

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Held at: 10.00am on 14 April 2022 at The Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre.

Present: Alun Alesbury, Heather Baker (Chair), Janet Duncton, Therese Evans, Barbara Holyome, Gary Marsh, Robert Mocatta, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, and Diana van der Klugt.

Officers: Robert Ainslie (Development Manager), Rebecca Moutrey (Senior Solicitor), Robin Parr (Head of Governance), Lucy Howard (Planning Policy Manager) and Sharon Libby (Governance Officer).

Also attended by: Richard Ferguson (Development Management Lead) and Stella New (Senior Management Development Officer)

OPENING REMARKS

407. The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and informed those present that SDNPA Members had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthered the National Park Purposes and Duty. Members regarded themselves first and foremost as Members of the Authority, and would act in the best interests of the National Park as a whole, rather than as representatives of their appointing body or any interest groups.

ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

408. Apologies were received from Janet Duncton, Robert Mocatta, and Richard Waring.

ITEM 2: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

409. Diana van der Klugt declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 8 as a Horsham District Councillor for Pulborough, Coldwaltham and Amberley ward; and also declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 as a neighbour of a protected site impacted by the water neutrality issue.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2022

410. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

411. There were none.

ITEM 5: UPDATES ON PREVIOUS COMMITTEE DECISIONS

412. The decision Notice had been issued on SDNP/21/02014/FUL – Land at Greenway Lane, Buriton, Petersfield.

ITEM 6: URGENT ITEMS

413. There were no urgent items.

ITEM 7: SDNP/21/06431/FUL LAND NORTH OF A3 JUNCTION THE CAUSEWAY PETERSFIELD, HAMPSHIRE

414. The Officer presented the application, reminded Members of the report, referred to the update sheet and made reference to an online survey that had been circulated on social media which sought to canvas local views about Electric Vehicle (EV) schemes generally. The survey resulted in 1100 responses where an average of 60-73% gave a neutral to positive view for an EV charging centre on the A3. The Officer commented that the survey did not appear to specifically refer to the application site.

415. The following public speakers addressed the Committee

- Maggie Johnston spoke against the application on behalf of Buriton Parish Council

- Jonathan Jones spoke against the application on behalf of the Buriton Village Design Statement Group
 - Mr Daniel Drukarz, as the Applicant, spoke in support of the application.
416. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC 21/22-48), the updates and the public speaker comments and commented as follows:
- Whilst there was a need for EV charging points along major A roads similar to the A3, it was inappropriate for one to be installed between the narrow gap of the urban area of Petersfield and the northern area of Clanfield which comprised of the ridge of the downs and a gap between the downs and Petersfield. No new evidence was provided to justify the development of this site and the National Park (NP) needed to maintain the highest level of national landscape protection.
 - As highlighted by the public speaker, the reflection of the sun from the solar panels and car windscreens could meet the gaze of walkers along Butser Hill. However, efficient solar panels should not reflect light.
 - Whilst initiatives such as this scheme needed to be embraced to increase the availability of EV charging points, and the innovative approach to design was commended, the scheme fundamentally was in an inappropriate location and would not conserve and enhance the National Park.
 - Whilst the design was an excellent concept and there was a biodiversity net gain, the proposals did not appear to be Landscape Led nor meet the first purpose of the National Park.
 - Camouflaging the scheme within the landscape just relied on vegetation.
 - This application had many green credentials; however, it did not meet Policy SD3 considerations regarding major development.
 - Light pollution is a significant issue in this location and if this application was approved there was concern about retaining the International Dark Night Skies status of the National Park.
 - The eco lodges were located next to the A3 which was a noisy A road and would be a disturbance to visitors. The number of lodges and their consequent density was a concern. The application could increase tourism and employment, but would lead to the countryside being unacceptably urbanised.
417. It was proposed and seconded to vote on the officer's recommendation.
418. **RESOLVED:** That planning permission be refused for the reasons set out in paragraph 10.1 of this report and the update sheet.

ITEM 8: SDNP/21/00627/OUT – LODGE HILL EDUCATION CENTRE

419. The Officer presented the report, reminded Members of the report and referred to the update sheet.
420. The following public speakers addressed the Committee:
- Celia Dennis spoke against the application on behalf of Coldwaltham Parish Council
421. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC 21/22-49) and commented as follows:
- The Chair reminded members that the application had already been debated in considerable detail and a resolution reached by this committee and since nothing had changed since that meeting apart from water neutrality that this decision should be respected. The committee should therefore limit considerations to the matter of water neutrality.

- Although the public speaker expressed concern about misuse of water neutrality, an S106 agreement would secure water monitored by meters, which would confirm whether water was being used in excess. Natural England had no objection to the scheme on water neutrality and their guidance should be heeded.
- The amendment to the recommendation wording for the S106 to secure an offsetting strategy prior to the commencement of development and obligation to implement the approved strategy was acknowledged. The S106 should also secure ongoing maintenance and monitoring in perpetuity.
- Notwithstanding the Authority's legal advice, some Members were minded to reconsider the whole application, due to concerns that the previous decision to grant planning permission so that finance could be raised by a private organisation was not in line with the first purpose of the National Park.
- A strategy should be agreed between affected local authorities Southern Water and Natural England before decisions on water neutrality were made by the SDNPA, and a precedent should not be set in the absence of any such strategy.
- The proposed water neutrality measures were based on certain energy and water efficient appliances being installed into the houses, however, human behaviour could not be factored into these measures.
- Paragraph 8.10 referred to the onsite mitigation of rainwater harvesting to service washing machines. What happened when there was insufficient rainwater as was the case during 2021-22?
- Paragraph 8.11 stated that the offset was being addressed by "... *time-controlled push button shower taps, and motion sensor detection on urinal flushes...*" being installed at Lodge Hill. As the development was to raise money for ongoing maintenance, this would be impacted by the cost of installing these additional mitigation measures.
- The programme of maintenance works was set out in the Appendix to the September Committee report and the S106 and robust water neutrality conditions would secure the water saving measures proposed.
- At the previous meeting it was agreed that discussions would be had with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) about the amount of overage and whether this could be reduced to ensure the maximum amount of funds were available to Lodge Hill. Had this been discussed with WSCC and could this be reiterated to WSCC?

422. Members were advised:

- The S106 was being drafted and details of monitoring could be included.
- The applicant had demonstrated that they had more than mitigated and offset water usage by retro-fitting the wider Lodge Hill estate.
- Members made a recent decision to approve the application, having considered the application, listened to public speakers including the applicant and debating as a committee. Had it not been for the water neutrality advice of Natural England the decision would have been issued.. Nothing else had changed in terms of policy or the information before Members, other than the issue of water neutrality.
- The SDNPA is the competent authority, just as other local authorities were outside of the National Park, and the SDNP is working strategically with other local authorities on the issue of water neutrality. The authority was confident that the measures in the report were robust and no concerns had been raised by Natural England. There was also a positive aspect to the water neutrality issue, as the developer was able to update the accommodation to use less water.
- Discussions had been held between WSCC and the Authority at a high level about the matter of overage, but the outcome of the discussions was unknown.

423. It was proposed and seconded to vote on the officer's recommendation.

424. **RESOLVED:**

1. That permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 10.1 of the report and a legal agreement, the final form of which is delegated to the Director of Planning, to secure:
 - i) Proceeds from the sale of the land for essential maintenance works to the Centre;
 - ii) A water neutrality offsetting strategy to be submitted and approved in writing prior to commencement of development along with an obligation to implement the approved strategy
2. That authority be delegated to the Director of Planning to refuse the application with appropriate reasons if the legal agreement is not completed or sufficient progress not made within six months of the Planning Committee meeting of 14 April 2022.

ITEM 9: PLANNING POSITION STATEMENT UPDATE

425. The Officer presented the report.

426. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC 21/22-50) and commented as follows:

- The report and recommendation was welcomed particularly the allowance of up to 20% of new homes on rural exception sites to be open market. Would land owners be contacted directly about this?
- It was good to see the Corporate Plan being put into action and aiding more affordable housing. How was the number of affordable houses of different tenure calculated?
- What was the definition of small scale for renewable and community led?
- There needed to be more small scale energy projects, as small scale energy projects had been initiated through the creation of climate action networks. Local communities were also interested in small scale energy projects. Were they able to get advice from officers on these?
- Was the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme an interim measure prior to moving to the Environment Land Management Schemes (ELMS). Was there an end point when ELMS took over and should this be reflected in the Planning Position Statement?
- There was a note of concern expressed about comments such as “... *In all our planning projects and programmes we will strive to get the best outcomes for people, and develop opportunities for co-development and design with those communities currently under-represented in our governance and staff structures ...*” and that with these the Authority was drifting away from its statutory purposes and duty.

427. Members were advised:

- The Planning Position Statement would be issued in a variety of ways including the Planning Newsletter, which would enable interested parties, including land owners, to come forward.
- The Local Plan states that the priority tenure for social housing was social rented. This would be considered on a case by case basis and should be community led.
- The definition of small scale was included in the recently published Technical Advice Note, with no threshold on exception sites.
- The take up of small scale energy projects would be interesting and what happened as a result of the Planning Position Statement Update would help form the National Park Authority's approach in the Local Plan Review. If an energy project was being considered then the SDNPA would provide pre-application advice.

- FiPL was still in place for the next two years. Within that time, the Planning Position Statement would be updated.
- The comments relating to diversity were part of the concept of A National Park for All for all, which was agreed by the National Park Authority (NPA) at its meeting in March 2022 as part of the Corporate Plan

428. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to:

- 1) Approve the Planning Position Statement Update set out in Appendix I for publication subject to any changes proposed by the Committee
- 2) Delegate authority to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee to make any minor changes to the draft Planning Position Statement Update

ITEM 10: STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT UPDATE

429. The Officer presented the report, referred to the update sheet and highlighted an error in on page 116, paragraph 3.11 of the report; that Figure 5.2 should read Figure 3.2.

430. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC 21/22-51) and commented as follows:

- If the document was approved, would it be sent to Parishes and Authorities in the National Park so they have a record?

431. Members were advised:

- The updated Statement of Community Involvement would be on the SDNPA website, where it would be accessible to all members of the public.

432. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to approve the revised Statement of Community Involvement Document.

433. The Chair closed the meeting at 11:55

CHAIR

Signed: _____