and management plan would deliver meaningful ecological and landscape enhancements, and whether these would be enforceable.

110. Members were advised:

- It was confirmed that under permitted development rights, the site could operate for up to 60 days per year with up to 50 pitches. The proposed permanent permission would allow a longer season with fewer pitches and robust conditions imposed.
- The plan showed 40 parking spaces, with one space per pitch proposed. It was noted that the local angling club also used the parking area. The applicant had indicated a limit of six people per pitch and a maximum of three tents per pitch.
- The management plan would be subject to a specific condition requiring approval before the campsite could be brought into use. Detailed noise control and on-site management measures would be required. A robust complaints procedure would be expected as part of the management plan.
- The amenity building was designed to provide the minimum facilities required for the scale of the campsite. Any increase in capacity or any changes required to meet licensing requirements may need to be re-assessed if a revised amenity building design was needed.
- Planning enforcement team would be available to investigate any potential breaches of conditions after permission was granted, and a more detailed site management plan was proposed as a pre-commencement condition.
- The planning history was a material consideration. Members were not required to disregard previous management issues; the weight given to past performance and issues raised was at Members' discretion.
- The fallback position of permitted development rights was explained, with Members advised to consider whether the proposed conditions and management plan provided sufficient confidence on future compliance.
- The possibility of granting a further temporary permission was within the Committee's discretion, given the rationale of testing compliance under changed circumstances. A clear justification for this approach would be needed given a temporary consent was granted in order to assess environmental impacts.

- The building would have two roof lights, which would be sensor-controlled and only active when the building was in use.
 - The application included BNG to accord with the mandatory 10%, with conditions to secure the establishment of new planting and land management, including a habitat management and monitoring plan. Officers advised that the proposed BNG would be sufficient and that the management plan would include measures for ecological and landscape enhancements, which would be enforceable through planning conditions.
 - The conditions, including those for BNG, management, and noise control, would provide a higher level of control and benefit than would be possible under permitted development rights. The balance was a campsite operating under PD rights with limited planning control, versus a permanent consent with a suite of conditions and ecological enhancements of the site.
 - It was confirmed a more detailed management plan could be required to be agreed and in place before any use of the site commenced- as per the recommended conditions. However, the committee could defer the application to allow for submission of a strengthened management plan to include a more detailed assessment of the applications proposals and clarification of amenity building requirements could also be considered, albeit whilst licensing requirements were separate to Planning those requirements could have a bearing on the proposals.
111. It was proposed, seconded, and approved that the consideration of the application be deferred to allow for submission of a strengthened management plan and to clarify requirements for the amenity building under relevant legislation.
112. **RESOLVED:**
- 1) That Planning Permission be deferred to allow for submission of a strengthened management plan and to clarify requirements for the amenity building under relevant legislation.
113. Committee broke for a short comfort break 11.15am.

ITEM 7: SDNP/25/01871/FUL - Land East of Brooks Road, Lewes

114. The Officer presented the application and reminded Members of the report (Report PC25/26-29) and the update sheet.
115. The following speakers addressed the committee in against the application:
- Chris King, representing himself.
 - Andrew Simpson, representing the Lewes Chamber of Commerce.
 - Janet Baah, representing Lewes Town Council.
116. The following speakers addressed the committee in support of the application:
- Adam Forsdick, representing Lidl Great Britain Ltd, the applicant.
117. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC25/26-29), the updates and the public speaker comments and commented as follows:
- It was suggested that the applicant should reconsider the design and its impact on neighbouring properties, with a view to making the scheme more suitable. Members were of the opinion that this was a missed opportunity.
 - Noted it was not for Members to redesign the proposal but to assess the application before them on its own merits.
 - A question was raised about whether referencing additional policies SD34 and SD35 would strengthen the reasons for refusal at appeal.

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- The relevance of policy SD34, which supports rural local economy and micro-businesses, was discussed, with reference to interest in the site from a local brewery.
- The conflict with policy SD35 was noted, and clarification was sought on how recent changes to planning use classes might affect the policy's application.
- The quality of the officer's report was praised, and a question was raised about whether the special qualities of the South Downs National Park would be considered by the Planning Inspectorate in the event of an appeal.
- The potential for alternative, more suitable designs for the site was discussed.
- Concerns were raised about traffic impacts, particularly at the roundabout near the site, and whether noise issues could be resolved given the proximity to residential buildings.
- The adequacy of the marketing evidence for the site's employment use was questioned, with surprise expressed that the requirement for 18 months of marketing appeared to be satisfied by an email from an agent.
- The committee's experience with permitting retail on employment land elsewhere in the Park was referenced, with disappointment expressed that the employment-based objection could not be substantiated in this case.
- The importance of enhancing the appearance of Lewes, especially at a key gateway site, was emphasised.
- The significance of views in and out of the National Park and conservation area was highlighted, with a suggestion to strengthen the reasons for refusal on these grounds.

118. Members were advised:

- Policy SD34 was primarily concerned with supporting rural local economy, farming, forestry, and tourism, with a focus on micro-businesses. While interest from a local brewery was noted, the policy was not considered directly relevant to the current application.
- Policy SD35 was identified as the main policy in conflict, with the officer acknowledging that changes to planning use classes, Class E had complicated its application. The report considered the conflict, and on balance, the reasons for refusal focused on design and impact.
- The special qualities of the National Park were discussed, with officers expressing confidence that qualities related to design and impact would be considered by the inspector in the event of an appeal.
- The adequacy of the marketing evidence was addressed, with officers noting that while some demand for employment use had been demonstrated, the application before the committee was for retail use.
- The importance of enhancing the appearance of Lewes and the significance of views in and out of the National Park were acknowledged, and these considerations were reflected in the reasons for refusal.

119. **RESOLVED:**

That the application be refused for the reasons set out in paragraph 9.1 of the report.

120. Janet Duncton left the meeting at 12.00pm

ITEM 8: SDNP/25/00292/FUL - GARDEN STREET, LEWES

121. The Officer presented the application and reminded Members of the report (Report PC25/26-30) and the update sheet, noting further objections from Lewes Town Council and residents regarding drainage and foul water capacity.
122. The following speakers addressed the committee in against the application:

- Jennifer Chibnall, speaking as a resident of Lewes.
 - Andrew Simpson, representing Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group.
 - Janet Baah, representing Lewes Town Council
123. The following speakers addressed the committee in support of the application:
- Guy Dixon, from Savills, the Agent, speaking on behalf of the applicant, Home Sussex 1 Limited.
124. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC25/26-30), the updates and the public speaker comments and commented as follows:
- The site was extremely sensitive, reflected in its planning history, and it was important to conserve and enhance the character of the conservation area.
 - It was noted that the previous permission had been granted on appeal, and concern was expressed that the inspector's decision did not fully address the statutory requirement to conserve or enhance the conservation area.
 - The current scheme was considered an improvement over the previous scheme. One Member was of the opinion that it failed to satisfy the requirements of the conservation area.
 - It was acknowledged that the principle of development was established. The design and scale were questioned, with the view that the scheme may be too high and overbearing debated.
 - The affordable housing provision was discussed, with disappointment expressed that only two affordable units were proposed, and questions raised about the viability assessment and the use of vacant building credit.
 - The challenges of delivering affordable housing on brownfield sites were acknowledged, with the high costs associated with contamination, drainage, and materials noted.
 - The importance of retaining the historic plaque from the physic garden was raised, with a suggestion that it be incorporated into the new development.
 - The design and materials were considered, with support expressed for the use of flint and brick and the inclusion of green roofs.
 - The adequacy of parking provision was questioned, with clarification sought on the number of spaces and the likelihood of residents obtaining 'on street' parking permits.
 - The impact on views, neighbouring amenities, and the conservation area was discussed, with differing views expressed as to whether the proposal would enhance or harm the area.
 - The tenure of the affordable units was questioned, with clarification sought on discussions with the local housing authority regarding management of the units.
 - The need to take account of changing viability and material costs since the adoption of the neighbourhood plan was noted.
 - Members expressing support for the proposal as a positive solution for a constrained site.
125. Members were advised:
- The starting point for affordable housing was confirmed as 50%, but the use of vacant building credit and the high costs of development on the site had reduced the viable number of affordable units to two. The applicant's viability review and costs plan had been independently reviewed and agreed by Chartered and Quantity Surveyors on the Authority's behalf.

- The challenges of delivering affordable housing on brownfield sites were acknowledged, with reference to national evidence and the specific constraints of the site.
- The historic plaque would be retained on the site as the wall where it was sited would remain.
- The design and materials reflected the character of the conservation area, with the use of flint, brick, and green roofs.
- There would be eleven parking spaces, and the local highway authority (LHA) had advised that it was unlikely residents would be able to obtain on street parking permits.
- It was confirmed that consultation had taken place with the local housing officer, and that registered providers were not currently seeking to take on and manage small numbers of units in this location.

126. **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That planning permission be granted subject to:
 - i) The conditions set out in paragraph 9.1 of this report and the update sheet and any amendments or other conditions to address technical matters; and
 - ii) A legal agreement, the final form of which is delegated to the Director of Planning, to secure the following:
 - a) Two affordable 1-bedroom homes of a discounted market sales tenure; and
 - b) The management and monitoring of the biodiverse green roofs for a period of 30 years as significant onsite biodiversity net gain, including a £41K monitoring fee.
- 2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Planning to refuse the application with appropriate reasons if the legal agreement is not completed, or sufficient progress has not been made, within 6 months of the Planning Committee meeting of 11 December 2025.

ITEM 9: ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

127. The Officer reminded Members of the report (Report PC25/26-31).
128. The following speakers addressed the committee regarding SDNP/20/01567/CND & SDNP/24/04961/CND Minsted Sandpit, Minsted Road, Minsted, Stedham, GU29 0JH.
 - Jeff Blackett, representing Minsted Residents Group.
129. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning report (Report PC25/26-31) and commented as follows:
 - Reference was made to a previous site visit to Minsted Sandpit, with clarification sought on the status of the application and the restoration scheme.
 - Frustration was expressed about the length of time taken to resolve enforcement cases.
 - The situation at Blind Lane, Lurgashall was raised, with concern that compliance had not been achieved by the deadline and that further proceedings had not taken place as quickly as hoped.
 - The importance of providing comprehensive information on outstanding enforcement cases, such as Long Road, Soberton, was emphasised and more detailed updates were requested in future reports.
 - The strength of the resident's group at Minsted was acknowledged, and the need for the Authority to act decisively was highlighted.
 - The need for robust enforcement where planning rules had been broken was stressed and the desire for fast and visible progress to deter future behaviour was expressed.

130. Members were advised:

- The application for Minsted Sandpit had been returned to the operator due to a lack of required environmental statements and information. A timetable was now in place for restoration, with a clear expectation that failure to comply would result in serious enforcement action.
- The site at Blind Lane, Lurgashall was confirmed to be clear of occupants, but restoration of the land had not been completed. Efforts were underway to trace those responsible, with contempt of court proceedings to follow once they were located.
- The desire for more comprehensive updates on enforcement cases was acknowledged, and more detailed information would be included in future reports.
- The importance of robust enforcement was reiterated. It was noted that taking time to gather evidence would strengthen the Authority's position in legal proceedings.
- The value of publicising enforcement outcomes was raised, and Members were assured that the Authority highlighted enforcement successes in planning newsletters.

131. **RESOLVED:**

- 1) Noted the update on enforcement action.

ITEM 10: UPDATE ON DUTY TO COOPERATE

132. The Officer reminded Members of the report (Report PC25/26-32).

133. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning report (Report PC25/26-32) and commented as follows:

- The removal of the Duty to Cooperate as a legal test was welcomed as it was hoped this would assist Local Plans to progress through examination more smoothly.
- Clarification was sought as to whether the removal of the Duty to Cooperate was linked to the introduction of Spatial Development Strategies and a question was raised as to whether the delay in elections for Mayors of the planned Mayoral Combined Authorities would impact this.
- A question was raised about the timing of when the Authority would need to set out its housing need. The need to balance cooperation with the unique status and constraints of National Park status was discussed and Members sought assurance that the Authority's bespoke methodology for assessing housing need would be robustly defended.
- The process for identifying and allocating sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation was discussed, with Members asking about the outcomes of the recent call for sites and whether this call was made across the whole National Park.
- The importance of transparency was highlighted, with a request that responses from partner authorities to the Authority's unmet needs letters be published in future reports.
- The volume of communication and joint working with partner authorities was noted. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts made to demonstrate compliance with the Duty to Cooperate.

134. Members were advised:

- It was confirmed that the preparation of Spatial Development Strategies would be led by the new Combined County Authorities, which were still due to be set up in the next few months, and that the postponement of the mayoral elections would mean the Spatial Development Strategies process would commence without the input of mayors. Cooperation with other authorities was ongoing in anticipation of future changes to governance structures.

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- The Authority's housing need number and proposed provision number would be brought to Members as part of the Local Plan Regulation 19 report that was scheduled to come before the Planning Committee at its meeting in February 2026. Officers reassured Members that the Authority's unique status and constraints would be robustly defended in the Local Plan process and would be taken into account in determining what level of housing provision was appropriate.
- The process for identifying sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation was explained, with officers confirming that the recent call for sites had been park-wide and that proposed allocations would be brought before Members for consideration.
- The importance of transparency was acknowledged, and officers committed to publishing responses from partner authorities to unmet needs letters in future reports.
- The volume of communication and joint working with partner authorities was confirmed, with officers highlighting the importance of maintaining positive relationships and demonstrating ongoing effective cooperation. This would remain a test of the soundness of the Local Plan at examination even though it will no longer be a legal test.

135. **RESOLVED:**

- 1) Note the contents of this report.

136. The Chair closed the meeting at 13.16pm

CHAIR

Signed: _____

