

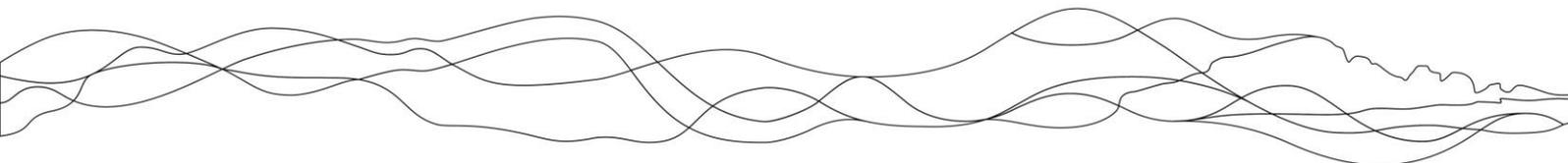


Planning in The South Downs National Park Authority – Exploding the Myths!

So, you have decided to explore beyond the current advertisements for Planning Posts at the South Downs National Park, but need a little convincing? The National Park offers real opportunities for your career development because of the diverse and exciting range of applications it receives. The South Downs is the UK's most populated National Park and sits on the major urban fringes of the South East Coast.

Myth 1) It's all about rural issues!

Covering an area of over 100 miles from the edge of Winchester to Eastbourne, it will include applications in rural areas and a need to meet the purposes of the National Park, but it is unlike any other National Park in that there is a vibrant economy and towns of a significant size such as Petersfield and Lewes where there continue to be significant residential and commercial schemes to be considered. Since the creation of the National Park, the Authority has had over 250 major applications and many significant applications and is as busy now as it has ever been. A few of the schemes that we have considered are outlined below:



King Edward VII Hospital – Easebourne

Photo: © City & Country/Arthouse Digital

Major development involving the extension and conversion of the existing Listed Building to form 148 apartments with provision for swimming pool, gym, shop & cafe, further development of the surrounding grounds and existing buildings to provide 183 dwellings.



The Courthouse – Friars Walk, Lewes

A mixed-use development comprising retail and leisure uses at ground floor and a hotel on first and second floors).



Rathfinny Estate, Alfriston

Photo: © Viv Blakely

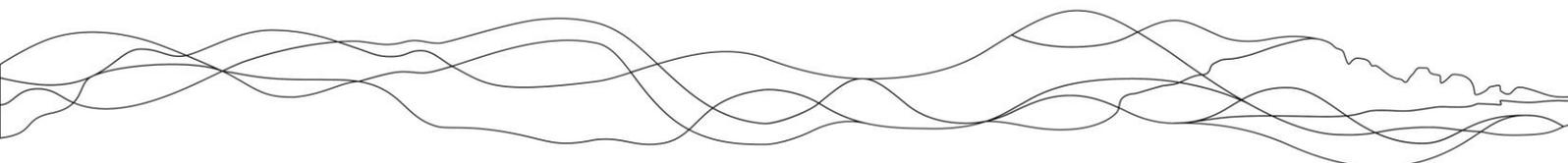
A winery and associated car parking and turning areas – an architecturally interesting design response to a rural development application for a Winery in a sensitive landscape location.



You will be assessing applications through the National Park planning lens where the three cornerstones of true sustainable development (Environmental, social and economic concerns) can be weighted appropriately.

Myth 2) It's all about refusing applications!

No! While the Authority faces challenges to ensure the purposes of the National Park are met, in meeting the purposes there is a socio-economic duty to foster the well-being of communities. We work in a vibrant, living, working landscape and endeavour to find solutions in planning schemes as opposed to barriers. Within the last year the Team has had 600 applications of which 90% were approved.



Myth 3) It's a sleepy backwater and not good for career development!

As you will see this is a very different National Park and offers the challenge of balancing the conservation of an inspirational landscape with the needs of its residents (a population of 112,000). And this all in the most crowded and economically vibrant part of the UK.

This means that the successful candidate will get the opportunity to continue to deal with a number of increasingly more complex applications that will ultimately look good on your CV and also provides you with the opportunity to hone skills and knowledge in particular areas such as EIAs, housing, commercial development etc. You will also do lots of work in partnership with colleagues and external groups and Authorities. Working in partnership is the way forward for planning to be effective.

Myth 4) It won't provide me with any challenges!

The South Downs National Park, still being relatively in its infancy, has become somewhat of a 'hot spot' for test cases, legal challenges and interesting appeal decisions. Two particular but completely different examples include oil and gas exploration & farm development. In addition as a new Authority we are capable of and keen where appropriate to adjust the organisation. You can have input into the ways of working and benefit from the flexibility of not being pigeon-holed within a larger organisation.

Myth 5) This is all just PR patter!

It is probably best to leave the last word to one of our Development Management Officers and their thoughts on working in the South Downs National Park.

"The experience and knowledge I have gained from dealing with a broad, complex and challenging caseload, ranging from housing developments, to vineyards, from heathland golf courses to the regeneration of part of a historic market town, has been phenomenal and all within the fantastic scenery of the SDNP."

