

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Held at: 10.00am on 13 March 2025 at The Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre.

Present: Paul Bevan, Antonia Cox, Alun Alesbury, John Cross, Janet Duncton, John Hyland, Gary Marsh, Stephen McAuliffe, Robert Mocatta, Andrew Shaxson.

Officers: Robert Ainslie (Development Manager), Rebecca Moutrey (Senior Solicitor), Claire Tester (Planning Policy Manager), Vicki Colwell (Principal Planning Officer), Lewis Ford (Senior Planning Policy Officer), Richard Fryer (Senior Governance Officer) and Jane Roberts (Governance Officer).

OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and informed those present that South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Members had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthered the National Park Purposes and Duty. That 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

163. Apologies for absence were received from Heather Baker and Daniel Stewart-Roberts.

ITEM 2: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

164. Stephen McAuliffe and Janet Duncton declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6, as trustees of South Downs Trust, and would leave the meeting for that item.

165. John Hyland declared a public service interest on behalf of the SDNPA on Agenda Item 6, as the SDNPA was the agent for the item.

166. Gary Marsh and Robert Mocatta declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 6 as members of the RSPB.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2025

167. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4: UPDATES ON PREVIOUS COMMITTEE DECISIONS

168. The Development Manager and Planning Policy Manager provided the following updates:

- SNP/22/02180/FUL, Land adjacent to Hare Lane Twyford, an appeal had been submitted.
- Tith Barn Falmer, East Sussex, an enforcement appeal had been dismissed. Members originally considered SDNP/21/01191/FUL & SDNP/21/01192/LIS on 10 February 2022 for the change of use of the barn to provide an event space, erection of commercial buildings and overnight accommodation building with landscaping and parking.
- The Planning and Infrastructure Bill was introduced on Tuesday 11 March 2025. The national scheme of delegation would not apply to National Parks but mandatory training for planning committee members would. Further information would be provided to Members at the next Planning Committee meeting.

ITEM 5: URGENT ITEMS

169. There were none.

170. Janet Duncton and Stephen McAuliffe left the meeting.

ITEM 6: SDNP/24/02058/FUL – RSPB, WIGGONHOLT, PULBOROUGH

171. The Officer presented the application and reminded Members of the report (Report PC24/25-27) and the update sheet.

172. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC24/25-27), the updates and the public speaker comments and commented as follows:
- Would the works be undertaken outside the breeding season?
 - Natural England's concern over water levels at the site had led to the introduction of water neutrality measures in the area. Would these works impact water neutrality?
 - As the works would allow water to be retained on site, it may help improve the water neutrality situation.
 - If the application improved the water neutrality situation, would the Authority be informed?
 - Was there a bio-security plan for contractors to deal with the movement of invasive species?
 - Could further detail be provided on how offsite Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits would be managed and applied.
 - Could the language in condition seven be tightened to require that credits be purchased within the Park? Was it the Authority's decision as to where credits were purchased or the applicants?
 - Biodiversity credits could go outside of the SDNP however, would like assurance they would deliver the credit within the SDNP.
 - Why were the RSPB not delivering the BNG exclusively onsite?
173. Members were advised:
- The works were scheduled to be done between July and October, outside of the active breeding season.
 - Water neutrality had not been mentioned by either Natural England or the Environment Agency in their comments. The works were concerned with the management of water on site rather than removing or adding water. This would be a parallel activity rather than a direct response to achieving water neutrality.
 - The management plan would allow the RSPB to monitor the water situation on site. It would not resolve or contribute to reducing the need for water neutrality measures to be provided by developers.
 - There were many factors that impacted water neutrality. The Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) would be monitored. If there was a material change then Natural England and the Environment Agency would change their position statement and advice to local planning authorities.
 - The bio-security plan would be part of the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
 - Condition seven covered the Biodiversity Gain Plan. Negotiations were ongoing with a habitat bank within the National Park for delivery of offsite BNG. The location of habitat banks and the Authority's preferring for them to be in the National Park, is something that's already in the BNG Technical Advice Note (TAN). That TAN is currently being updated, but the principal that offsite credits should go within the Park, rather than outside, remains unchanged.
 - The Authority must approve any purchase of BNG credits. There were currently a limited number of registered habitat banks within the National Park, so it could be potentially problematic to explicitly require that within the condition.
 - There was deemed condition within statute which was embedded in the SDNPA decision notices regarding the submission of a Biodiversity Gain Plan. The applicant had

already submitted the plan and condition seven bound them legally to that submitted plan.

- Biodiversity Net Gain would be delivered on site, well above the minimum 10%. The statutory metric struggles to capture enhancements on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The site could qualify for an exemption but the RSPB were keen not to seek use of the exemption and rather to deliver in accordance with the metric as well. This meant they were delivering both on and offsite BNG.
- BNG continued to be a challenge, many Officers were involved across the Authority to ensure that it achieved the optimal BNG from developments within the regulations.

174. **RESOLVED:**

1. That planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 9.2 of this report and the update sheet.
2. That the Committee confirmed in reaching their decision that they had taken into account:
 - the environmental information as required by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017;
 - all matters referred to in the Director of Planning's report including comments received from statutory consultees and other interested parties, and
 - all other material considerations.

175. John Cross and Gary Marsh left the meeting at 10.36

176. John Cross, Janet Duncton, Gary Marsh and Stephen McAuliffe rejoined the meeting at 10.38

ITEM 7: ADOPTION OF THE UPHAM VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT AS A SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

177. The Officer presented the item and reminded Members of the report (Report PC24/25-28) and the update sheet.

178. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC24/25-28), the updates and commented as follows:

- Members were impressed by the amount of work and detail in the document and congratulated the Parish on a thoughtful and useful piece of guidance.
- Members were concerned that the detail in the document was too prescriptive, but also recognised that it sent a clear and positive message about the level of detail the SDNPA would like to see in planning applications.
- Members asked if the Village Design Statement (VDS) was created with the aid of professional help or all done by the volunteers?
- Members asked if the level of detail was necessary outside of the conservation area?
- Members raised that there was no historical precedent for windows to be painted white.
- Members raised the issues of affordability and energy efficiency of windows.

179. Members were advised:

- The document was very detailed, but it was guidance, not mandatory or requirements.
- The steering group comprised parish councillors and local residents, some of whom have professional backgrounds.
- The steering group had worked on the document for many years and had been very receptive to community, consultee, and officer comments.
- The steering group had identified the distinctive local character of their area and prepared guidelines to help conserve and enhance this identified local character.

Agenda Item 3

- Officers were of the opinion that the level of detail was helpful when negotiating with developers and the document would be an aid when considering planning applications.

180. RESOLVED:

The Planning Committee approved the adoption of the Upham Village Design Statement as a Supplementary Planning Document

181. The Chair closed the meeting at 11.09am

CHAIR

Signed: _____