

SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING NEWS

UPDATES FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Have your say on the Local Plan Review

An eight-week consultation begins this month as the National Park invites people to have their say on how and where development takes place.

The award-winning South Downs Local Plan is being reviewed to ensure it's up-to-date and addresses important issues such as nature recovery, climate change, affordable housing and helping local communities thrive.

The public consultation of the Local Plan Review starts on 20 January and will run until 17 March. This is the main opportunity for people to help shape the final Plan, so the National Park is encouraging the public to get involved.

Local Plans set out where future development will take place, such as new homes and locations for business growth, as well as key policies, such as protecting nature and heritage, against which future planning applications will be judged.



**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK
LOCAL PLAN**

The National Park Authority proposes to keep much of the existing Local Plan, including the emphasis on landscape-led, which means that the nationally-designated landscape is considered in every planning decision. The Local Plan will continue to prioritise the provision of clean air, water, dark skies and food and a



medium level of growth spread across the towns and villages of the 1,627km² National Park.

The Local Plan Review document contains:

- An introductory chapter explaining the purpose of the Local Plan Review and what the consultation will cover.
- The vision and objectives for the Local Plan Review.
- 55 existing policies that have been updated, as well as 10 new, thematic policies. Changes include strengthening climate, nature and green infrastructure policies, greater protection for water resources, and more policies around viticulture and regenerative tourism given their importance for the South Downs economy.
- 28 existing Local Plan site allocations that have not been implemented and will be carried over

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

into the Local Plan Review, some with changes to wording or site areas.

- 48 new proposed site allocations across Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex.
- Settlement maps showing existing Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan allocations, alongside the proposed new ones.

The National Park Authority is now inviting comments from local communities, stakeholders and the development sector. This feedback will then help shape the next version of the Local Plan, which will be published in 2026 ahead of its submission for examination by an independent Inspector. Once the new Local Plan is adopted in 2027, it will be used to help decide all planning applications in the National Park.



Tim Slaney, Director at the National Park Authority, said: "Planning is the beating heart of the National Park, deciding where development takes place and how we conserve and enhance its amazing

landscape, wildlife and heritage.

"This is not an entirely new Local Plan and we would like to keep many of the existing policies that are working well. We need to ensure the Plan remains up-to-date and delivers on our priorities of nature recovery, climate action and a 'National Park for All'. As part of the review, we will also be incorporating policies around the future of Shoreham Cement Works.

"The Local Plan Review is still in its early stages and no decisions have been made. This consultation is a really key opportunity for people to influence what happens next and we're looking forward to hearing people's comments."

Responses to the consultation can be made in the following ways:

- Online: Using the consultation platform to view and give feedback on the draft revised Local Plan [here](#).
- Email: planningpolicy@southdowns.gov.uk
- In writing: Planning Policy Team, South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH

You can also find out more at one of the Local Plan Review drop-in events at:

- **Midhurst** – Wednesday, 22 January between 6.30pm and 8.30pm at the South Downs Centre Memorial Hall, North Street, GU29 9DH

- **Twyford** – Saturday, 25 January between 2pm and 5pm at Twyford Village Hall, Hazeley Road, Twyford, Winchester SO21 1QY
- **Amberley** – Tuesday, 28 January between 3.30pm and 7.30pm. Amberley Church Hall, St Michael's Amberley, Church Street, Amberley, Arundel BN18 9ND.
- **Petersfield** – Wednesday, 29 January between 6.30pm and 8.30pm at Festival Hall, Heath Road, GU31 4EA
- **Liphook** – Saturday, 1 February between 2pm and 5pm at Liphook Church Hall, Liphook Church, Church Rd, Liphook, GU30 7SQ.
- **Lewes** – Wednesday, 5 February between 6.30pm and 8.30pm at Lewes Town Hall, High Street, BN7 2QS and Saturday, 15 February 1.30-4pm at Cliffe Hall, 28 Cliffe High Street, BN7 2AH
- **Petworth** – Wednesday, 12 February between 3.30pm and 7.30pm at Leconfield Hall, Market Square, Petworth, GU28 0AH.



A recorded virtual webinar will be made available online to explain the review and how people can get involved.

The National Park

will also be engaging with young people, farmers, parish councils, planning agents and infrastructure providers such as health, water, sewerage and electricity suppliers to make sure that the final Local Plan takes all of these perspectives and issues into account.

The web hub for the Local Plan Review can be accessed here: www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/the-south-downs-local-plan-review/

- This is a Draft Local Plan on which the Authority is seeking views. It will be subject to revisions as the Authority moves through the process. However, at present the Plan would provide approximately 4,500 new homes to 2042.
- The proposed new allocated sites were identified through the Land Availability Assessment 2024 (Provisional Findings) which reviewed around 800 sites across the National Park. Comments on these proposed sites are sought from statutory consultees, the community and the development sector to inform the next version of the Plan. Additional site suggestions are also welcomed.

Affordable housing boost



A major development that will bring much-needed affordable homes is a step closer to coming to fruition.

Three years ago the National Park Authority granted outline planning permission for 226 homes – with half of them being affordable – at Old Malling Farm, Lewes. Now the specific design, scale, layout and appearance of the development have been agreed following approval by Planning Committee.

The 10-hectare site will include 10 new flats, 96 two-bed houses, 93 three-bed houses and 27 four-bed houses. Of the 113 affordable homes, 10 will be Lewes Low-Cost Housing and the others a mixture of affordable rent and shared ownership.

The design features of the development have been praised, such as retaining and improving landscape features, views and vistas to create a sense of place, making the site pedestrian and cycling friendly, and having the dwellings in clusters to allow for generous green spaces.

Landscape Officer Ruth Childs said: “The site offers enormous opportunities to bring about a positive landscape change associated with the development. The onus has been on creating a high-quality public realm, functional open spaces and semi-natural habitats to help the site integrate into its context.”

The green spaces include “pocket parks” in the southern part of the site which include equipment and community growing spaces. The site will deliver over 30 per cent biodiversity net gain from the creation and improvement of wildlife habitats.

Vicki Colwell, Principal Planning Officer, said: “This is a landscape-led development that is really responding to its National Park location with well-linked and generous green spaces that are diverse in character.

“Ultimately we want to help create sustainable places that people will want to live in and enjoy for generations to come and I think we’ve achieved that here.”

The previous outline permission secured £1.7million towards highway and access improvements.

Farm plans are approved



A disused dairy barn and hay store will be converted into new rural workers’ accommodation as part of a farm diversification scheme,

Old Farm in Houghton is an agricultural business spread across 90 acres of privately-owned land and has recently joined the Agri-Environment Scheme to help make the site a source of food and a haven for local wildlife. The farm’s Grade-II listed Old Dairy, and unlisted but historic Dutch barn structure are now unsuitable for modern-day cattle farming and the Authority has given the green light for both buildings to be converted into accommodation for an essential agricultural worker.

Meanwhile, the Authority has also granted approval for a new barn to be used for farm storage and three holiday lets to help diversify the farm’s income.

The conversion includes a number of sustainability features, including rainwater collection, new planting to attract pollinators, solar panels, and reduced artificial lighting to minimise impact to the International Dark Sky Reserve.

Sarah Round, Principal Development Management Officer, said: “This is a sensitive conversion of heritage assets on a working farm and is a great example of how agricultural businesses can work with planning to diversify.



“The farm is part of our National Park farm cluster, aiming to deliver farmland bird recovery, chalk grassland restoration, resource protection and encourage public engagement.

“The holiday lets are located on the working farm and it’s fantastic that those staying will be encouraged to learn about the farming practice.

“I’m sure the tourism accommodation will be popular with walkers on the South Downs Way and people wanting to explore the National Park.”

Funding of £2m for local community projects



Cycle path improvements, new toilets, a school extension, wildlife viewing platform and the restoration of a historic walled garden are among the community projects to benefit from a major funding boost from the South Downs National Park Authority.

To kick off 2025 the National Park is announcing 27 projects across Sussex and Hampshire that will receive a share of just over £1.9m. The funds have been raised through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is administered by the National Park Authority and paid by developers as a means of supporting new community infrastructure.

In addition to the £1.9m, 29 parish councils across the National Park are sharing more than £313,000 for the benefit of their local community.

In Hampshire, £75,000 will go towards access and toilet improvements at Petersfield Heath, as well as a further £30,000 to be spent on the installation of a Changing Places toilet at Queen Elizabeth Country Park. Meanwhile, £40,000 will go towards “Butser’s butterflies” with extra funding to improve the precious chalk grassland for the insects. Selborne School will benefit from £100,000 for an extension to help improve after-school facilities. On the popular Meon Valley Trail, access will be improved with the addition of a new ramp at Soberton, thanks to a cash injection of £75,000. Some £30,000 will go towards the restoration of a walled garden at Chawton House which has long associations with Jane Austen and her family.

In West Sussex, over £720,000 will go towards the second phase of Centurion Way, which is providing a new link for walkers and cyclists from Chichester into the heart of the National Park at Cocking and linking up with the South Downs Way. Some £50,000 will go towards improving wetland and grazing habitats at

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RSPB Pulborough Brooks, while £20,000 has been allocated towards refurbishing Burpham Village Hall. At Northchapel, £20,000 will go towards installing a multi-use games area at the local sports club.

In East Sussex, £245,000 will help to upgrade a number of paths and infrastructure in the Lower Ouse Valley, improving links to train stations and local attractions. At Lewes Railway Land, a new wildlife viewing platform will be created at the Winterbourne Stream, thanks to £14,000 of funding, while £120,000 will go towards improving cycling facilities in the town. Some £30,000 has been awarded to help create a reedbed at Alfriston Clergy House to encourage wetland birds. Meanwhile, £50,000 has been allocated towards working with East Sussex County Council for a proposed signalised pedestrian crossing at Seven Sisters Country Park.

Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: “As we begin 2025 and enter the National Park’s 15th year, it’s wonderful to share this good news.

“There’s a great mix of projects across the length and breadth of the National Park, many that will enrich the quality of people’s lives and help improve access to this cherished landscape, as well as tackling the biodiversity and climate crises.



“The Community Infrastructure Levy is an important element of our role as a planning authority and we know it can make a real difference to local communities, encouraging them to prosper and benefitting future generations.”

The Authority has now opened the call for projects for the 2025/2026 round of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. Find out more [here](#).

CIL funding is designed to be spent on infrastructure to support growth within the National Park around the priorities of Nature Recovery, Climate Action and A National Park for All.

The full list of projects to benefit by county

Please note while funding is provided from the Community Infrastructure Levy, the schemes will primarily be delivered by partners and community groups and the CIL investment often only makes up a portion of the total cost of the project.

Hampshire

Selborne School – building extension to enable 'wrap around care'. £100,000

Winnall Moors Nature Reserve – replacement of existing boardwalks. £150,000

Petersfield Heath – access and toilet improvements. £75,000

Enforcement updates

The National Park's enforcement team has been busy over the past six months with a number of enforcement notices served on those breaching planning regulations.

Here are two cases to highlight, writes Robert Campbell, Senior Planning Enforcement Officer.

The Boneyard, Drove Road, Brighton

A planning enforcement notice was served back in May 2023 concerning the material change of use of the land to a mixed-use. This included a commercial equestrian business use for livery and the breeding of showjumping horses, as well as the placement and residential occupation of one mobile home. There were numerous storage containers on site, together with a number of new timber stables.

The owners were required to cease the mixed use and dismantle the new stables, as well as restoring the land to its previous condition. They were given six months to comply. The owners appealed to the Planning Inspectorate, and a one-day Appeal Hearing was held at the South Downs Centre last October.

The owners appeared at the hearing and set out their case that they needed the site for their business plan and that it was necessary for them to live on site due to welfare requirements around their horses.

The Inspector refused to grant planning permission, extended the period of compliance to 12 months and dismissed the appeal.

This result was a good team effort from the enforcement team, senior planners and landscape expert.

The Fox Inn, Arundel Road, Patching, Worthing

A Planning Enforcement Notice was issued to the owners of the Fox Inn in April 2024. This was for the siting of a large marquee on a hardstanding base, as well as the siting of a storage container, the engineering of an earth bund, and the use of the site for the dumping of commercial waste.

The owners were required to remove all of these items and were given three months from the 2 April 2024 to comply. No appeal against the notice was made to the Planning Inspectorate.

The site was inspected on 6th August 2024 and the notice had not been complied with.

Enforcement officers tried on numerous occasions to get the owners to comply with the notice, but to no avail.

As a result, prosecution papers were drawn up and the matter was heard at Crawley Magistrates' Court on 28 November 2024. The two owners failed to appear, and the matter was heard in their absence. Each defendant was ordered to pay a fine of £1,100, costs of £658 and victim surcharge of £440, resulting in a total liability for the offence of £4,396.

Meon Valley Trail – access ramp at Soberton. £75,000

East Meon – byway upgrade. £50,000

Boosting Butser's Butterflies – restore and improve an area of priority habitat at Butser Hill Nature Reserve by re-establishing chalk grassland. £40,000

Queen Elizabeth Country Park – installation of Changing Places Toilet and separate shower and changing block. £30,000

Chawton House – restoration of walled garden. £30,000

Rowlands Castle – highway and open spaces improvements. £15,000

Ballard Close, Twyford – wild outdoor education. £1,500

Cheriton – highway improvements. £20,000

The Green Room School, Kingsley – multi-purpose pod helping to deliver therapeutic needs. £5,500

West Sussex

Centurion Way Phase 2 – the route is currently being extended from West Dean to Cocking to link up with the 100-mile long South Downs Way National Trail. £724,508

RSPB Pulborough and Amberley – improving wetland and grazing habitats as part of the "Downs to the Sea" project £50,000

Northchapel Sports Club – installation of multi-use games area. £20,000

Midhurst – revitalising Northern Gateway Project. £20,000

Burpham Village Hall – refurbishment to include air source heat pumps, LED lighting, bike stands and outdoor tap. £20,000

Hollycombe Primary School, Milland – tree planting. £4,000

Birchwood, Fittleworth – tree planting. £3,140

Petworth – installation of dropped kerbs in Market Square. £3,000

Stedham with Iping – improvements to parish, including local information. £3,000

East Sussex

Lower Ouse Valley – upgrades to a number of paths and infrastructure linking to train stations and attractions in the area. £245,000.00

Lewes – Improvements to Cycle Route R90. £120,000

Seven Sisters Country Park – towards working with East Sussex County Council for a proposed signalised pedestrian crossing. £50,000

Alfriston Clergy House – creation of reed bed. £38,000

Lewes Railway Land – viewing platform at Winterbourne Stream. £14,000

Falmer to Stanmer – improvements to visitor signage. £7,000

Exceptional design shines brightly at award ceremony



A stunning new wildlife haven, a hillside café in the shape of a train carriage, an eco-friendly house and a beautifully renovated farmstead are among the winners of the South Downs Design Awards.

The winners were announced at an inspiring ceremony at the South Downs Centre in Midhurst.

The awards celebrate high standards of architectural and landscape design, as well as promote creativity and understanding of the National Park through design. More than 60 nominations were received earlier this year and 16 unique projects were shortlisted from across Sussex and Hampshire.

It was double delight for the team behind the restoration of the **Cockshut Stream**, in Lewes, (*pictured above receiving their awards*) which won the **Landscape Category** and also took the top spot in **The People's Choice**, taking the lion's share of the 1,500 votes in the public poll.

Six hectares of much-needed wetland for wildlife has been created following the realignment of the rare chalk stream. The area has quickly become an oasis for nature, with herons, kingfishers, egret and snipe among the many birds to be found, while toads, sticklebacks, eels and newts can be spotted in the ponds.

The partners on the project included the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust, Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust, Lewes District Council, Veolia Environmental Trust and Chris Butler Archaeological Services.

The judges said: "This is truly an enhancement of both natural beauty and wildlife. The panel hopes this kind of project can be replicated at a larger scale both within the National Park and far beyond."

Taking the trophy in the **Non-residential Category** was the **Handlebar Café**, which sits on the viaduct cycle and walking path below St Catherine's Hill in Winchester

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Judges said: "The judges were very taken with the genesis of this project which originated from ideas and sketches by local teenagers with no formal design training."

There were joint winners in the **Residential Category: Lannings Way, Midhurst** and **The Mile House, at Crossgates, Amberley**. Lannings Ways comprises four energy-efficient homes that pay homage to the heritage of the site as a former ambulance station and the traditional setting of the site in the conservation area. The Mile House is an incredible living space, placed up to the edge of a slope to maximise views of the National Park.

Winning the **Conservation Category** was **Wiston Estate Winery at Washington** with a redeveloped historic farmstead that draws inspiration from the surrounding landscape. Two historic flint barns have been sensitively restored into a fine dining restaurant and private dining room, alongside new-build elements for wine production and a visitor shop.

Judges said: "We were very impressed with the repurposing of historic farm buildings and the sensitive juxtaposition of new buildings and the very high quality of detailing and workmanship."

All the winners received a specially designed trophy, beautifully hand-carved in South Downs oak by acclaimed West Sussex-based sculptor, Alison Crowther. Helping to present the awards and special guest for the day was Carolin Göhler, President of The Landscape Institute.

The judges highly commended a number of projects:

Black Timber House, Rodmell – a house with very good sustainable credentials.

New Temple, Liss – a unique project using a bright material palette which creates 'an aura of calm'.

Woolbeding Glasshouse – a stunning kinetic glasshouse, 15 metres high, at Woolbeding National Trust Gardens made up of 10 segments (sepals) designed to open and close in the manner of a flower.

Chalk-based Renovation, Remediation and Regeneration at Shoreham Cement Works – an innovative hypothetical student-based project looking at possible ways to redevelop the Shoreham site, including a construction school and production facility for chalk cobs as a natural building material.

Tim Slaney, Director of the Authority, said: "Every project demonstrates just how high, rightly, the benchmark is for design in the South Downs National Park. They show the true skill and flair of architects, urban designers, landscape specialists, developers and planners to be able to respond to landscape, character, local identity and heritage, as well as find innovative solutions to the climate and nature emergencies."

High praise for trio of projects



Stanmer Park has won a major accolade

The National Park's commitment to design excellence has again been recognised by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI).

Our Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document was shortlisted in the National Awards following its triumph at the RTPI South East awards in the summer.

Competition for the award was fierce with 10 other plans in the shortlist. The Climate Emergency Development Plan Document, submitted by Cornwall Council, was eventually crowned the winner of the Excellence in Plan Making Practice category at the glittering event held in London.

The shortlisting of the Design Guide in such a competitive category recognises the contribution made by the document to provide comprehensive guidance on delivering well-designed developments in a landscape-led planning system.

There has been further praise, with Lewes named a runner-up in the 2024 Academy of Urbanism (AoU) awards for the best town or small city in the country.

The awards recognise some of the best, most enduring or most improved urban environments.

The description in the shortlist said: "Lewes' Saxon roots and location in the South Downs National Park create an attractive town that embraces both its cultural and physical heritage.

"This in turn has made it a desirable place to live and visit, and its public transport and walkability contributes to a lower number of car commuters compared to similarly sized towns."

Meanwhile, there was awards success for Stanmer Park's Management Plan, which won the Landscapes and Parks Management category for the Landscape Institute's annual awards. The landscape-led plan pioneered by Land Use Consultants (LUC), promotes the continued reinvigoration of the park, including integrating historic design considerations with current needs such as climate change and habitat creation.

New pre-app service launches



Stella New, Development Management Lead, introduces a new service that was recently launched for applicants, developers and agents.

The Authority rolled out a new Pre-Application service on 1 October 2024 to streamline and speed up the service.

There are now two stages, with Stage 1 providing a brief, desktop appraisal to assess the in-principle acceptability of a proposal, and Stage 2 providing more detailed advice with at least one site visit or meeting.

Stage 1 responses will advise whether the development is acceptable; acceptable subject to amendments; or unacceptable in principle and will normally be provided within three weeks. Advice will also be given as to whether the proposal is likely to be subject to statutory considerations such as Biodiversity Net Gain, the Habitats Regulations and Water or Nutrient Neutrality.

Stage 2 responses are intended for proposals on allocated sites or within settlement boundaries, or that have received an 'acceptable' or 'acceptable subject to amendments' response at Stage 1.

Detailed advice will be provided on matters such as design, heritage, ecology, dark skies etc. and consultee advice will be sought in the normal way. Some proposals may also benefit from separate pre-application advice from other bodies such as Local Highways Authorities, Local Lead Flood Authorities, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Stage 2 responses are normally provided within eight weeks unless additional meetings/workshops are required.

Planning Performance Agreements will be required for schemes of 25 or more dwellings and commercial development of 5,000sqm or more.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric checks are also available to see whether a BNG metric is valid prior to submission.

The fee schedule can be found **here**.

Additional meetings and site visits will incur an additional fee. Advice for agricultural and affordable housing development will be free of charge.

We will be reviewing the service after six months.

Latest planning statistics

Appeals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate	24
Appeals started	21
Appeals determined	19
Appeals successfully defended	15
Statutory submissions received	977
Statutory submissions received via the Planning Portal	860
Statutory submissions determined	999
Neighbours notified	4416
Representations received	1756
Consultations issued	2629
Conditions imposed	3216
Enquiries for planning advice	331
Enforcement complaints received	134
Enforcement cases opened	119
Enforcement related site inspections	83
Enforcement notices served	5
Enforcement cases closed	165

Figures cover from 1/7/24 to 30/9/24

Planning Committees

The next meetings will be held on 13 February, 13 March and 10 April.

Watch the meetings on-demand for up to six months after the meeting through our [webcasting portal](#). You can look at previous and upcoming agendas on the website [here](#).

Meet the planner...

Let's catch up with James Brazil, Planning Policy Assistant.

Three words that sum up your job in planning?

Engaging, Ever-changing, Impactful

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

I am a Planning Assistant at the National Park and apprentice at Oxford Brookes University, working towards becoming a Chartered Town Planner. My primary role is in the Planning Policy Team, working on the Local Plan Review, Land Availability Assessment, and Authority Monitoring Report, helping to shape policies in the South Downs and steering development



in the future. I have also been involved with the Development Management side of planning, responding to Do I Need Planning Permission requests and carrying out our Duty Planner service.

What appealed to you about working in planning?

Prior to my role at the SDNPA I have grown up surrounded by family businesses related to the construction and planning sector. Upon learning about planning as a profession it grabbed my interest immediately, as to me, planners seemed the "Jack of all trades" that bring together a range of specialisms and sectors to help solve problems for everyone, whether this be providing housing, re-naturing, or working towards creating community infrastructure.

Can you describe your typical day?

My work is ever-changing and two days are never alike. Some days I block off and are spent on reports, examining data, and responding to public enquiries, some are filled with meetings with colleagues, neighbouring authorities, and various teams, and others are spent completing site visits, attending planning committee, or at university.

Best thing about working in planning for a National Park?

Everything! The SDNPA has been a great place to work firstly due to the people. Everyone is extremely welcoming and skilled at their job, creating a great work environment with the ability to work effectively. I have also learnt a whole lot from colleagues with more experience than myself, helping me to further develop professionally. The complexity of planning in a National Park as a protected landscape is another upside as it comes with a whole range of challenges that need to be addressed, but being part of the solution to these challenges gives my work purpose.

What do you love about the South Downs National Park?

It feels like home. I grew up in the countryside just bordering the National Park and still live there now, so the South Downs is on my doorstep. The idyllic market towns, peaceful villages, dark night skies, range of wildlife... Need I say anymore?

Dream holiday destination and why?

I'd like to discover more of my home turf via a trip around the entire coast of the UK to say I've truly explored every part of my home.

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

Full English for breakfast, visit family and friends, visit a pub – and don't leave the pub!

Pic Credits – P1 Chris Gorman (South Harting)