

7.845 Although it is outwith the AONB, the Agency argues that this high quality landscape extends south of the A27 up to and including the land subject to the variation order. I accept that the pastoral landscape of small fields enclosed by ditches, fences and hedgerows does extend south of the road. However it seems to me that the landscape is less intact than the Agency claims due, primarily, to the loss of some field boundaries. The distinctive enclosure of the wide valley floor by downland hillsides is also absent south of the A27. Roughly coincidental with the line of the road, the Arun breaks out of the Downs and begins its passage across the much more open and less distinctive landscapes of the coastal plain. The land south of the AONB up to and including the variation order land is also fragmented from the core downland landscapes to the north by traffic on the busy A27, built development close to Arundel Railway Station and by the town of Arundel itself. All of the above argues against the inclusion of the non-AONB land south of the A27.

7.846 Setting aside my doubts concerning the satisfaction of the natural beauty criterion, I am also conscious that there are few opportunities to obtain markedly superior recreational experiences south of the A27. In marked contrast to the situation north of the road, south of the A27 the very extensive valley floor landscape is devoid of any public rights of way. In saying that I note that the Arun is itself used for boating and other water-based recreational purposes and that a right of way exists along the embankment that forms the western river bank. This route is well used by walkers and others seeking open-air

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recreation and it allows the public to enjoy the superb views of Arundel and the wider Downs beyond. The views north across the valley floor are rightly commended by the Agency and others but I am not convinced that they justify the inclusion of land that is not itself of especial value. I do not dispute that this land makes an important contribution to the setting of Arundel - an important matter on any count - but this point is effectively addressed by a protective policy in the adopted Arun Local Plan.

7.851 I now turn to Tortington Common. This is an area of woodland that appears to consist mainly of conifer plantations but also includes some deciduous woodland and heathland. It is not identified as being of nature conservation value, unlike Binsted Wood and Stewards Copse to the west and east respectively, which are both SNCIs, but a note attached to the South Downs Campaign submission (Ob.3275/35/1, annex B) indicates that it is nonetheless of some ecological value. More importantly, perhaps, it seems to me to be an integral part of a very extensive area of woodland generally to the west of Arundel that extends over the chalk dipslope and the upper coastal plain. I recognise that this area is fragmented by the A27 which tends to form a barrier to north south movements. Even so, the woodland area south of the road is very extensive and generally of high landscape quality and on balance I consider that it satisfies the statutory criteria. I therefore support its inclusion in the PSDNP. This conclusion is qualified insofar as I accept that if the Highways Agency's review leads to a decision in favour of an Arundel by-pass on the line that is safeguarded in the Arun Local Plan, it would seem sensible to exclude Tortington Common from the PSDNP.

7.852 My final comment under this head relates to the claim that the variation order might lead to pressure for a future by-pass to take a more southerly route across the Arun Valley and beyond. It is said that such a route could have adverse implications for the countryside to the west of the valley. Given that I do not support the inclusion of land in the valley south of the AONB, I see no need to comment on the claims that a more southerly route would be more damaging. The relative merits of alternative routes fall outside the remit of the South Downs inquiry in any event.

(iii) Land in the Arun Valley situated between the variation order land and the coastal railway line

7.853 Given my conclusions in respect of the land south of the A27, it follows that I do not favour the inclusion of additional land extending as far south as the coastal railway line. I would add that even if I had reached a different conclusion on the land further north, I would not have supported the

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inclusion of the objection land. Like the Agency, I consider that there is a progressive decline in the intrinsic landscape quality of the valley floor away from the A27 and the influence of the core Downs is also less marked.

(iv) Land south of the coastal railway line

7.854 It must follow that if I do not support the inclusion of the land north of the railway line in the PSDNP, the same conclusion must apply to the land to the south of it. Although it will be of little comfort to those seeking to extend the PSDNP down to the coast, I would add that the carefully conceived submission put forward by the CPRE, and the submissions put forward by other objectors, persuade me that the coastal landscape at Climping is very special. Unfortunately I consider that it is too far removed and detached from the core Downs to warrant inclusion in the PSDNP.

Inspector's Recommendations

7.855 Firstly, that the PSDNP boundary follows the AONB boundary across the Arun Valley and around Arundel save for the exclusion of properties in the High Street. Secondly that the variation order is not confirmed in respect of the corridor of land in the Arun Valley but is confirmed in respect of Tortington Common (subject to the outcome of the Highways Agency's review).

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Binsted village and surrounding land

Case for objectors

7.856 A number of objectors argue that the boundary should be amended to include land to the south of Binsted Wood. The CPRE seeks the inclusion of the tract extending as far south as the coastal railway line and as far west as the western edge of Binsted Rife. The Friends of Binsted Church and others seek the inclusion of a slightly smaller area and the South Downs Campaign argue for the inclusion of only the fields and woodland immediately south of Binsted Wood.

7.857 I begin with the wider area. In support of its inclusion it is said that the land is well maintained and exhibits the traditional characteristics of the lower downland slopes. It is

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different to other coastal plain landscapes and is linked to the wider Downs by its landform, landscape and history. It is also well related to the Arun Valley to the east, land that should also be included in the PSDNP. The delicate topography and secrecy of the Binsted area is vital to the setting of Arundel. Binsted Rife has a remote and magical quality and provides a strong boundary between a rich rural landscape of Binsted Parish and the damaged landscapes further west. Public footpaths and country lanes allow access to the historic parkland at Binsted Park and the remainder of this largely unspoilt rural area. Both statutory criteria are clearly met.

- 7.858 The more limited area promoted for inclusion by the South Downs Campaign (and supported by the Friends of Binsted Church and others as a "fall-back" option if the inclusion of a wider area is deemed inappropriate) includes some woodland areas that are part of the Binsted Woods SNCI and a small number of enclosed fields. Inexplicably, the woodlands that are excluded are part of the best areas for wildlife and recreation. This area has benefited from a programme of landscape enhancement work that has offset the ravages of Dutch Elm Disease. In time this work will make the land in question feel even less like the coastal plain. Including this area would bring more bridleways and footpaths into the PSDNP and provide additional recreational opportunities.

Agency's response

- 7.859 The wider objection area extending as far south as the railway line contains medium to large fields surrounded by dense hedgelines. Less wooded than the land further north, it is more open as a result. It is a transitional landscape that lacks a strong sense of place and, overall, is more closely associated with the coastal plain than the rolling landscapes further north. While this area contains pockets of attractive countryside it is not generally of outstanding natural beauty. It does not satisfy the natural beauty criterion. It follows from this that it cannot offer a markedly superior recreational experience.
- 7.860 The more restricted area identified by the South Downs Campaign includes some arable fields that have some attraction but are not of outstanding quality. The areas of woodland within the objection area are linear in shape and read as part of the sweep of arable countryside.

Inspector's Conclusions

- 7.861 The extensive tract of countryside in the vicinity of Binsted that the CPRE, the Friends of Binsted Church and others wish to see included in the PSDNP forms part of the assemblage of landscapes that make up the coastal plain. To my mind this is one of the more remote and higher quality tracts within the coastal plain – a character area that frequently suffers from the presence of unwelcome urban fringe type developments. By comparison to the wider character area, the countryside in the vicinity of Binsted is scenically attractive with few landscape detractors. I say this even though it is outside the AONB and is not subject to any other protective landscape designations so far as I am aware. Unfortunately I am not convinced that it should all form part of the PSDNP. Overall it lacks core downland characteristics and the visual associations with the chalk landscapes to the north are weak. It may be better than “ordinary” countryside, whatever that might mean, but I doubt if it amounts to countryside of especial importance. It also seems to me that my conclusion that the Arun Valley should not form part of the PSDNP tends to undermine the case for including all of the land in the vicinity of Binsted. The Binsted area is, in any event, far less important than the Arun Valley to the landscape setting of Arundel.
- 7.862 I now turn to the far more restricted area of land identified by the South Downs Campaign and others. It seems to me that this area has close associations with Binsted Wood, not least because the fingers of woodland within this area are also part of the same Binsted Wood SNCI. Earlier in the report I indicated that in my opinion this wood should form part of the PSDNP. It also seems to me that the open countryside at the edge of the wood lies towards the upper end of a transition that extends generally from the high quality core downland and associated landscapes in the A27 corridor to the flatter and less distinctive landscapes of the coastal plain. Unlike other parts of the coastal plain, this area also benefits from the programme of landscape restoration work that has been undertaken in recent years. This work has strengthened key landscape elements such as the mature hedgerows that help to give the local landscape a clear sense of place. On balance I consider that this area at least meets the natural beauty criterion. It is also relevant to note that the local rights of way network allows the public to visit and enjoy this area. To my mind it is part

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of a wider tract that offers markedly superior recreational experiences.

Inspector's Recommendation

- 7.863 That the PSDNP boundary be amended insofar as it should include the land identified by the South Downs Campaign in Doc.3275/15a – appendix A.