



Summary

South Downs National Park – Local Plan Options Consultation Document

February 2014

What is the South Downs National Park Local Plan?

The Local Plan will contain policies that will be used to make planning decisions in the National Park, alongside Neighbourhood Plans for particular towns and villages, and national planning policy.

At the moment planning decisions within the National Park are made using different policies specific to the various districts, cities and boroughs that overlap the National Park (which the National Park Authority inherited in April 2011). When the final Local Plan is adopted in 2017 it will become the single local plan for the National Park.

Over the past couple of years, people, businesses and organisations around the National Park were involved in shaping the Partnership Management Plan. The policies in the Local Plan will help to achieve the vision and deliver the objectives of the Partnership Management Plan. It will do this by guiding the amount, type, form and location of development, while prioritising conservation of the landscape, scenic beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

What is this consultation about?

This 'Options Consultation' builds on the consultation and engagement that has taken place over the past three years and provides the opportunity to discuss the key planning issues that the Local Plan will deal with. It asks for your views on how we should respond to development demands across the National Park in the future, to ensure that we look after the South Downs and support the thriving communities within it.

At this early stage in the development of the Local Plan we need to discuss and agree the overall principles, with more detail and discussion on specific sites at the next stage – Preferred Options, in early 2015.

We have put the key issues and a range of options into a Local Plan Options Consultation Document which you can find via our website:

<http://consult.southdowns.gov.uk>

To read a paper copy of the Options Consultation Document, visit your local library, or district council office.

If you have any questions, please email the address below or ring us on 0300 303 1053.

How do I get involved?

You can comment on the Options Consultation Document in a number of ways:

1. Online at <http://consult.southdowns.gov.uk>
2. Fill in an electronic comment form and email to planningpolicy@southdowns.gov.uk, or
3. Fill out a paper copy comment form and send to:
Options Consultation
Local Plan team
SDNPA
Hatton House
Bepton Road
Midhurst
West Sussex GU29 9LU

Please make sure that you say which chapter, issue, option and/or question you are commenting on.

More information can be found at:

www.southdowns.gov.uk/localplan.

We will analyse all comments received. They will help us refine the options and prepare the Preferred Options document.

What is in the Options Consultation Document?

The Options Consultation Document has 10 chapters.

1. The Introduction describes the Local Plan process, the planning context, how we define 'major development', the National Park's special qualities and the long term vision for it.
2. Chapter 2 sets out the important features of the National Park in the form of a Spatial Portrait.
3. The other eight chapters set out a number of key issues, with different options being given for how planning policies could respond to each issue.

Landscape and Natural Resources

The National Park's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage contribute to the quality of life of everyone living in, working in or visiting it. Their conservation and enhancement is the National Park's primary Purpose, and a legal requirement of the National Park Authority. The landscape and wildlife of the National Park is varied, and several of the options relate to whether we should take different approaches in different parts of the National Park or treat the National Park as a whole. Landscape and natural resource issues include:

- Conserving and enhancing landscape character;
- Linking green spaces together;
- Protecting and encouraging rare and special habitats and species, and also wildlife more generally;
- Protecting the natural water resources against excessive use or pollution; and
- Protecting and managing trees and woodland.

Historic Environment

The many historic buildings and archaeological sites, the historic parklands and the other heritage features of our area are a key reason it was made a National Park. The planning system is an important way to protect them – not only those designated for their national importance by the Government, but also those not yet identified or only of local value. Historic environment issues include:

- Keeping historic buildings in good condition, and helping them to stay in use;
- Protecting traditional farm buildings;
- Making historic buildings more energy efficient without harming their character;
- Protecting features of the historic environment that are not currently protected by national legislation; and
- Ensuring that important infrastructure projects do not adversely affect our heritage.

Design

The design of new development will affect many elements of the environment, society and economy of the National Park. The Local Plan can help make sure that the design and location of new development is sensitive to the National Park's special qualities. Design policies need to help these to continue and develop, and also be informed by the ideas of sustainable development. Design issues include:

- Designing new developments in a way that conserves and enhances the built character, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park;
- Encouraging the use of particular building materials, for example local materials;
- Making sure new buildings are easy to adapt to changing uses;
- Setting minimum space standards for new housing; and
- Making new and existing buildings energy efficient and resilient to climate change.

Settlement Strategy

The National Park contains beautiful countryside and many different types of settlement, from tiny isolated hamlets to large market towns like Lewes and Petersfield. The settlement strategy chapter looks at what types of development might be allowed in the countryside and what should be required, encouraged or restricted in settlements of different sizes and with different levels of facilities and services. There are also issues about the relationship with settlements outside the boundary, and about large former industrial sites in the countryside which may be redeveloped..

Housing

The provision of housing is a major issue for the National Park and will need to be addressed in the Local Plan. The cost of housing is high, which causes problems for people living and working here, but National Park status means opportunities for new housing development will be limited compared to other areas. Issues include:

- Providing affordable housing for local people;
- Making sure the types of housing available meet local needs;
- Setting out when on-site dwellings could be built for farm, estate or forestry workers;
- Meeting the housing needs of older people;
- Finding suitable sites for gypsies and travellers.

Economy and Tourism

Businesses in the National Park had an estimated turnover of £3.6 billion in 2012. There are strong economic links between the National Park and areas outside the boundary, with most businesses inside the National Park being small ones, in a wide range of sectors. Tourism and recreation in particular have a significant role in the local economy. By supporting and promoting sustainable tourism and recreation, and other economic activity, in appropriate locations planning policies can contribute to economic well-being and encourage people to enjoy the National Park's special qualities. Issues include:

- Protecting sites and allocating new sites for industrial or commercial uses where appropriate;
- Supporting farms that want to diversify their business;
- Making sure horse-related development conserves the landscape; and
- Protecting and encouraging tourist attractions and accommodation in suitable locations.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

Infrastructure covers a wide range of services and facilities, from flood defences, energy generation facilities and fibre optic cables to schools, pubs, post offices and public open space - the elements that are needed to make a settlement sustainable. The provision of facilities in the South Downs generally has been in decline, especially in smaller villages. The planning system has an important role to play in protecting those services we already have, helping them to adapt, and providing new facilities. In particular, development can help fund new

infrastructure through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Issues include:

- Encouraging new and protecting existing community facilities from change of use;
- Supporting renewable energy generation that does not harm the landscape or wildlife;
- Setting priorities for what projects would be funded by CIL; and
- Responding to applications for major infrastructure schemes.

Transport and Accessibility

Tens of millions of people visit the National Park by car every year, and tens of thousands of people commute into and out of it by car every day. The resulting traffic creates carbon emissions and harms the tranquillity of the National Park. There are also many settlements with no or limited access to public transport. The National Park Authority is not a transport authority, but there are several issues relating to transport that we can address with local planning policies, including:

- Protecting disused railway lines, for footpaths, bridleways or the potential return of the railway;
- Setting car parking standards for new development and appropriate provision of new public car parks in suitable locations; and
- Allocating new development to places with good access to public transport.