

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The South Downs National Park Design Review Panel will engage with significant proposals that could have a bearing on the special qualities of the South Downs National Park.* The Panel will operate with particular regard for the first National Park Purpose: “To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.”
- 1.2 The purpose of the South Downs National Park Design Review Panel is to review development proposals and to advise the South Downs National Park planning authority and applicants on design issues through the objective expertise provided by Panel Members. The advice is independent and does not have a statutory planning function in its own right. Its reports will be a material consideration in the South Downs National Park Authority’s statutory planning function.
- 1.3 The Panel will review proposals at both pre-application stage and during the course of formal planning applications. The process of design review delivers public benefit by improving the quality of architecture and design, including the design of landscapes, streets and public spaces.
- 1.4 The secondary function of the South Downs National Park Design Review Panel is to review design principles, policies and guidance produced by or on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority.

2. PANEL MEMBERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 2.1 The South Downs National Park Authority will contribute administrative, logistical and financial support to the South Downs National Park Design Review Panel. The South Downs National Park Authority will circulate details of meetings, supporting information, reports and organise site visits and venue hire. This function will not compromise or conflict with the independent status of the Design Review Panel.
- 2.2 Members of the Design Review Panel must be qualified in a discipline that is of direct relevance to the range of development applications that may be considered by the Panel. For example, architects (including conservation architects), urban (including rural) designers, landscape architects, landscape management advisors, agricultural advisors/ farmers, artists and nature conservation advisors. Other suitably qualified professionals may be invited to advise the Panel at the discretion of the SDNPA and with the support of the Chair and Vice Chair.
- 2.3 Members and any advisors will have the option to either opt in or out should there be a request that the Panel’s views are reported at planning appeal. If there are no Members available to represent the Panel’s views at appeal, a third party appointee will interview the panel and report its views at appeal.

* Refer to the Significance Test and Working Protocols

- 2.4 Potential Design Review Panel Members may be suggested by:
- Professional bodies (e.g. RIBA, Landscape Institute)
 - Suggestions of serving Members
 - Suggestions of the South Downs National Park Authority Officers or Members
 - Suggestions of the Officers of the Local Planning Authorities within the SDNP
 - Suggestions of Parish Councils or local community groups
 - Direct applications from individuals
- 2.5 All potential Members should complete the SDNP DRP Member Application Form. SDNP DRP administrators and SDNP DRP Members will consider which applicants to invite to interview. Interviews will be conducted jointly by SDNPA officers and DRP Members. Formal appointments will be made by the SDNPA.
- 2.6 Panel Membership will be encouraged from individuals of national repute, operating outside the SDNP, and from individuals with local knowledge, operating within the SDNP.
- 2.7 Members are appointed initially for a period of two years, and subject to a review process.
- 2.8 Panel Members should be familiar with the working arrangements of the SDNP DRP and with the statutory context of the South Downs National Park.
- 2.9 The Chair and Vice Chairs will be elected from the list of Design Review Panel Members and will sit for 2 years. The Chair and Vice Chair should expect to attend all panel meetings to ensure continuity and consistency. The election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs will take place at the Annual General Meeting, and will be recorded in the minutes of the Annual General Meeting. If it is found to be too onerous for the Chair and Vice Chair to attend every meeting, the SDNP DRP may look to appoint 2 Chairs and Vice Chairs so that attendance at meetings can be alternated.
- 2.10 Job specifications for the roles of Chair and Vice Chair will inform the selection and election of Members to these positions.
- 2.11 The South Downs National Park Design Review Panel is the responsibility of South Downs National Park Authority. Any representation relating to the conduct of the South Downs National Park Design Review Panel shall be made to and dealt with by the South Downs National Park Authority and not to/by any member of the Panel.
- 2.12 Resignations from the Panel shall be sent in writing to the Chair and copied to the South Downs National Park Authority.
- 2.13 Design Review Panel Members are entitled to recoup from the South Downs National Park Authority reasonable travel and parking expenses which accrue as a result of their attendance at Design Review Panel meetings and the Annual General Meeting.
- 2.14 Members are not remunerated for their time.

3. PANEL MEETINGS

- 3.1 The type and number of schemes to be brought to any Design Review Panel meeting will be decided by the South Downs National Park Authority. Two or three cases is typical.
- 3.2 The Design Review Panel should operate in accordance with the agreed protocols, which determine the working relationships to be observed between the SDNP DRP and other DRPs and local authorities acting within the SDNP area.
- 3.3 In instances where an application relates to a site within part of the SDNP that has Local Design Review coverage and the application is *called-in* for determination by the SDNPA, the Chair, Vice-Chair or other Member of the Local Design Review Panel will be invited to sit on the SDNP DRP for the relevant meeting. For the purposes of that meeting, the co-opted LDR Member will serve as a SDNP DRP Member and will be entitled to comment on other schemes under review. Refer to SDNP DRP Working Protocols.
- 3.4 A Design Review Panel meeting will usually comprise 6 Members. A minimum of 4 Members must be present to comment on any proposal. There should be no more than 8. Ordinarily at least two of the Members will be qualified in architectural or urban design and at least two shall be qualified landscape architects. All panel Members should be senior professionals (Director level) with a wide range of experience.
- 3.5 The South Downs National Park Design Review Panel administrators will maintain a list of Panel Members that details criteria including their location and skills sets. Panel meeting organisers will ensure that each meeting is attended by the recommended range of qualified professionals with good breadth of expertise, with both local (within SDNP) and national (external to SDNP) representation. Rotas for member attendance at Design Review Panel meetings will be agreed on a yearly or biannual basis to accord with the timing of the AGM.
- 3.6 Design Review Panel meetings should be organised to ensure a fair rotation of panel Members. There will be sufficient numbers of local and national Members representing each required professional skill to ensure that no Member (except the Chair and Vice Chair) need attend more than one panel meeting every two months. Regular Members may be paired (in a pool) so that they can take turns. Panel Members may be permitted to nominate a pre determined stand-in if they find they cannot attend at short notice.
- 3.7 Each Panel meeting will be led by the Chair or a Vice Chair as identified by the published rota for that year. On an occasion when the Chair or Vice-Chair is not available another Panel member will be invited to chair that meeting.
- 3.8 South Downs National Park Authority officers (and officers of the local authorities within the SDNP) may be invited to present briefings to Design Review Panel meetings and answer questions. They shall not, however, sit on the Panel or engage in the Panel's discussion
- 3.9 South Downs National Park Authority Members and local community representatives may be invited to attend Design Review Panel meetings as observers. They shall not, however, sit on the Panel as members or participate in the Panel's discussions. The Chair may allocate a short time for questions from such observers. Protocols should be made clear to observers at the beginning of the meeting and questions may not be asked outside of allocated times.
- 3.10 Meetings will be held on a regular basis throughout the year, normally every 4 weeks but dependant in the volumes of applications. The frequency of meetings may be reviewed by

the panel. On occasions, additional special meetings may be convened to deal with particular schemes where this is deemed necessary by the South Downs National Park Authority.

- 3.11 Panel meeting venues will circulate around accessible locations.
- 3.12 The potential for 'virtual' panel meetings to be undertaken through a teleconferencing facility may be explored to reduce the carbon impact and costs of meetings.
- 3.13 A typical Design Review Panel meeting may be expected to take half a working day.
- 3.14 Site visits should be undertaken for proposals of particular sensitivity or complexity. The decision as to whether or not a site visit is necessary should be taken by the Chair. Transportation to sites can be arranged by the South Downs National Park Authority administrators.
- 3.15 Applicants or agents will be encouraged to present schemes to the Panel. This may include projected images, computer simulations, physical models and display boards. The Panel may ask applicants to abide by a standard presentation format or time limit.
- 3.16 The typical format for design review sessions is:
 - a. background briefing by SDNPA Officer to Panel (applicants not present) Officer identifies key issues of concern
 - b. Open questions by Panel to Officer
 - c. Applicants enter and set up
 - d. Applicant presentation
 - e. Discussion of issues with applicant
 - f. Applicants leave
 - g. Panel discussion
 - h. Summing up by Panel Chair
- 3.17 The Chair should provide a verbal summary of the Design Review Panel's discussion and Members should confirm their agreement.
- 3.18 An Annual General Meeting will be held each year (usually in April). The Design Review Panel AGM should review the list of Panel Members to ensure that national and local expertise is being drawn upon, with a good circulation of Members at meetings. If recruitment of Panel Members has been low during the preceding year, the Design Review Panel AGM should consider actions to ensure a good balance of skills and contextual understanding is maintained.
- 3.19 Attendance at the SDNP DRP may be considered as Continuing Professional Education for Members.

4. OUTCOMES FROM PANEL MEETINGS

- 4.1 The deliberations on each item presented to the Design Review Panel will be minuted by officers of the South Downs National Park Authority and subsequently verified by the Chair of the Panel which considered the item.
- 4.2 Panel Members may record their thoughts graphically in sketches and these may be added to reports.
- 4.3 The South Downs National Park Authority Design Review Panel administrators will issue verified design review written reports within two weeks of a panel review.
- 4.4 An annual report will be prepared by the South Downs National Park Authority, which will be presented to the AGM. The report will summarise the cases that were reviewed by the Panel during the previous year, state what the planning decisions were and give any updates on development sites.
- 4.5 Outside of the meeting, individual Design Review Panel Members shall not discuss the merits of any proposal with the press, public, the applicant or the applicant's agents.
- 4.6 The Panel's agreed reports will be placed on the Planning Authority's website where they can be viewed by the public. The SDNPA operate a transparent service, whereby pre-application and application details, although not actively publicised will be placed on the online planning register. This is unless the applicant gives reasons why the enquiry is commercially sensitive.
- 4.7 The South Downs National Park Authority administrators or officers will notify the Design Review Panel of the planning outcome of any schemes that have been considered by the panel.
- 4.8 Changes to applications resulting from design review will be expected to be completed to the satisfaction of South Downs National Park Authority design and case officers. The Design Review Panel may consider amended proposals at subsequent Panel meetings. The Design Review Panel may also review design details and material samples and advise the SDNPA whether planning conditions have been adequately met.

5. DEALING WITH INTERESTS

- 5.1 Panel Members will be required to abide by the SDNPA Code of Conduct and complete a register of interests from.
- 5.2 Panel Members should abide by their Institute's professional code of conduct and any breach will be reported to the relevant professional body.
- 5.3 Panel Members will be sent information in advance on the schemes to be reviewed. Panel Members are expected to declare in good time any interest that might arise either as an individual or a member of a group or organisation, where they have a financial, commercial or professional interest in a project, its client and or/its site. The panel member is then expected to inform the panel administrator of the nature of the interest where a decision will be taken in light of the declaration. Where a conflict of interests arises, a panel member who has declared an interest in a particular item will not attend the meeting and will not take part in the panel discussions on the proposal concerned.

Tim Slaney
Director of Planning
South Downs National Park Authority

Signature..... Date

Name:.....
Representing.....
Address.....
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Signature..... Date