

Ecosystem Services Technical Advice Note (non-householder)

I. What is this note and how does it relate to my proposal?

I.1 This note will assist those applying for planning permission within the South Downs National Park when seeking to comply with Policy SD2 of the South Downs Local Plan. This is the Authority's core policy on protecting and enhancing Ecosystem Services.

I.2 The Ecosystem Services approach is a way of thinking about the landscape and environment in terms of its functions and the wider benefits it provides. As such it needs to be embedded within the planning and design process from the outset. This note sets out how best to apply this approach to your application proposal. It will also provide guidance on how to produce an Ecosystem Services Statement to support your application. This is a mandatory document for all applications as it will be a requirement of the Local Validation List.

I.3 In addition, it will assist applicants to select the most appropriate actions for their site and demonstrate how following this approach will help their proposal to deliver multiple benefits for people and wildlife in the National Park. This will, in turn, add value to their development scheme.

2. What are Ecosystem Services?

2.1 Ecosystem Services are the benefits that people and society get from the natural environment. Figure 1 illustrates the inter-relationships between Ecosystem Services and the wider public benefits that people derive the National Park. An ecosystems approach helps us to identify the benefits we get from nature, value them and build them into planning, decision making and management. Further details are set out in the South Downs Local Plan.

Figure 1: People supporting landscape and landscape supporting people.



3. The Policy Framework

3.1 Government policy states that the planning system should recognise the wider benefits of Ecosystem Services. This is carried through to the South Downs Local Plan with Core Policy SD2: Ecosystem Services, which applies to all planning applications made in the National Park.

Development proposals will be permitted where they have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. This will be achieved through the use of high quality design, and by delivering all opportunities to:

- a) Sustainably manage land and water environments;
- b) Protect and provide more, better and joined up natural habitats;
- c) Conserve water resources and improve water quality;
- d) Manage and mitigate the risk of flooding;
- e) Improve the National Park's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change;
- f) Increase the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means;
- g) Conserve and enhance soils;
- h) Support the sustainable production and use of food, forestry and raw materials;
- i) Reduce levels of pollution;
- j) Improve opportunities for peoples' health and wellbeing; and
- k) Provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources which contribute to the special qualities.

Development proposals must be supported by a statement that sets out how the development proposal impacts, both positively and negatively, on ecosystem services.

4. When should I start to think about Ecosystem Services?

4.1 Ecosystem Services should be embedded within the design process from the conceptual stage onwards. It is a way of thinking that should influence decision making in all aspects of a proposal.

4.2 The early analysis of priority Ecosystem Services and the public benefits they provide is important. It should form a key part of the evidence base that is utilised to determine the baseline conditions of the application site. This will consequently inform the scope and form of development that would be appropriate for the site and the surrounding landscape.

4.3 The SDNPA would encourage all applicants to utilise the Authority's pre-application service <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/making-an-application/pre-application/>. This provides the best opportunity to consider how this early analysis can be undertaken, and how it can be translated into appropriate Ecosystem Service based actions on site.

5. How do Ecosystem Services relate to other development plan requirements and the documents I am submitting?

5.1 Policy SD2 is a Core Policy in the South Downs Local Plan that sets out an overarching principle of development for the National Park. The delivery of this policy is interdependent with other Local Plan policies.

5.2 There are a number of potential evidence sources that relate to the policy criteria. These may assist with assessing the baseline conditions on your site. Some of these, such as the Ecosystem Service mapping tool (EcoServ GIS) are highly relevant to this policy. Access to a web-based Policies Map is available for you to review some of this GIS based information (link to follow).



5.3 Table I sets out links to other Local Plan policies and potential sources of information that could provide evidence to support your planning application. Accordingly, whilst there is a requirement for a stand-alone Ecosystem Services Statement to be submitted alongside all planning applications, it is expected that other submitted documents, such as the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, should also reference the results and outcomes of the Statement to demonstrate an integrated approach.

Table I: Links between the criteria of Policy SD2 and other Local Plan policies and potential sources of evidence.

Policy SD2 Criteria	Interdependent Local Plan Policies	Available Evidence Sources
a) Sustainably manage land and water environments	SD4: Landscape Character SD11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows SD17: Protection of the Water Environment SD18: The Open Coast	Viewshed Study & South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment. EcoServ: Pollination EcoServ: Multi-functional mapping Habitat Connectivity Mapping Water Framework Directive mapping (chemical/biological status)
b) Protect and provide more, better and joined up habitats	SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity SD10: International Sites SD11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows SD17: Protection of the Water Environment SD18: The Open Coast SD45: Green Infrastructure	Habitat Connectivity Mapping EcoServ: Green Infrastructure Asset Mapping Forestry Commission Woodland inventory. Register of Local Geological Sites and Geological SSSIs.
c) Conserve water resources and improve water quality	SD17: Protection of the Water Environment SD48: Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources SD49: Flood Risk Management	Ecoserv: Water quality/water purification Water Framework Directive mapping (chemical/biological status) Nitrate apportionment mapping (where available)
d) Manage and mitigate risk of flooding	SD17: Protection of the Water Environment SD45: Green Infrastructure SD48: Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources SD49: Flood Risk Management	EA Flood Risk Mapping
e) Improve the National Park's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change	SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity SD14: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation of Historic Buildings SD45: Green Infrastructure SD48: Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources	Natural England Climate Change Risk Mapping. Ecoserv: Climate change regulation Ecoserv: Carbon storage Habitat Connectivity mapping



Table 1 (Continued):

Policy SD2 Criteria	Interdependent Local Plan Policies	Available Evidence Sources
f) Increase the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means	SD4: Landscape character SD5: Design SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity SD11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows	Ecoserv: Carbon storage Forestry Commission Woodland inventory.
g) Conserve and enhance soils	SD4: Landscape Character SD39: Agriculture and Forestry	British Geological Society Soil Maps. NEVO Soil Risk models
h) Support the sustainable production and use of food, forestry and raw materials	SD4: Landscape Character SD34: Sustaining the Local Economy SD39: Agriculture and Forestry	Land Cover - Crop maps Land-App and Farm Cluster mapping. Forestry Commission Woodland Inventory
i) Reduce levels of pollution	SD11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows SD20: Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes SD45: Green Infrastructure SD54: Pollution and Air Quality	Ecoserv: Noise regulation Ecoserv: Water quality/water purification Ecoserv: Air quality/air purification
j) Improve opportunities for people's health and wellbeing	SD4: Landscape character SD5: Design SD6: Safeguarding Views SD7: Relative Tranquillity SD8: Dark Night Skies SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity SD12: Historic Environment SD18: The Open Coast SD20: Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes SD23: Sustainable Tourism SD24: Equestrian Uses SD45: Green Infrastructure	Ecoserv: Education Ecoserv: Green Travel Ecoserv: Accessible natural green space Tranquillity Mapping
k) Provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources which contribute to the special qualities	SD4: Landscape character SD5: Design SD6: Safeguarding Views SD7: Relative Tranquillity SD8: Dark Night Skies SD20: Walking, Cycling and Equestrian Routes SD23: Sustainable Tourism SD24: Equestrian Uses SD45: Green Infrastructure	Ecoserv: Education Ecoserv: Green Travel Ecoserv: Accessible natural green space Tranquillity Mapping



6. How do I apply ecosystem services to my proposal?

6.1 To ensure that a development proposal incorporates the most appropriate Ecosystem Services solution(s) the following process should be followed when preparing a planning application:

Stage 1: Evidence gathering

At the very outset an exercise should be undertaken to understand the baseline conditions of the application site and its surrounds. It should focus on assets, such as tree and woodland, wildlife habitats, water or soils that are valuable for providing Ecosystem Service benefits or might fall within the scope of the exercise defined by the criteria of policy SD2.

Stage 2: Analysis of Evidence

Once the assets present on the site have been established these should be analysed, with reference to the criteria of policy SD2, to determine what opportunities are present on the site (including linkages and impacts upon the surrounding area). It is important at this stage that the Ecosystem approach is utilised as a ‘lens’ through which to evaluate the assets of the site to ensure that all potential benefits are identified. This needs to determine what opportunities are present on the site to protect and enhance Ecosystem Service provision.

Stage 3: Determining the site strategy for Ecosystem Services

Once the opportunities to implement Ecosystem Services actions on the site and the surrounding area have been identified it is appropriate to consider how these will best be delivered to generate multiple benefits.

To ensure compliance with policy SD2 it will be important to demonstrate how these opportunities will be delivered and how they are within the control of the applicant to deliver them. We would expect proposals to be setting out how the principle of ‘net-gain’ might be delivered from the design and layout of the scheme.

Stage 4: Implementation of Strategy

The assessment stage will help determine what the appropriate Ecosystem Services based solutions for the development proposals are. Once complete this assessment, along with a summary of the methodology, should be set out within an Ecosystem Services Statement. They should also be shown on the submitted application plans.

6.2 The actions will be secured at the planning application stage through the use of either a planning condition or legal agreement.

7. Format of your Ecosystem Services Statement

7.1 The Local Validation List <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/making-an-application/local-validation-list/> requires all planning applications to be accompanied by an Ecosystem Services Statement. The preparation and scope of the statement should be proportionate to the impact of the proposed scheme. A simple template is available for householder applications (link to follow). The statement must be in the form of a standalone document unless it is part of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

7.2 In addition, to the Statement all of the proposed Ecosystem Services solutions must be shown on the submitted application plans.

