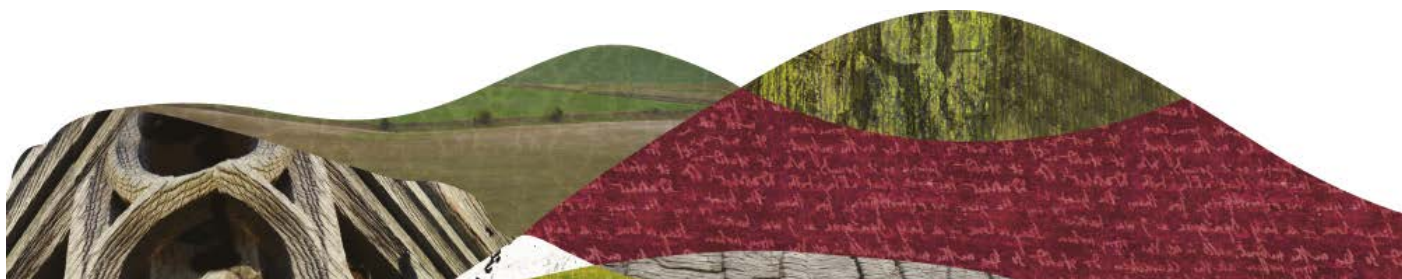


SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING

NEWS FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY



Welcome to the planning newsletter for the South Downs National Park Authority
Send your comments to us at planningnewsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

Why planning for healthy places is good for all of us

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning for the South Downs National Park Authority, gives his take on the growing role of planning in helping people's health and wellbeing.



Planning and health are inextricably linked – and I believe that link is as important as ever.

Of course, the very roots of our planning system stemmed from the need to improve health, address squalor and social inequality.

The Housing and Town Planning Act 1909 was a

milestone piece of legislation relating to emerging planning.

The Act was partly the result of a growing interest in “garden city” schemes that emerged in the late 19th century and a realisation that housing needed to be provided, and land managed, in a way that was good for health, and, in turn, good for the economy.

Fast forward to 2021 and the health and wellbeing agenda has never been more prominent.

With more people working from home than ever before, the need for a healthy environment in which to live and work is now a basic public right. People are also taking a fresh look at their own health and the health of planet Earth, looking at ways they can connect with the environment for their own wellbeing and also help this



amazing biosphere that, to date and to our best knowledge, is a total one-off. Its fragility in the face of the pandemic, climate change and human impact is now a daily aspect of many of our lives and the news around the world.

The good news is that strong and effective planning can make a real difference to both the environment and people's health.

The World Health Organisation defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.

A growing body of research indicates that the environment in which we live is inseparably connected to our health across the life course. The design of our neighbourhoods can influence physical activity levels such as walking and cycling, our reliance on cars, social connectivity, mental health and, indeed, predisposition to certain life-limiting illnesses.

So how can the South Downs National Park Authority play a leading role?

Well, firstly our award-winning South Downs Local Plan was, and still is, ahead of the game, with policies that champion and prescribe creating healthy places. Healthy

for nature and healthy for people – and one might argue that this is a strongly symbiotic relationship. We are part of, not separate from, nature, after all.

Our Development Management process, with a strong emphasis on landscape and design-led development and early engagement with the Authority, works in favour of creating healthy places.

An environment in which you have access to green space, can cycle to work (if you wish!), can opt for an electric car to help reduce air pollution, and live in a high-quality space where you and your family can prosper.

Developers also know that creating healthy places has strong marketing leverage.

The importance of our planning functions to administer S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding should not be underestimated.

In this newsletter, for instance, you'll read about funding that has helped to install a brand-new kitchen space at a youth centre. A wonderful area where young people can relax, chat to friends and pick up some lifelong cooking skills. Just one example, of many, where the Authority has helped to make a difference to the community and people's everyday lives.

Strategic planning is of course at the heart of what we do, but these smaller-scale measures can be just as impactful when taken as a whole.

The role of planning also dovetails with the Authority's community outreach work and I'm really pleased we are joined up in terms of our work on health and wellbeing and have resource in place to help deliver healthy outcomes for individuals and communities.

As planning evolves over the coming years and decades, I hope that creating healthy places to live, work and play continues to be at the forefront of policymakers' minds – and that some of the more damaging practices creeping into planning are revisited.

Crucially, shared leadership, across the disciplines of planning and health, needs to be established at the earliest stages of development to ensure places are designed using evidence-based planning principles that reflect local health and wellbeing needs.

The Authority has set the benchmark high and will continue to strive for excellence.



First-class development is given the green light



A high-quality development that includes affordable housing and highway improvements has been given the go-ahead.

The Authority's Planning Committee voted to approve plans for 14 new dwellings on land at Limbourne Lane and The Fleet, in Fittleworth, West Sussex.

The residential development will include seven affordable homes, of which five will be social-rented tenure and two shared ownership.

Given the sensitive landscape characteristics, the scheme has evolved over time through extensive pre-application discussions with the applicant, Montagu Developments Limited.

The resulting scheme includes a number of sustainable design features, including plastic-free windows and the use of timber and local stone, as well as green roofs on the car ports.

Energy sustainability is a highlight of the development, including electrical vehicle charging points at all homes and the use of solar panels to reduce the carbon footprint. One of the dwellings will be a certified Passive House.

No street lighting is proposed, helping to conserve the area's Dark Skies Reserve status and benefitting nocturnal and crepuscular wildlife.

The Authority has also secured a financial contribution from the developer towards traffic calming measures in the area, meeting a local need to reduce traffic speeds and promote walking and cycling.

Rob Ainslie, who heads Development Management at the Authority, said: "The site was allocated for residential development in the Neighbourhood Development Plan and the scheme has evolved over time to take into account local needs, as well as recognising the National Park's landscape-led approach with a focus on biodiversity.

"It provides much-needed affordable homes and also a sustainable drainage scheme that will address the current water-logging issues at the site.

"The design of the scheme gives consideration to habitats and protected species, retaining the features that support bats and delivering significant biodiversity net gain."

Grant paves the way for new affordable homes



Two families are now starting a life in new homes in the heart of the National Park after the Authority provided funding to help secure affordable housing.

The Authority helped to secure a grant of £60,000 for the Midhurst Community Land Trust, which is a not-for-profit organisation established with the aim of making housing in the Midhurst area more affordable to local people.

The Affordable Housing Grant, along with other funding, has resulted in a reduction of rental levels to 70 per cent of market rates, as well as enabling them to offer in-perpetuity leases.

Gill Welsman, Planning Project Management Officer, explained: "A key factor in the success of this scheme has been early engagement with the Authority.

"The Trust initially identified an opportunity to buy two new homes in the centre of Midhurst and consequently sought advice from the Authority in order to progress and inform their project.

"By engaging in discussions with the Authority at an early stage the Trust were able to check and review the design and sustainability criteria for the dwellings, as well as inform their funding strategy.

"This early engagement ensured the homes were secured through a S106 agreement.

"Following the submission of an Affordable Housing Grant application, funding was transferred upon practical completion in May 2021, with the new residents moving into their new homes in early June. A fantastic success story for planning and we wish the families all the best for the future."

Adrian Moore, Chairman of Midhurst Community Land Trust, said: "Without the SDNPA grant, this project would not have been possible."

Gill added: "With the potential for similar organisations to secure funding through the Affordable Housing Grants, we hope to be able to support additional projects across the National Park."

Further information on our Affordable Housing Grants and guidance on developing affordable homes is available by contacting affordablehousing@southdowns.gov.uk

Funding allows youth centre to get makeover



Young people are benefitting from a sparkling-new kitchen at their youth centre, thanks to funding from the National Park Authority.

The King's Arms Youth Centre, in Petersfield, Hampshire, was given £15,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to refurbish the kitchen in their new permanent base in the town.

The King's Arms, affectionately known as 'KA' to the young people, is a charity set up to meet the needs of young people in Petersfield, Alton and surrounding villages. The charity runs a variety of activities, such as arts, craft, cooking, or simply letting young people have a space to "chill" and relax.

The charity also runs the East Hants Young Carers Programme, which gives respite to young people who are caring for a relative by providing the opportunity to meet with other carers, enjoy a meal together or go out for a trip.

The charity aims to help young people with their self-belief, emotional resilience and to develop positive relationships.

Jessica Riches, a Planning Officer who helps to deliver CIL funding, said: "It's great to see this amazing facility come to fruition and we know that hundreds of young people across the region will benefit from the improvements. We hope everyone enjoys using this kitchen!"

Caroline Aeschliman, Chief Executive of the King's Arms, said: "The transformation of our kitchen area is brilliant. From an empty shell to a homely, inviting space. It means we can have impactful mentoring conversations with young people over a cuppa in a relaxed environment and we can provide meals for young carers in need of respite. We can also do cooking activities with young people with additional needs giving them confidence, and we've used the space to make cookie creations with young people struggling at school, helping them think about some of their choices.

"We are very grateful for our CIL funding which, matched with a local trust fund, allowed us to completely renovate the kitchen area."

Harmful extra fencing is removed from landscape



Fencing that was harming views of the South Downs landscape has been removed following a three-year enforcement case.

The Authority issued two enforcement notices at Lewes Racecourse after extra fencing was erected without planning permission .

The extra fencing (pictured above) ran horizontally to the approved fencing (pictured below), creating paddocks.



The racecourse is no longer used for competitive races, but is still used as an active training centre for horses.

The landowner initially failed to act on the notice

to remove the additional fencing, sparking a three-year court case that has now been successfully resolved and potential criminal proceedings have also been dropped.

Heather Lealan, who manages the Authority's enforcement team, said: "As well as sweeping vistas of the designated South Downs landscape, this site has cultural heritage significance having been a battlefield in medieval times.

"The extra fencing was unfortunately causing significant harm to the landscape and it meant we had to take swift and robust action.

"This is a significant result for the Authority, setting an important example in terms of the sensitivities around fencing in a protected landscape.

"It shows that no matter how long it takes we will pursue action where it is expedient and in the public interest to do so."



Developer is prosecuted for bulldozing building



A developer has been prosecuted after demolishing a historic and characterful cottage in the village of East Meon.

Mark Probyn pleaded guilty to breaching planning laws at Aldershot Magistrates Court on 19 May, following a prosecution brought by East Hampshire District Council and acting on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority

He was ordered to pay more than £3,000 in fines and costs.



The brick-built cottage, at 2-3 Chapel Street, dated back to the late 1800s and was protected from demolition as part a Conservation Area.

Probyn, of Coombe Road, East Meon, flattened the building on 12 March 2020 after being advised it had structural issues and needed underpinning.

East Hampshire's Planning Enforcement Officers carried out an investigation, which continued throughout the coronavirus lockdown, and brought the case to court.



Probyn pleaded guilty to a criminal offence under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. He was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £2,000 in costs and a £181 victim surcharge.

Cllr Ingrid Thomas, EHDC Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Quality, said: "It is very sad that this historic building has now gone forever and, although it will be replaced, it cannot be recreated."

Mike Hughes, who heads the conservation team at the Authority, said: "The National Park has well over 160 Conservation Areas and each one contributes to the special qualities that makes the South Downs so unique and geographically distinct. This enforcement action shows just how seriously we will take planning breaches that harm historic buildings in conservation areas."



High-grade conservation is the star of the show



A charming inn with a history spanning 800 years has been lovingly restored and improved to become a prestigious hotel business.

The Star Inn, a Grade II* listed building in Alfriston, East Sussex, opened earlier this year after renovations that involved significant guidance from the National Park’s conservation team.

The building was bought by Olga Polizzi in 2019. A member of the well-known Forte family of hoteliers and mother of Alex Polizzi, “The Hotel Inspector”, she had a vision of giving the historic inn a new lease of life and celebrating the property’s heritage.

The Star was originally a timber-framed religious hostel to accommodate monks and pilgrims en-route from Battle Abbey to the shrine of St Richard, patron saint of Sussex, at Chichester Cathedral.

The Star is referred to in travel books as far back as the 16th century.

Its timber frame is decorated with carved figures and an old ship’s figure head was later placed alongside the building. To this day, the latter forms a real eye-catcher for anyone walking along High Street.

A travel book by Miller Christy published in 1928 describes its frontage as ‘almost unbelievably picturesque, with its heavy timbering, its overhanging upper storey, its three graceful Oriel windows, its tiled ends, its roof of huge slabs of Horsham stone, and its many remarkable carvings in oak.’



The inn had a number of later additions in the 18th and 20th century, including a wing added in the 1960s that did not enhance the conservation area.

Following lengthy pre-application discussions, Listed Building Consent applications were submitted and later approved by the National Park Authority.

The work included repairs to the original building, as well as improving the appearance of the car park and 1960’s buildings and upgrading the quality of the rooms.

David Boyson, Conservation Officer for the National Park Authority, said: “The renovations have been sensitively undertaken and the end result is a visible enhancement of the conservation area.

“As is always the way with complex historic buildings, the project did evolve as works progressed and there are quite a few subsequent applications dealing with changes of plan.

“Mrs Polizzi employed an excellent agent and historic building consultant and our conservation team continued to be fully involved as the project progressed.

“It’s an excellent example of the Authority working closely with a committed owner and her top-notch professional advisors from the private sector in achieving a shared objective – namely renovating this important historic building and creating a high-grade visitor facility for the village.”

Olga Polizzi said: “Alex and I are happy to have reopened The Star after a period of extensive work and a quite major transformation.

“We love the South Downs National Park, a stunning area with some of the best walking in England.

The Star sits in the centre of Alfriston, a very pretty unspoilt 16th century village.

“Among the many attractions in this area are Glyndebourne, Charleston, Rathfinny winery, and The Towner in Eastbourne with its extensive collection of Ravilious and other modern British art. We look forward to welcoming guests to a relaxed environment with good food and service. Wonderful to be in East Sussex!”



Agents’ Forum update

The next meeting of the South Downs Agents’ Forum will be held at 4pm on Monday 18 October.

The focus of the meeting will be biodiversity and looking at:

- Biodiversity net gain
- Call for sites
- The role of planning in nature recovery.

Lucy Howard, Planning Policy Manager, said: “The Agents’ Forum has been a real success and we’re excited about the next meeting. The meeting may be held virtually or in-person and we’ll make a decision closer to the time. We look forward to seeing all agents who regularly submit planning applications in the National Park to the Authority or the host authorities. Invites will be sent out shortly.”

News from the National Park's host authorities

The South Downs National Park is one of the largest planning authorities in the UK in terms of the number of planning applications we receive each year and also one of the largest in terms of the geographical area we cover.

This level of demand has seen new and innovative partnership models to ensure planning-related matters are dealt with as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Authority has developed successful hosting partnerships with Chichester, East Hampshire, Winchester, Horsham and Lewes Councils. Here are some updates from our host authorities:

Lewes



Lewes District Council

Recent months have seen several applications for Grade II* listed buildings and an opportunity to work closely with Historic England, with three consents within the National Park.

Firstly, the team oversaw a listed building consent on 111 High Street, Lewes in five weeks. The case required an urgent replacement of rotten timber columns as the building was at risk and being supported with acrow props.

The team also issued a timely consent at Charleston Farmhouse for a Covid-secure route for visitors, along with associated alterations in time for the lifting of restrictions for visitor attractions on 17 May. The interior contains an important series of mural and furniture decorations by the Bloomsbury group.

Finally, various works were approved at Plumpton Place, including a revised tunnel layout to preserve historic fabric which would otherwise have been removed, to facilitate the display of historic and archaeological artefacts found during a recent excavation.

Chichester

In October 2020, Chichester District Council, on behalf of the Authority, refused planning permission and listed building consent for the change of use and alteration of the former YMCA Conference Centre, at Dunford House, West Lavington, to a single dwelling. Dunford House was the former home of Sir Richard Cobden, the former politician best known for his fight for the repeal (1846) of the Corn Laws and his defence of free trade. Until very recently Dunford House housed the 'Cobden Collection', a collection of artefacts related to Cobden's time as a politician and his life in Sussex.

Appeals against the refusal of both applications have now been received and will be decided in the next few weeks by the Planning Inspectorate.

Given the history of the site and its association with Sir Richard Cobden, it is likely there will be a significant amount of local interest in the outcome of the appeals.



Horsham

Planning consent has been granted for an application at Drewitts Farm, in Church Street, Amberley.



Planning permission had been sought for a small mixed commercial and residential development making use of former agricultural facilities within the Amberley settlement boundary. Council officers worked closely with the applicants to develop a heritage-led scheme, which successfully redressed several previous unsympathetic additions and alterations within a historic agricultural yard and improved views out of the Amberley Conservation Area towards the Downs.

The creation of three small commercial units and a single one-bedroom dwelling through conversion and limited new construction was considered to perform well against housing and economic policy contained within the South Downs Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan, and to secure an overall significant social, economic and landscape benefit.

Winchester

Good news from our friends at Winchester!



Winchester City Council is delighted to work in partnership with the South Downs National Park team. Together we're making really positive in-roads to rural diversification. Working collaboratively in this way makes us feel proud to be a part of a wider team, creating a real positive impact on the environment we live in. And to have the National Park as one's office is a beautiful bonus...

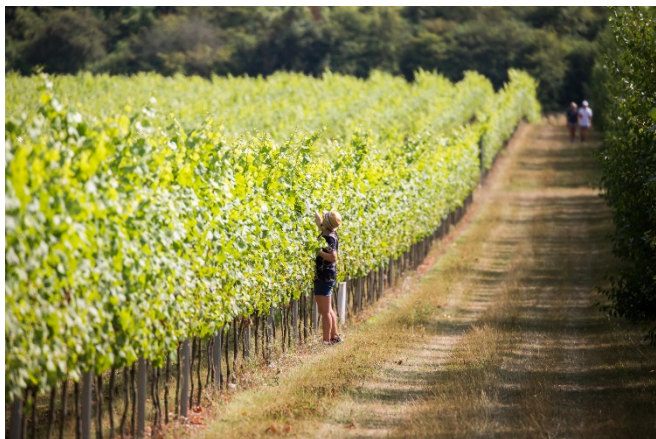
We're pleased to be able to report a good news story from the Legal and Planning Enforcement teams. After several years of action against people unlawfully occupying an area of land in the South Downs National Park, the High Court ruled in our favour and the occupants were ordered to move from the site. This was a case that spanned over three years, and demonstrates the resilience of our team. Mr Justice Cavanagh praised our "reasonable approach" in his summing up.

We're proud of our team's patience throughout the past three years. This was a real case of dedication paying off!



A view of Amberley in Horsham District

New guidance for winemakers



The Authority has produced new planning guidance for current and potential winemakers – recognising that any increase in vineyards must protect and enhance the treasured landscape of the South Downs and help biodiversity.

This is supported by a new report which looks at the growth in wine production witnessed in the National Park in recent years and looks at its potential for the future.

The study has shown that the potential for more viticulture may be significant, bringing hundreds of new jobs and millions of pounds-worth of investment to local rural economies in the National Park.

There has been a 90 per cent increase in vineyard coverage in the South Downs National Park since 2016, with around five new vineyards planted every year.

Currently around 0.4 per cent of farmland is used for viticulture – but 34 per cent could be suitable for vineyards.

The study identifies 39,700 hectares of land in the South Downs National as being suitable for viticulture. If just one-tenth of this land (3,970 ha) were to be converted for growing grapes, this would represent an area larger than the current UK viticulture sector (3,500 ha in 2019) and more than 22 million bottles of wine could be produced annually. (2.5m are currently produced annually)

If vineyard area and wine production in the National Park doubles, to almost 1,000 ha, the study estimates 800 people (full-time equivalent jobs) could be employed, an annual contribution to the wider economy of £127 million could be provided, and 75,000 tourists could visit each year.

Read the summary of the study [here](#).

The Viticulture Technical Advice Note can be read [here](#).

Lucy Howard, Planning Policy Manager, said: “This useful guidance forms a framework for how viticulture could expand in the National Park over the coming years, while also delivering benefits for landscape and biodiversity.

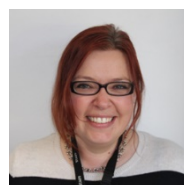
“The Authority is also in the process of developing an environmental best practice guide which we hope will be ready for release later this year.

“This will provide advice to vineyard owners and managers on ways to enhance biodiversity on a vineyard.”

Energy consultation launched



Vicki Colwell, Principal Planning Officer, gives an update on proposals for a new renewable energy scheme that is now out for public consultation.



As well as dealing with thousands of planning applications each year, we are also involved in several major national projects for road improvements, renewable energy and other infrastructure.

These Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are examined by the Planning Inspectorate and decided by the Secretary of State.

The Authority normally acts as ‘statutory body’, which seeks to influence the proposals and ensure the National Park’s purposes and duty are being upheld as the scheme develops.

We’ve been able to have an impact to achieve the best possible outcomes for conservation and biodiversity in previous schemes, such as Rampion, the south coast’s first wind farm.

Amid plans for a new pipeline to deliver fuel to Heathrow Airport that ran through the National Park, the Authority managed to secure improvements to the final route. This meant that important cultural assets were avoided, trees and hedgerows were better protected, and we also secured a community fund to deliver appropriate mitigation projects.

One next major infrastructure project to consider will be Rampion 2, a proposal for a new offshore wind farm of up to 116 turbines between 1.5 and 2.3 times higher than the existing array. The formal public consultation has just begun and will run until 16 September.

As well as the turbines themselves, the proposal also includes an onshore underground cable that would enter the National Park to the east of Arundel and exit near Wiston, before continuing to a substation at Bolney.

Full details of the proposals and how to comment can be found at www.rampion2.com/consultation

The SDNPA will be providing a formal response to this consultation in due course.

Other NSIPs we are also currently involved with include proposals at the M3 junction 9, where the consultation has recently closed, and works at the A27 in Arundel.

Public vote in favour of adopting neighbourhood plans



Five more Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) have been adopted following referenda in May.

The NDPs were “made” at June’s Planning Committee, bringing the total number in the National Park to 37.

The referenda took place for Boxgrove, Bramber, Henfield, Upper Beeding, and Stedham with Iping after being postponed last year because of Covid restrictions.

Each NDP, developed by the local parish council in consultation with the public, received 85 per cent, or more, support in favour of being adopted.

Lucy Howard, Planning Policy Manager, said: “Neighbourhood planning gives local communities the power to shape development in their area and sits at the heart of our approach to planning for thriving and prosperous communities.



“As of July 2021 there are 36 made Neighbourhood Development Plans, which are testament to the dedication of local volunteers and the Authority’s officers in ensuring that communities are an integral part of the planning process in the National Park.

“These newly-adopted NDPs now become part of the statutory development plan for the National Park, and the policies and proposals contained within them will be used in the determination of planning applications, including appeals within the relevant parishes.”



A stunning aerial view of Stedham Common in West Sussex

Views needed on National Park’s new draft Design Guide



King Edward VII Sanatorium which won a Design Award

Mark Waller-Gutierrez, Planning Lead Specialist, introduces an innovative design guide that is now out for public consultation.

The design quality of all new development in the National Park is critical to help us carry out the first purpose of National Parks – “to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area”.

There are policies in the Local Plan, in particular SD5 (Design), which set out the broad requirements for good design.

The draft Design Guide aims to interpret those policies in more detail and provide guidance on good design standards for new development. It covers development scales from domestic extensions to larger-scale housing or non-residential development.

Providing guidance on best practice for achieving good design outcomes, it illustrates what ‘landscape-led design’ means for development in the South Downs. Topics that are also covered include integrating car parking, green infrastructure materials, boundary treatments and architectural details.

The document does not, however, prescribe how development should be designed in a particular geographical area of the South Downs.

The distinct character of the many varied places across the National inform the design approaches for a particular locality.

The document is crammed with useful illustrations, with examples of good and poor practice, as sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words!

The document can be accessed [here](#).

We would really appreciate comments from the community who live, work and visit the South Downs National Park. Comments on the document, which must be received by 6 September, can be sent by email to planningpolicy@southdowns.gov.uk or in writing to The South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst GU29 9DH and marked for the attention of Mark Waller-Gutierrez. The final draft will be reviewed and amended where appropriate in response to the public comments, and these public comments will be reported to the Planning Committee when it is asked to consider adoption of the document this autumn.

Camping and glamping



The final version of the National Park's Camping and Glamping Technical Advice Note (TAN) has now been published.

The TAN explains how to make a successful planning application for camping and glamping that delivers multiple benefits to the nationally-protected landscape of the South Downs.

It includes a strong focus on ecosystem services, which are the goods and services we get from nature. The guide includes a useful diagram illustrating how a campsite can deliver ecosystem services.

Lucy Howard, Planning Policy Manager, said: "Many thanks to everyone who fed into our consultation on the document and helped shape it.

"We hope the TAN will be useful to everyone who is thinking of setting up a campsite in the National Park whether it needs planning permission or not. It explains what you can do under permitted development rights and the process for getting permission if you need it.

"The TAN should be read alongside the South Downs Local Plan and Partnership Management Plan. It is now a material consideration that will be taken into account by decision makers at the Authority and the host authorities when determining planning applications for camping and glamping."

Read the TAN [here](#).

Investing in our service

We want to provide the best possible service to customers who use planning services in the South Downs National Park.

For this reason the Authority has commissioned independent research agency Marketing Means to undertake a Planning Customer Satisfaction Survey on our behalf. They will be contacting a sample of planning applicants and agents and Parish/Town Councils who have recently used the Authority's planning service.

They will be given the option of completing the survey either by telephone or email. The survey will take place between 11 October and 10 December 2021.

If you have any questions or would like to find out more about this research please contact CSS-Planning@southdowns.gov.uk

Key stats at a glance



Summer fields at Wilmington, East Sussex, by Edd Allen

Appeals submitted to Planning Inspectorate	13
Appeals started	8
Appeals determined	21
Appeals successfully defended	16
Statutory submissions received	1,204
Statutory submissions determined	1,215
Neighbours notified	4,740
Representations received	1,741
Consultations issued	3,205
Conditions imposed	3,591
Enquiries for planning advice	376
Enforcement complaints received	295
Enforcement cases opened	217
Enforcement related site inspections	228
Enforcement notices served	5
Enforcement cases closed	172

(Data from 1/4/21 to 30/6/21)

Planning Committee Meetings

The next Planning Committee meetings will be held on 12 August, 9 September, 14 October and 11 November.

You can watch the meetings on-demand for up to six months after the meeting through our [webcasting portal](#).

10 questions with Naomi



This edition we catch up with Naomi Langford, a Major Projects Officer for the National Park.

Three words that sum up your job in planning?

Fascinating, diverse, challenging.

Okay, so what's your role at the National Park?

The main part of my role is to consider and make recommendations on planning proposals for large and complex projects across the whole National Park area. I get involved in projects from the earliest stage of pre-application discussions, through all the relevant permission stages to on-site delivery and beyond. A lot of my role is about project management, working closely and collaboratively with a broad range of specialist advisers and engaging with the community. I always have a range of projects on my desk, all of which are at different stages with different pressures. With another hat on, I monitor and advise on viability appraisals for planning applications which we scrutinise carefully with the assistance of external specialist consultants. From time to time I also get involved in developing policy, including Technical Advice Notes, and assist my colleagues with work relating to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects that are located either within or may impact upon the National Park.

What appealed to you about working in planning?

The site visits are a big positive of the job. When I started in planning I loved visiting homes and gardens and hearing from the applicants about what they wanted to create for their home. I am a naturally sociable person. Now I can visit substantial historic properties, spectacular landscapes and varied commercial sites. There are a lot of "wows" in the National Park. It is a privilege and a great responsibility to be involved in the present and future of the National Park and its people. I am definitely proud of being a planner.

Can you describe your typical day?

The majority of the day involves a computer, responding to emails, reviewing plans and documents and writing reports. I like connecting to colleagues and others on the phone or in person to chat through schemes, debate what works and what could be improved. I look forward to

getting back to the informal discussions in the office environment, as we learn so much from each other! I'm new to the SDNPA having joined in February 2021, so as we get back to normal I'm looking forward to spending more time with colleagues and sharing some of my home-baked cakes and home-grown strawberries!

Best thing about working in planning for a National Park?

Taking a proactive role in delivering high-quality and sustainable development. This is driven by the National Park designation, our purposes and our bold and forward-thinking Local Plan and Partnership Management Plan. Across the organisation everyone is so friendly and I felt welcome straight away.

What do you love about the South Downs National Park?

The variety. It has a character as a whole but each place and each part of a place can be so different. I love the unexpected, and the contrast. Emerging from a sunken lane into an expansive landscape takes my breath away.

Currently reading/watching?

Line of Duty, Unforgotten and Time have all been great recently. The series Small Axe on the BBC was really thought-provoking. When I want something lighter and need some inspiration for my own hobbies, I delve into the Great British Bake Off and Sewing Bee.

If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I have a weakness for crisps.

Who inspires you?

In the planning world I'm always impressed with the young planning barristers (often a similar age to me) that I get the pleasure of working with on appeals or meeting in training courses. Their knowledge and understanding is remarkable and I relate to their eye for detail.

Describe your perfect day (when not working, of course!)

Sailing. I'd be out on the water in a dinghy in a good breeze, whizzing about as fast as I could with the sun on my head and the sea spray in my face.

