



# THE LANDSCAPE-LED APPROACH TO DESIGN IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

## WHAT IS LANDSCAPE?

There is an established definition of 'landscape' which is used by design professionals around the world. This is the meaning that the South Downs National Park Authority uses when it refers to a 'landscape-led approach to design'. Landscape in this context includes everything that is a result of the actions and interactions of people and nature. So it includes structures, buildings and townscapes, roads and paths, the materials that build them, as well as fields and woods, hedgerows and trees, the local ecology, air and climate, the shape of the land, water features and the type of rocks (geology) under the land.

To many people, 'landscape' can just mean the countryside, or sometimes the planting ('soft landscape') and all the external works, like paths and paving, walls and seats etc. ('hard landscape') in new developments. These narrow

definitions do not cover the same scope as the established definition of 'landscape'.

How the different patterns of landscape elements, their history and cultural resonance and how they are experienced by people, all contribute to the landscape character of that location.

**Examples of landscape character** (These happen to be two towns, but could equally have been two villages in the National Park)

The hilly nature of **Lewes** among the chalk downs; the tradition of local materials in that area, (such as flint and 'mathematical tiles' for building); as well as the distinctive historical character of the town ('a place of crafts and fabricators'); its close relationship with the river and flooding; are all contributors to the landscape character of the town, which has resulted in a highly distinctive place with an eclectic mix of buildings and spaces (including many little lanes called 'twittens'), which respond both to topography and to the river.

In contrast, the town of **Petersfield**, although close to the downs and with views of steeply wooded hills ('hangers'), is largely flat itself; has a big public heath with a large pond, a market square (reflecting its agricultural market town history) and a network of small interconnecting streams. The main, locally characteristic building materials are timber, clay tiles and red brick, often with a tradition of rich detailing.

## WHAT IS THE LANDSCAPE-LED APPROACH TO DESIGN?

All new development needs to respond to what it is that makes up the landscape character of that place (the pattern of landscape elements). Another way of expressing the '**landscape-led approach to design**' is '**good contextual design**'.



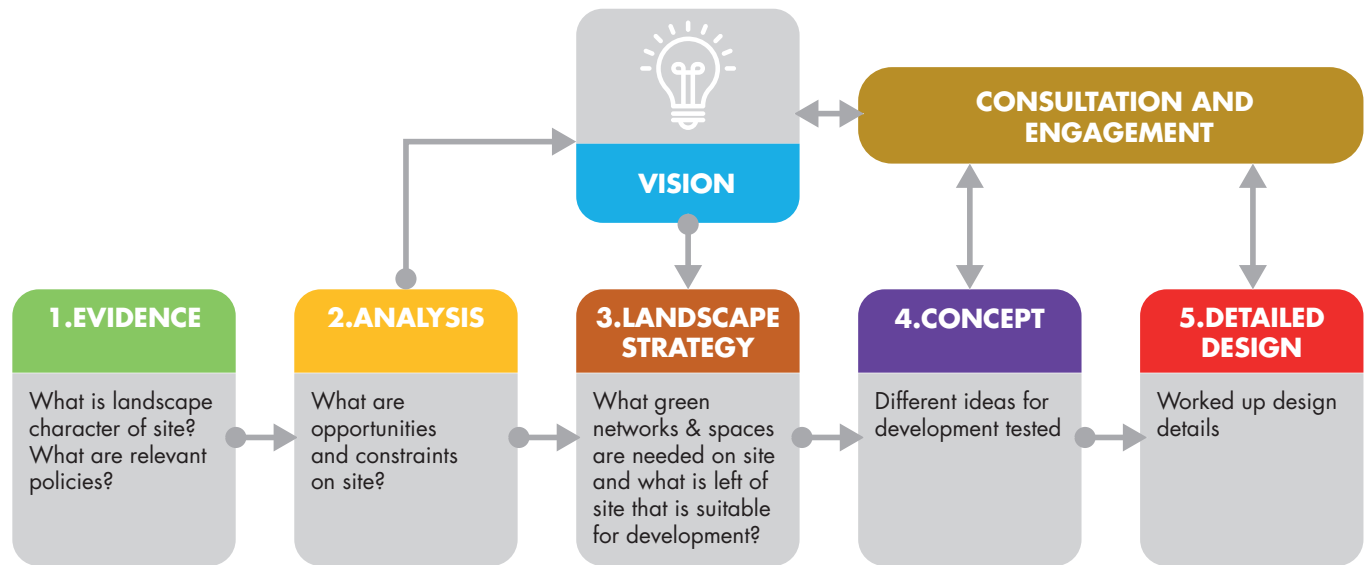
The landscape of the South Downs National Park is the context for every site which the Authority is required to conserve and enhance ('Purpose 1' of the National Park). It therefore follows that enhancing the particular landscape character of the site becomes the key driver to achieving a successful design solution that makes new development 'speak of its place'. What is unacceptable is 'anywhere' development (with no local identity or distinctiveness) which is the complete opposite of the landscape led-approach.

### EXAMPLES OF LANDSCAPE-LED DESIGN IN THE NATIONAL PARK

To understand how the landscape-led approach has been successfully carried out, the Authority has put together some case studies:

- **Case Study 1: Large Residential**
- **Case Study 2: Medium Residential**
- **Case Study 3: Non-Residential**
- **Case Study 4: Farmstead Conversion**

### SIMPLIFIED PROCESS MAP FOR THE LANDSCAPE-LED DESIGN APPROACH APPLICABLE TO MOST DEVELOPMENTS



### VIDEOS

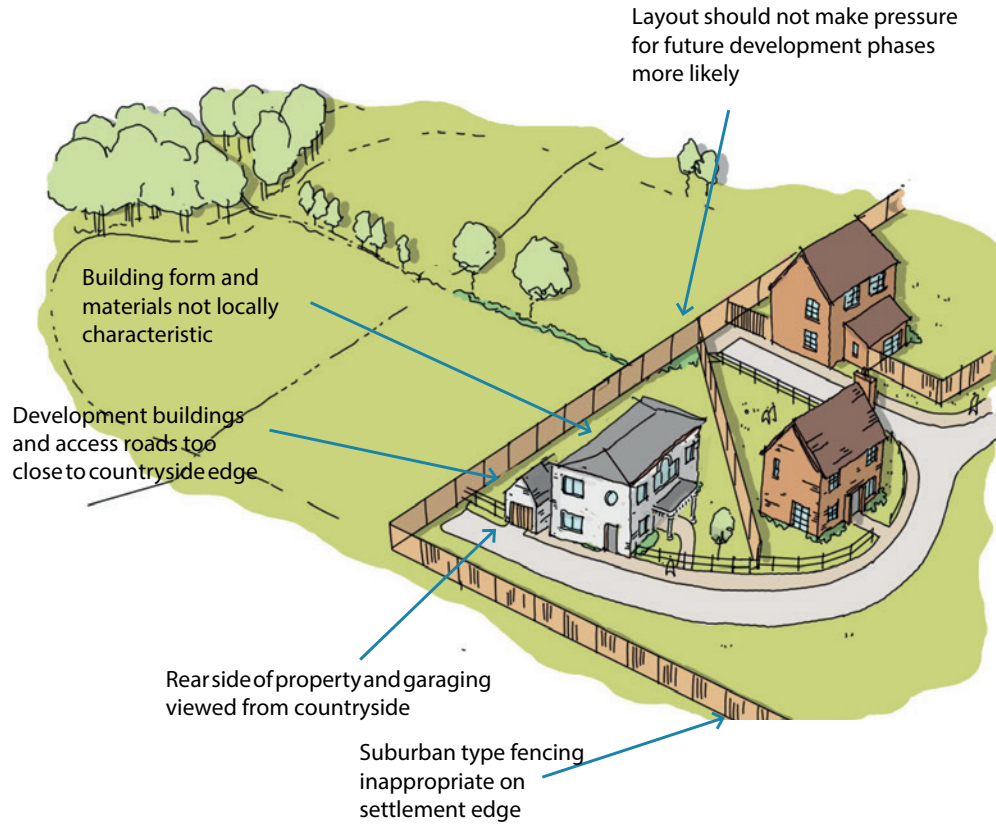
The Authority has produced videos that explain the landscape-led approach to design:

- **What is good Design?**
- **Landscape-led Design**

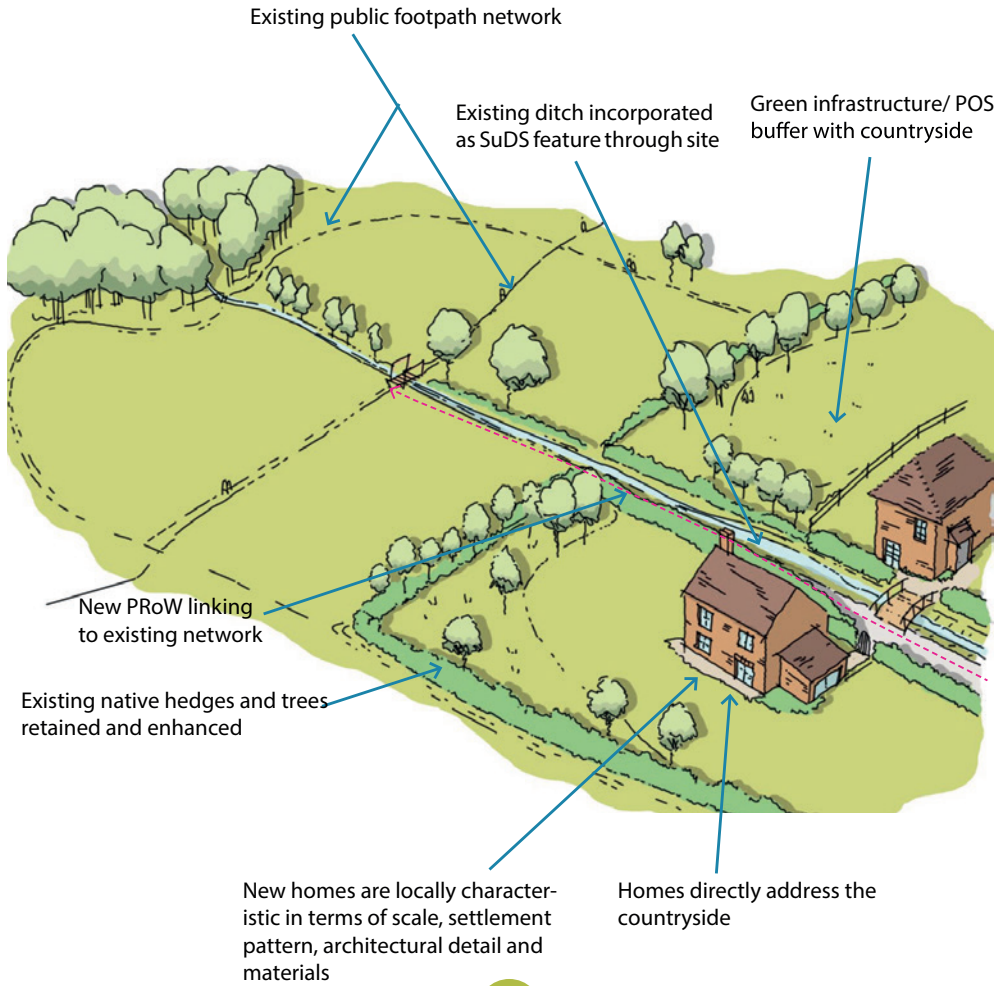
### THE SDNPA DESIGN GUIDE

The Design Guide provides guidance on a number of issues, but the golden thread running through it is the need for design to be 'landscape-led' (or 'contextual' in other words) **Adopted Design Guide SPD – South Downs National Park Authority**. Sketches on key topics illustrate this, for instance:

**COUNTRYSIDE EDGE:**

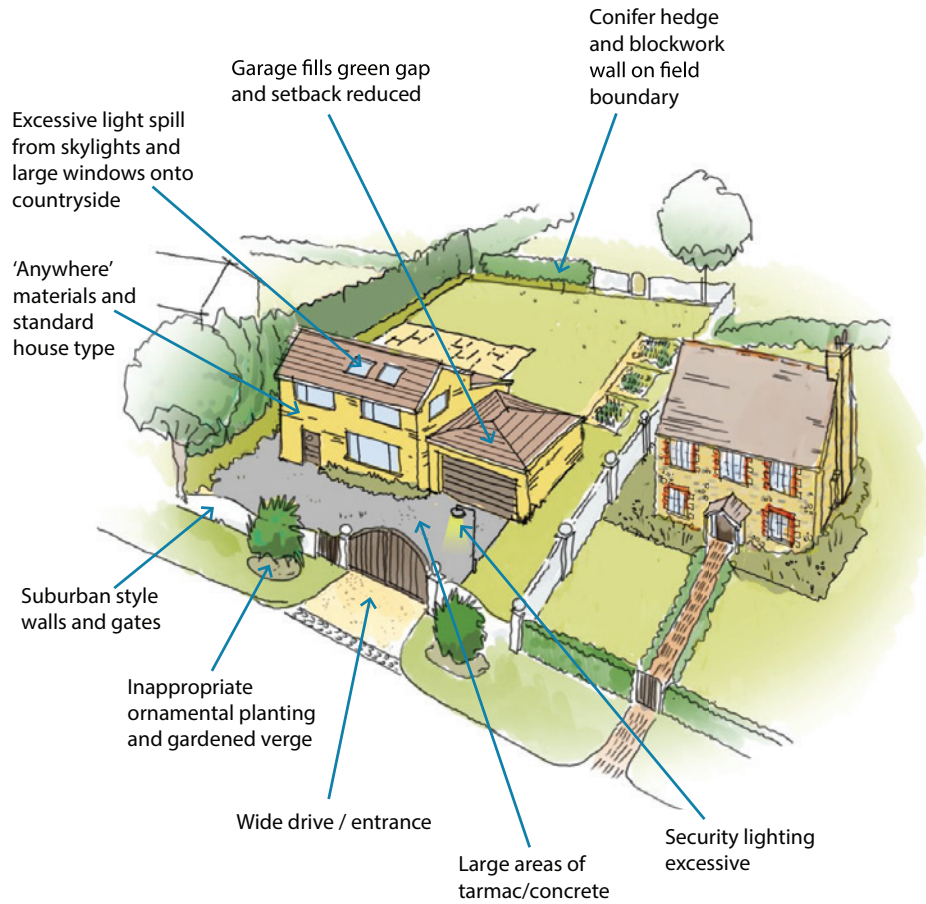


**NOT LANDSCAPE LED**

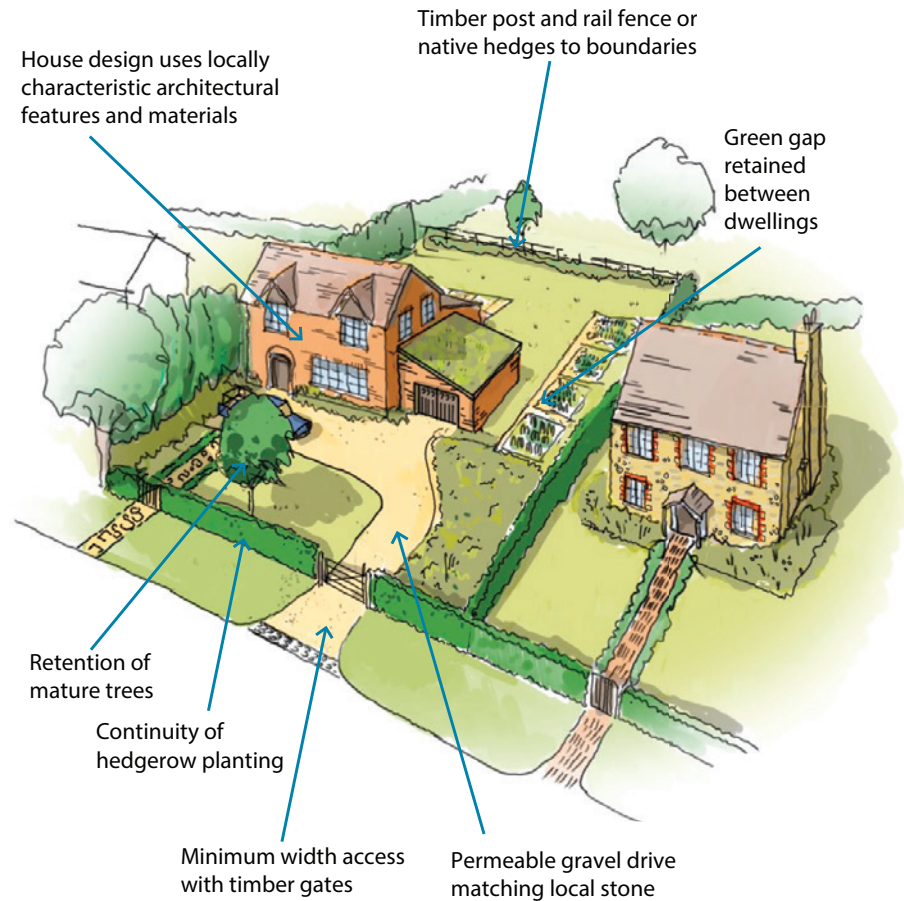


**LANDSCAPE LED**

## NEW HOUSE IN COUNTRYSIDE LOCATION:



**NOT LANDSCAPE LED**



**LANDSCAPE LED**

