

Position Statement on behalf of The Goodwood Estate Company Limited

MATTER 4: Overall Housing Need and Supply
Policies SD25, SD26 and SD33

It is the position of the Goodwood Estate that the response of the local planning authority to concerns raised in representations to the local plan is unacceptable. Neither the proposed modifications nor the reasoning offered through the Summary of Issues and responses offers the Estate with any comfort or certainty that the concerns raised have been considered and adjusted appropriately.

The concerns raised in the representation relating to the soundness of the authority's approach to housing land supply and its response to need remain.

The broad-brush approach to policy application is acceptable at a strategic level if supported by local, detail policy. The latter is absent and for this reason the plan lacks clarity, precision and balance; consequently it provides uncertainty to developers, landowners, businesses and communities with the National Park.

MATTER 4:

a. Are the OAN figures of 447 dwellings per annum (dpa) (8,493 total) and 293dpa affordable, established by the HEDNA, justified by robust evidence drawn from appropriate housing market areas (HMAs)?

The number of dwellings sought within the local plan area is based on a flawed methodology as raised by the Estate in its representation. Proposed modifications that take account of already built out permissions reduce the housing total required further and are not replaced, such that housing provision is increasingly restricted. The provision of adequate affordable housing provision is correspondingly constrained.

The plan methodology must be refreshed to follow guidance correctly and all potential development land investigated with individual scrutiny. The authority's approach has been to dismiss potential areas of development through a general application of constraints (principally a wide-brush application of landscape character -itself not examined robustly). A true, sustainable planning balance has not been applied to site investigation, neither has any attempt been made to determine if mitigation could be applied to make a site acceptable or to determine if on some sites, economic or social benefits outweigh any harm to landscape interests.

With a more robust approach to site consideration we believe a greater number of sites could be identified and the annual housing supply increased without harm to National Park objectives.

b. Is the landscape-led assessment of development capacity and the housing requirement of 250dpa (4,750 total) set by the Plan justified by robust evidence?

Application of the Plan's methodology is flawed. The response to representations¹ is too superficial with no robust evidence presented. The response fails to acknowledge the methodology does not follow National guidance and continues to mis-apply a bottom up landscape capacity led approach. The definition of landscape capacity is inconsistent between sites and settlements. There has been no analysis of the extent to which OAN can be met in this area notwithstanding the National Park designation.

No attempt has been made by the authority to respond to the questions posed through our representation that the methodology was applied incorrectly. The response² simply repeats National Parks objectives which are acknowledged. The primacy of conserving and enhancing the landscape is accepted but no evidence is provided to demonstrate that this objective cannot be achieved if housing supply methodology is applied correctly. The capacity-led bottom up approach (as opposed to starting with OAN and working downwards) is inappropriate and conflicts directly with the court's interpretation of the 2012 NPPF paragraph 47. No evidence is provided to demonstrate a greater number of dwellings or economic growth cannot be accommodated without harm to National Park objectives.

¹ Pages 124 – 131 Summary of Issues and Responses

² Page 21 Summary of Issues and Responses (issue 4)

Reliance on NPPF footnote 9 is too simplistic. It is correct the full OAN does not have to be met where other objectives take priority such as in National Parks, but the methodology must comply fully with guidance before such objective constraints are applied. The authority fails to demonstrate on what evidence or guidance it can adopt a non-standard methodology.

It is correct there should be a focus on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services. How this will be achieved on a very restricted (open market) housing supply is not explained. An unduly restricted housing supply will mean such objectives are not met. There is no contingency for identified sites not coming forward and little or no provision for the future (local plan roll-forward).

The landscape and environmental constraints are applied too liberally at a strategic level, without evidence of rigour or test of sustainability applied at site level. Methodology has concentrated only on sites brought forward through a call for sites, with other land that may provide sound housing locations excluded on grounds of non-deliverability as they did not feature in that exercise. The methodology should do more to determine if the most suitable land could become deliverable within the plan period.

c. Is the choice of housing sites allocated in the Plan justified by robust evidence and selection methodology?

No - a correct application of methodology, sustainability objectives and constraints would allow a wider variety of sites to be included without harm.

d. Is the distribution and amount of housing sites between settlements justified by robust evidence?

No.

SDNPA has underestimated the potential offered by all developable land, promoted or otherwise. It has not evidenced in full the opportunities that exist by reference to specific settlements and exception sites. Only when this has been determined can constraints be applied, alongside individual site characteristics and opportunities and a true planning balance. There are many smaller settlements where a limited amount of growth (even one or two units) will play an important role in sustaining a settlement or meeting local needs. The blanket application of constraints to remove settlements from consideration means that many smaller yet sustainable sites are excluded without detailed scrutiny.

e. Is there robust evidence that the portion of the existing housing land supply of the SDNP from sites already permitted but yet to be built out will be delivered?

No comment.

f. Are the housing sites allocated by the Plan deliverable to an appropriate trajectory within the Plan period to meet the requirement of 250dpa?

The plan lacks confidence and certainty due to the misapplied methodology suggesting sites may not come forward. The unduly constrained manner of this approach and the limited number of sites consequently available, adds to the likelihood that the total will not be reached. Furthermore, the plan provides no flexibility to meet any change in OAN or to provide a confident position for the future that indicates the National Park and its communities and landscape can be sustained.

g. Is there robust evidence that the unmet housing need of the SDNP will be met by neighbouring authorities, Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans?

The plan places an unnecessary burden on neighbouring authorities by not maximising the ability of suitable development sites to deliver housing within the national park. There will be an inevitable increase in commuting and houses will become increasingly unavailable to many already living in communities. This will have a detrimental impact on communities and they will not be sustained. The approach of the authority is to unwittingly force the park to become primarily a visitor destination with few communities sustained with individual services. Consequently, the economic drivers that have created and maintain the landscape so protected will be harmed to an extent where the status quo cannot be maintained.

Support for limited growth in settlements, from within many local communities and individuals is both predictable and inevitable, biased by those keen for no change as a personal preference. The National Park should not place undue reliance on such views in its consideration of growth needs. A full examination of growth need (for sustainable protection of the national park) must be undertaken before limitations to growth are applied. The authority must set realistic growth levels (even where locally unpalatable) for neighbourhood plans to follow. It is not inappropriate to set minimum housing supply requirements in locations where circumstances allow.

The Estate is working with parishes and through neighbourhood plans to promote sustainable development within communities commensurate with their need and capacity. The estate is examining the potential for initiatives such as Community Land Trusts as a way to provide local affordable housing where no open market (or enabling) development is permitted. The plan should be more open in its assistance for such initiatives and for providing support for development that will enable affordable housing provision.

h. Does the Plan make appropriate provision for accommodation for Gypsies and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople, based on robust evidence of need and available sites?

No comment.

Additional general comment

The sensitivity test (of landscape and environmental impact) applied to many settlements and locations is too liberal. A "one-size fits all" is inappropriate across such a large and diverse area. Planning balance considerations will differ between sites and locations. Even in National Parks growth must be sustainable. In the South Downs the landscape now protected is the result of past economic activity that cannot simply be stopped at a moment of time.

The plan should acknowledge the role of housing, businesses and communities to the sustainability of the national park and make appropriate provision for their enhancement. The plan unfortunately falls too easily under the desire to protect landscape at all costs without a full and proper consideration of how that can be achieved, or what in fact is being protected and for whom. Development should be more restricted in the park but not at the cost of undermining the very matters which sustain it. Officers, local politicians and many individuals have welcomed the opportunity to restrict development too quickly and easily without a thorough understanding of what is truly required to sustain and protect the national park. The presumption is that all development is harmful and should be resisted without the consideration of mitigation and planning balance in all cases. Comments in the published summary of issues and responses illustrate such a stance all too clearly.

An over-reliance on Footnote 9 NPPF to justify a very limited development provision is simply wrong if the NPPF methodology is miss-applied. The comment in the issues and responses "*As it is necessary to restrict housing growth in the National Park, it is not possible to meet the full OAHN*"³ demonstrates clearly the misunderstanding and consequent application of methodology. We submit that the interpretation of Footnote 9 must be to establish the full housing need requirement, find sufficient sites to meet that need and then apply constraints to site identification, with an appropriate weighting applied in respect of National Park objectives and where the site is within and its contribution to the park, to determine a level that can be delivered successfully. The authority approach is to start from a low position of need in principle and then apply constraints. This is contrary to Government and Court advice.

Suitability of agricultural or forestry buildings for conversion

Paragraph 7.208⁴ is too inflexible – proposals must be treated on individual merit. There are locations where change to existing buildings, rebuilding or extension may be appropriate, particularly where the planning balance will generate housing, social or economic benefits to the national park without harm to objectives, or enable enhancements to be made to landscape or heritage assets. Policy SD25 in so far as it relates to new-build development should be equally flexible where equal positive merit can be demonstrated. It should be made clear through the plan that policies and principles are to be applied generally and it is possible to deviate with sound reasoning. The authority's approach to date is that of policies applied as strict rules to be enforced, without due consideration to individual merit or circumstance.

³ Page 127 Summary of Issues and Responses (issue 1)

⁴ Schedule of Main Mods MM14-MM16

Whole Estate Plans

The local plan should promote the evolution of landed estates as major businesses within the park that generate funds for reinvesting in the National Park's sustainability. While such businesses comprise employment and commercial activities they are also key providers and managers of housing, much of it small, traditional, or of heritage merit; housing that is much valued in a variety of ways within the national park.

Estates should be permitted to continue the tradition of housing provision in relation to estate generated need, to allow the relocation of tenants as required (downsizing through the provision of new accommodation) and to provide new housing (to meet OAN and to provide enabling development to reinvest in business that will benefit the national park overall). Policies should contain sufficient flexibility to enable estates to plan and undertake appropriate developments with confidence, and recognise that a divergence from policy may be acceptable in certain circumstances. The general intent of Policy SD25 (3) is supported in this respect, but the planning role of Whole Estate Plans should consequently be given weight through the local plan and should unequivocally form part of the development plan.

The authority's insistence these are kept outside of the development plan but endorsed by the authority, generates a two-tier system of policy and with it, uncertainty. Estate plans are increasingly being used to determine the appropriateness of development proposals and given weight in planning decisions but this is not set out formally in local plan policy. Policy SD25(3) infers the role and weight of Whole Estate Plans but being outside of the development plan, any weight can be set aside easily through the application of other policies in response to local political objection.