

# SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING NEWS

UPDATES FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

## New homes approved for two historic villages

**New affordable homes are being built as part of two well-designed village developments.**

The National Park's Planning Committee voted to grant approval to plans to build 12 houses and four apartments on land at Elm Rise, Findon, West Sussex.

Half of the new homes will be affordable, including social rented and intermediate housing.

Meanwhile, the committee also voted to give the green light to demolition of garages and building five homes on land at "The Yard" at The Street, Washington, West Sussex. One of the homes will be affordable and secured for rural workers based in the National Park. The site is owned by the Wiston Estate and fits well into the estate's approved Whole Estate Plan.

Planners agreed that the design is appropriate and would conserve and enhance the setting of the Washington Conservation Area and adjacent listed buildings.

Both applications have evolved over time after feedback from planning officers and consultees.



Artist's impression of Findon homes

Green infrastructure is an integral part of both housing developments.

At Findon the site includes chalk grassland and public space to the north and east of the site will



Artist's impression of the development at Washington

provide opportunity for enhancements to biodiversity. Swathes of wildflower and wild grass zones are planned across the site, as well as a bark and wood-chip area to attract wildlife like birds and insects.

To protect the Dark Night Skies, which are important for nocturnal wildlife, no street lighting is proposed and the landscape design and building materials have been chosen to limit light pollution.

The Washington development includes a central green space comprising shared front gardens, evoking the character of a rural village setting. There will be new native mixed species hedgerows and tree planting across the site.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, said: "I'm delighted that the hard work of the developers and community, as well as ourselves, is coming to fruition. These two developments will help sustain these villages, as well as provide some much-needed new affordable homes."

## Boomtown gets green light for one year



The Boomtown Festival (Pic credit Orangeisacop, Wikimedia)

**The popular Boomtown Festival went ahead this summer following a temporary planning permission from the National Park Authority.**

Following a detailed discussion and hearing debate both for and against the application, the Planning Committee unanimously voted to grant a one-year temporary planning permission for the festival at Matterley Farm.

The permission included holding the festival for 76,999 attendees – including 1,000 on Sunday. The most recent temporary permission, which expired on 31 December 2024, was for a festival for 64,999 attendees (including 1,000 on Sunday).

The committee granted permission on the basis that the detailed Management Plan around landscape and ecology mitigation was in place and approved before the construction period of the festival.

After successfully meeting the conditions, the festival went ahead as planned.

Explaining the decision, Tim Slaney, Director of Planning at the Authority, said: "This application was very carefully considered and underwent wide consultation with relevant authorities, including Natural England and National Highways, as well as the community, with 26 letters of objection and 163 letters of support received."



"As with many activities in the South Downs National Park, we need to balance everyone's enjoyment of the National Park with keeping these landscapes special for future generations."

"The temporary permission for one year will allow time to consider the experience and impact of the greater numbers at the festival, both positive and negative, and a longer-term plan that enhances the landscape and ecology."

## Sporting facilities given go-ahead at college



Illustrative view of Lancing College and sports dome

**Plans for an all-weather sports dome at Lancing College have been given the go-head.**

The dome will be built over four existing astroturf courts and allow year-round sport at the school.

A number of factors were considered in the decision by the Planning Committee, including an objection from Historic England given the various historic listed buildings on the site. A letter from the school's Bursar's Office, outlining the challenging environment in which independent schools operate, also had to be considered, as well as support from the local parish council.

Competing arguments were heard at Planning Committee, with Members voting for approval of the plans. On balance, it was concluded that the benefits of the proposals outweighed the harm stated by some consultees.

The dome, to be around 72m long and 25m wide, will be situated to the east of the main campus and have a dark green colour.

Members considered that the astrocourts benefit from tree screening and are substantially lower on the slope of the land than the main campus – reducing visual impact on the wider landscape. The courts are situated within an area of the site that is characterised by sports pitches. The plans demonstrated compliance with Biodiversity Net Gain above the required 10%, together with ecological benefits including planting 21 trees, installing log piles and a bat box.

Development Management Officer Sam Bethwaite said: "This sports development aligns well with Lancing College's Whole Estate Plan, which covers how physical activity enriches the learning experience at the college."

"When not in school use, the local community will be able to use the dome for sport activities and this is another big positive of the plans."



## Cabin must be removed



### **Enforcement action was taken after a large wooden log cabin was built without planning permission in the National Park.**

The cabin, with fully-insulated walls, roof and floor, was built on a beautiful viewpoint on land west of Lovedean Lane.

East Hampshire District Council's Planning Enforcement Team, working on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority, investigated the development over a series of months, including instigating legal proceedings.

Between September 2024 and February 2025 officers served a Planning Contravention Notice, two Enforcement Notices and a Stop Notice to Andrew and Deborah Melbourne, of Waterlooville, who own the land.

In May, ahead of a scheduled High Court hearing in June, the Melbournes signed a legally binding contract agreeing to remove the building, take away the log cabin and all its resulting materials, gates, fences and other forms of development, including the groundworks and paths and return the landscape to its original condition.

Cllr Angela Glass, EHDC's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement, said: "We are delighted this legal agreement has been signed and we now expect the development to be cleared over the next couple of months. This is the culmination of many months of complex legal and enforcement work by our determined team of officers to reach this position."

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, added: "I'm delighted we've reached a resolution to this breach of planning that was harming this wonderful nationally-designated landscape."

"I would like to thank East Hampshire District Council which pursued this enforcement case with determination, making it clear we will not tolerate blatant breaches of planning."

## Local Plan Review update

### **The process of reviewing the South Downs National Park's Local Plan continues at pace after more than 3,700 comments were received to a consultation.**

The Authority has been analysing all the feedback to the consultation that was held between January and March as it prepares for the next stage of the Local Plan Review. The award-winning South Downs Local Plan is being updated to ensure it addresses important issues such as nature recovery, climate change, affordable housing and helping local communities thrive.

Earlier this year more than 1,000 people visited 20 consultation events across the National Park and over 10,400 people viewed the online consultation. More than 1,900 individuals responded to the consultation, making 3,714 separate comments.

Following a meeting of the National Park's Planning Committee, the next stages have been agreed:

- In response to the first consultation, 28 new sites were put forward to the Authority to consider for development. In addition to this, further feedback was submitted regarding 38 existing sites that the Authority had previously excluded or rejected in the Land Availability Assessment (LAA). An updated LAA, outlining the Authority's assessment of potential sites for development, will be published this autumn and inform the next consultation in 2026.
- Further engagement with National Park Parishes will take place during the autumn about any proposed changes to potential site allocations.
- All the feedback so far will be considered as the Authority prepares the next stage of the Local Plan Review, with the second public consultation taking place between May and July 2026.
- Submission of the revised Local Plan to the Government's Planning Inspectorate is expected in the autumn of 2026 and full adoption as planning policy by the National Park Authority in 2027.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, said: "We're working diligently and methodically through the various formal stages of the process and look forward to engaging further with the public, parishes, landowners and partner organisations. In this way we can deliver a Plan for the whole area that enables the right amount of growth whilst addressing the nature and climate change crisis we face."

The Authority will be preparing several studies and evidence documents over the summer to support the next version of the Local Plan going out to consultation. See all consultation comments [here](#).

## Securing benefits for National Park from Rampion 2 scheme

**Principal Planning Officer Vicki Colwell writes about concerted efforts by the National Park and partners to secure significant**

**mitigations from the Rampion 2 development – and all the hard work and negotiations reaped rewards.**

It has been almost five years since the SDNPA first got involved in the proposals for the extension to the existing Rampion Windfarm.

In April this year, the Secretary of State approved the Development Consent Order that will enable up to 90 further turbines to be installed off the Sussex Coast, reaching a maximum height of 325m, with the underground cables to connect to the National Grid running up from the coast, through the National Park, to a substation near Cowfold.

As Rampion 2 is 'nationally significant infrastructure', or an NSIP for short, it goes through a different planning process, where we are an interested party, rather than the decision maker.

Typically, these projects spend one to two years in pre-application discussions and public consultation, before being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination.

An Examination takes a maximum of six months and is mainly a written process, interspersed with in-person hearings. This leads to some extremely tight deadlines, which often involve trawling through thousands of pages of information in order work out what has changed.

Chief among our concerns was: 'can a route through the National Park be avoided?'

If not, what is being done to mitigate and compensate for the harm going through the protected landscape? This still hadn't been properly addressed by the time we were in examination hearings.

To put it into a bit of context, the cable corridor during construction could be up to 40m wide, going through 100+ hedgerows and tree belts, drilling under Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Sites and cutting across areas of nationally-significant archaeological potential. Those 'temporary' effects are going to be felt for years after the construction has finished.



## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

One of the key tasks (and I would argue in most such projects) was to put together a team of colleagues to consider the effects. They all played major roles in the run up to and during the examination itself.

Led by the Principal Planning Officer for NSIPs, a team of officers across the Authority (ecology, landscape, cultural heritage, transport, access, rangers) considered the effects of the project and what measures needed to be taken avoid/mitigate/compensate for the scheme's impact.

They helped shape the scheme so that whilst it doesn't avoid the National Park, it is going to be providing better mitigation than we started with.

This includes direct responses to:

- Seascape, Landscape and Visual Effects
- Traffic and Access
- Soils and Agriculture
- Minerals and Ground Conditions
- Historic Environment
- Ecology / Biodiversity.

On top of that, we have also secured a compensation fund of £3.5million to deliver projects identified as capable of compensating for the residual effects of the development and which can further National Park purposes.

This will be paid over the course of 30 years from when Rampion 2 becomes operational and will help us deliver a wide range of projects.

This fund and the pressure we applied to get better justification and changes to the mitigation played a key role in the Examiner's recommendation and the final decision (all 800 pages of them).

Our work does not stop now – even though we don't make the decision, we are responsible for ensuring all the requirements of the decision are fulfilled within the National Park before, during and after the construction process.



View of Rampion from Rottingdean by Rob Aro

## Think piece “We need planners to mediate between people’s private interests and the broader social good and cohesion”



**When I was asked to write this article I was initially reluctant: ‘I don’t have time!’, ‘what on earth would I talk about?’, ‘why would anyone be interested in what I think?’**

But it is really important that we occasionally raise our heads from the daily bustle and remember why we are doing the role we have chosen.

I have spent the last 35 years working as a planner in Hampshire and Sussex in various public sector roles.

I have been a chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) for most of that time, but only recently have I got involved in the internal workings of that organisation. It has given me opportunities to connect with fellow planners across the nations, share our experiences, learn from and support each other.

As a member of the RTPI Regional Management Board for the South East, I have got involved in numerous training events and celebrations of the best examples of planning in the region.

As a member of the RTPI English Policy Committee I have been given the enormous privilege of helping to steer the Institute’s responses to the extensive planning reforms proposed by the Government which will significantly reshape the planning system in this country.

These activities not only reignite my enthusiasm and enjoyment of my chosen career, they also benefit the South Downs National Park Authority by raising its profile on the national stage and increasing organisational knowledge of wider issues.

### SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

But working in planning is not all a bed of roses. RTPI research into the State of the Profession in 2023 found that:

- Over the last decade there has been a lowering of levels of funding for planning services but an expansion of the range of duties for the planning system (such as biodiversity net gain);
- Many planners across the UK sector feel that their health and wellbeing is adversely affected by disinformation and harassment;
- Many planners feel that social media can fuel misinformation about local planning issues and spread unsubstantiated allegations without recourse or burden of proof
- Although the SDNPA has not experienced this, 25 per cent of public sector planners in the UK have left the profession since 2013.

I came into planning from a community perspective – getting involved as a teenager in gathering evidence on behalf of my local parish council to prevent waste tipping in a sand quarry. I have spent much of my career supporting neighbourhood plans and other community-led planning initiatives.

But I think it’s a real shame that planners can be subjected to online or in-person abuse, simply for doing their job. I realise this is a trend happening across multiple sectors, whether you work in retail or the NHS for instance, but I think it’s a point worth mentioning.

We all know planning can be emotive – it affects the places people love and planning decisions can impact our homes, our sense of security and our quality of life. But imagine what life would be like without a planning system – where anybody could build or use land however they wanted without management to protect the public interest or our environment?

We need planners to mediate between people’s private interests and the broader social good and cohesion. This leads to making those planning decisions or recommendations to Planning Committees.

And it is quite right that those planners should be accountable and held to high standards of behaviour and professionalism (as per our RTPI Code of Conduct). But we are human, we occasionally make mistakes or just make decisions or recommendations that are unpopular.

By all means bring those to our attention, but abuse should never be tolerated. A basic level of mutual respect should be a given in any job – and I hope to see more of it!

**Claire Tester, Planning Policy Manager**



## Best practice for highway planning

**Detailed guidance has been produced to help with future highway planning in the National Park.**

As the most populated National Park in the UK, many towns and villages lie along the route of busy rural country roads.

For the majority of visitors and residents, it is the highway network that frames our experience of the National Park.

The guidance, prepared by Ethos Consultants, and developed in partnership with Parish Councils and Local Highway Authorities, aims to minimise the impact of traffic on the built and natural environment, prioritising walking, wheeling and cycling. It is also intended to assist Parish and Town Councils in assembling evidenced schemes that can be submitted for funding bids and highway authority work programs.

It includes a number of key recommendations:

- Design principles should be considered and addressed at the initial design stage of development.
- Consideration of appropriate design for the National Park should be at the forefront of thinking when developing a scheme to avoid a retrofitting approach.
- Ensure design is inclusive of all users with protected characteristics.
- Reduce traffic dominance through surface treatment and layout.
- Where spaces need to be defined between transport users, use green infrastructure or changes in surfacing.
- Simple use of street furniture, with suitable locally significant materials or timber in the first instance.
- Gateway features should be the consistent approach to village entry points. These should include shared identity and be coordinated to avoid overuse of signage.
- Avoid use of overly large-scale signage and bright or fluorescent colours which can urbanise and diminish the scenic value of the area.

The guidance is aimed at Local Highway Authorities, parish and town councils, and developers to refer to in placemaking, highway planning and to assist public bodies in fulfilling their s245 duty to seek to further the purposes of the National Park. Find out more here.

**[Find the documents here.](#)**



## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### Call for Traveller sites is under way



**Local planning authorities are joining forces for a coordinated call for sites to help identify suitable locations for permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots across their administrative areas.**

The authorities – Hastings Borough Council, Rother District Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Wealden District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority – are running a joint ‘call for sites’ that runs until 5 October.

We’re working together to seek to ensure that the accommodation needs of these communities are met in a fair and sustainable way, in line with national planning policy and local housing strategies.

Landowners, developers, community groups, and members of the public are being invited to put forward potential sites.

All suggested sites will be assessed against a consistent set of criteria to determine their suitability. Even sites as small as a tennis court can be considered.

Each planning authority has a dedicated team member to answer any questions from those considering submitting a site. This support is available throughout the call for sites period.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning at the National Park Authority, said: “It’s important to try to address the housing needs of all people within our community. The National Park already has a number of permanent pitches for gypsies and travellers, transit pitches and permanent plots for travelling showpeople. I’m pleased to be working collaboratively with other Local Planning Authorities to meet our legal and moral obligations, not least as the travelling community are a part of the cultural story, and food production, of this National Park.”

Further information, including how to submit a site and contact details for each council, is available on each council’s website: **[South Downs National Park Authority](#)**, **[Eastbourne](#)**, **[Hastings](#)**, **[Lewes](#)**, **[Rother](#)** and **[Wealden](#)**. To see FAQs about this consultation please visit this webpage **[here](#)**.

# Updates from the Planning Policy team

## Update on Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan

The SDNPA is working in partnership with Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils, and the New Forest National Park Authority on a Partial Update to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (HMWP) to guide minerals and waste decision-making in Hampshire up to 2040.

The Authorities submitted the HMWP Partial Update ("the Plan") to the Secretary of State in July 2024 for independent examination. A Planning Inspector was appointed in September 2024 and hearing sessions were carried out in February 2025. The Inspector has requested an additional hearing session to be held on 9 September 2025 to address the proposed allocation at Purple Haze (outside the South Downs National Park in New Forest District). If the Inspector finds the Plan to be "sound" (subject to main modifications), then it is anticipated that the Plan will be adopted by the Authorities in Spring 2026.

## Community Planning

- The East Dean and Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan was submitted to the SDNPA for Examination. Consultation on the submission version of the Plan took place between 19 May and 30 June. SDNPA have appointed John Slater as examiner and the examination of the Plan has now started.
- A referendum for the Pulborough Neighbourhood Development Plan is due to be held on Thursday 4 September 2025. Further details can be found on the [\*\*Horsham District Council \(HDC\) website\*\*](#). HDC are the lead planning authority for the Plan with part of the parish in the South Downs National Park.
- The West Saltdean Neighbourhood Development Plan is currently at examination.

## Brownfield Land Register

The Brownfield Land Register has been updated with the latest version available on the [\*\*SDNPA website\*\*](#). The Register provides a list of brownfield sites in the National Park that may be suitable for residential (housing) development. The latest version of the Register includes brownfield sites from the [\*\*Land Availability Assessment \(LAA\)\*\*](#) that were deemed to "have potential" for housing development. The LAA has been prepared to support the review of the South Downs Local Plan.

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

# CIL funding success is on a roll with new facilities!



**Families and young people are benefitting from new recreation facilities thanks to funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).**

East Sussex County Council was awarded £50,000 in CIL funding for a new pumptrack and skatepark at Landport, Lewes.



Nikki Allen, CIL Planning Officer, explained: "Both projects have increased sports and recreation facilities for young people and families in Landport and Lewes."

"It's a big upgrade from the original skatepark that was outdated and not well used. Local people volunteered to help build the skatepark gaining new skills and building confidence, whilst being mentored by a local skate expert with input from a larger skate company."

Meanwhile, Midhurst Town Council was awarded £15,000 in CIL funding for the refurbishment of Lilac Cottage – part of the town's Old Library – into a community hub.

The project has refurbished an important Grade II building in the centre of the Midhurst conservation area, keeping all existing original features, but ensuring it is fully practical as office space for the Town Council, for community use by Midhurst Community Hub and a small room to hire.



CIL funding is paid for by developers and administered by the National Park Authority. Since the National Park was created, almost £9m of funding has been poured into hundreds of community projects, including new access paths, pedestrian crossings, sports pavilions, community gardens and school facilities.

National Parks have played a massive part of my life – my grandparents lived in the Peak District, I grew up in the South Downs (before it was a National Park I admit), have been to the Lake District every year of my life, moved to the New Forest after university, and now live on the outskirts of the South Downs again – so it felt fitting to work for a National Park! I get to do a very interesting job I enjoy in this amazing landscape, it is the best of both worlds.

### Can you describe your typical day?

That's what I love about this job, there isn't one. One day I can be reading and signing off case reports, and the next I can be out in the Park all day assessing sites.

A big part of my job is supporting the Planning team and the wider Authority. There is a lot to get involved in, so no day is the same.

### Best thing about working for a National Park?

The variety – one day I can be in a tough meeting with developers negotiating and the next I am in a Land Rover being taken to a remote hill-top to assess sites from stunning viewpoints.

### What do you love about the National Park?

It amazes me how you think you know the Park well, and then you stumble across a stunning viewpoint or a perspective you have never seen before. It really changes with the seasons and never fails to surprise you.

The market towns and small villages are unique (and most contain at least one good pub/restaurant which is very important)

### Have you got any hobbies?

Where I live has some great running routes so I try to get out most evenings. I used to kayak most weekends too and want to get back into it.

Also trying to be a better baker – which is turning out to be quite an expensive hobby.

### Currently reading/watching?

I rewatch a lot of series I have seen before whilst I cook – so currently have Schitt's Creek and Ghosts on a loop



### Dream holiday destination and why?

Canada – I would love to hire a pick-up truck and travel round the country as much as I can.

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

Going out for breakfast, a long hike and then relaxing in the sun.

**Pic credits:** P2 By Orangeisacop - **Own work**, CC BY-SA 4.0, P3 EHDC.

Planning activity	April to June 25
Appeals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate	24
Appeals started	28
Appeals determined	26
Appeals successfully defended	14
Statutory submissions received	970
Statutory submissions received via the Planning Portal	797
Statutory submissions determined	943
Neighbours notified	4,487
Representations received	1,481
Consultations issued	2,767
Conditions imposed	3,279
Enquiries for planning advice	243
Enforcement complaints received	225
Enforcement cases opened	128
Enforcement related site inspections	144
Enforcement notices served	7
Enforcement cases closed	118

## Meet the planner...

**For this edition, we catch up with Rob Green, who joined the Authority earlier this year to become Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager.**

### Three words that sum up your job?

Varied, collaborative, rewarding

### What's your role in the planning team?

I am the Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager. I lead the Majors team, who work on most of the large applications and Planning projects we have across the National Park. We also have dedicated Community Infrastructure Levy and Monitoring Officers who make sure that community projects and affordable housing receive the funding they deserve from development. I also lead the Specialists team which is made up of Urban Design, Landscape and Historic Environment officers who provide detailed specialist advice across the Authority. I am responsible for our partnership arrangements with our host authorities who process applications on our behalf, and work closely with them to deliver the Planning service across the Park.



### What appealed to you about working for a National Park?