

KEY MESSAGES

This is a landscape led Local Plan, for the first time looking at the South Downs as a whole with National Park purposes and our duty to the fore. The Plan introduces a new spatial portrait for the South Downs, which is set out opposite.

The Local Plan considers the geology and geography and working practices that have shaped the landscapes of the National Park and their influence on the evolution of settlement patterns and communities. We seek to capture the principles of 'ecosystem services' into the making and delivery of the Local Plan. This approach ensures the services nature provides us (such as woodfuel, clean water, health and well-being) from nature's own 'capital' (timber, water, fresh air) are factored into decision making and allocations.

This thinking results in an emphasis on landscape and the nature of the areas as mapped out in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment. This has informed the evidence base, which is wide and varied and deliberately includes elements important to the National Park's special qualities.

Allocations and policies are therefore landscape capacity led, not target driven. This complies with the National Planning Policy Framework and the DEFRA Vision and Circular 2010 on national parks. These documents, as Margaret Paren advises in the Foreword, do support our need to produce a plan fit for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and, in relation to housing, local affordable homes provision.

We have searched thoroughly and rigorously for suitable development sites; it is just that in carrying out this work landscape conservation takes the primary role.

We have a clear spatial strategy, one of dispersing a 'medium' level of growth throughout communities within the National Park, rather than enabling growth just around the largest settlements. This has come from, and is broadly supported by, local communities, evidence of local need and a recognition that even the smallest communities need to live, breath and prosper over the next 15 years. We are also determined to ensure the quality of new build reflects

the landscape within which it sits and is of a standard befitting a National Park as an exemplar of rural planning.

A strategic approach of dispersed growth combined with a landscape capacity analysis within the Local Plan, to formulate policies and allocate sites is driven by a number of key factors:

- Evidence Base – studies/information such as Tranquillity Mapping, Dark Night Skies, Transport Assessments, Ecoserve mapping to know what ecosystem services are available or in deficit
- Evidence Base – the *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* where many parameters relate to landscape matters such as views, impact upon the special qualities of the National Park and other statutory assessments such as Habitat Regulation Assessments and Sustainability Appraisals
- Community Engagement and Feedback – particularly Neighbourhood Development Plans but also individual and collective meetings with parish representatives, use of a landowners network, the South Downs Partnership and discussions with statutory agencies
- Officer and Member knowledge and professional insight as to what may be possible and what may be available. Given the range of officers involved in the Local Plan, the extensive knowledge of the National Park and the experience of Members in so many areas relevant to plan making, this is key to sound plan making

We have, in advance of the Local Plan, but using the same approach, actively promoted and assisted in over 50 Neighbourhood Development Plans, all incorporated into the Local Plan. This ensures evidence base, local knowledge and experience is used to fullest effect in creating a single Development Plan Document over such a large area.

CONCEPTUAL SPATIAL DIAGRAM OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA

