

SA5 – The South Downs



Supporting Documents:

PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas - 2004
PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - 2005
South East Plan Examination Panel Report - 2007
SDNP Inspector's Report on the National Park Boundary - 2007
The South Downs Management Plan - 2007
The Downland Initiative - 2005
Stanmer Park Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Management Plan - 2003
Sustainable Community Strategy -2006
Housing Needs Survey - 2005

Context

2.145 A National Park is proposed for the chalk landscapes of the South Downs stretching from Hampshire in the west to Beachy Head in East Sussex. National Parks are administered by a National Park Authority (NPA), which will have the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park and providing opportunities for its understanding and enjoyment by the public and a statutory duty to prepare a Local Development Framework for the National Park.

2.146 For the administrative area of Brighton & Hove the proposed South Downs National Park boundary includes most of the land currently designated as part of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) but excludes some parts that are either developed, proposed for development in adopted development plans or where the landscape has been reduced in quality. The proposed park also includes a major tract of land west of Woodingdean and Ovingdean, south of the race course and the cliffs and coast south of Beacon Hill which do not currently enjoy AONB status.

2.147 The role of the preferred option is to set out the council's aspirations for those parts of the national park within the administrative area of the city to inform future partnership working with the National Park Authority. In the interim, until the National Park order is confirmed, PPS7, and saved policies in the adopted Local Plan (NC6, NC7 and NC8) will continue to give high priority to the protection of AONB land. The South East Plan (Panel Report) reiterated that the purposes of the National Park designation should be a material consideration in the making of any planning decision that may significantly affect the Park.

Preferred Option – SA5 The South Downs

Following confirmation of the National Park order, the council will work in partnership with the National Park Authority and adjoining authorities and landowners to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the South Downs National Park and recognise the following council priorities for National Park

land that falls within the city's administrative area:

1. Promote sustainable land use management systems on the downs with greater emphasis on local healthy food production, diversification and farming practises that are sympathetic to wider downland objectives;
2. Conserve and enhance downland habitats and species to meet BAP targets and recognise the role of the Downs in the city's green network (see CP5 Biodiversity);
3. Protect scheduled ancient monuments and other downland features;
4. Protect sensitive aquifer protection zones and address catchment flood management issues.
5. Increase the amount of access land adjacent to the urban area and enhance access from the urban area to the Downs by sustainable transport including by walking, cycling, riding and public transport modes (see CP8 Sustainable Transport and CP4 Healthy City);
6. Facilitate tourism in the South Downs and the provision of gateway facilities to the South Downs National Park, recognising in particular, the role of Stanmer Park (see SA4 Urban Fringe and CP18 Culture, Tourism and Heritage).

Supporting Text

2.148 Until such a time as the South Downs National Park is confirmed by the Secretary of State of the Department for Farming and Rural Affairs the South Downs AONB is protected by national and regional planning policies and the adopted Brighton & Hove Local Plan. The purpose of this preferred option is to set the council's aspirations for those parts of the National Park within the administrative area of the city to inform future partnership working with the National Park Authority. Through implementation of the 2005 Downland Initiative the council is currently working towards a more sustainable approach to the land management of the South Downs, by improving conservation, public access and recreation whilst maintaining financially viable farm businesses.

2.149 An important role of the National Park Authority will be to promote understanding of the South Downs and to promote access to the Park by sustainable means. A number of these measures are likely to be implemented within the administrative area of the city council therefore emphasising the need for good partnership working. Stanmer Park is a Grade II registered park of special historic interest, a 485 hectare rural estate with landscaped park, buildings and gardens, a village, farmland, woodland and amenity grassland used as public open space within the AONB and proposed to be entirely within the National Park. It is covered by a variety of nature conservation and conservation designations and is a major recreational resource for residents and visitors. The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the plan to promote access to the South Downs by developing Stanmer Park as a gateway, promoting open access and improving public transport.

2.150 The chalk under the downland around the city is the aquifer or groundwater storage that supplies the city. It is therefore important that it is protected from any development or land use that could cause harm by polluting or affecting the water supply held in the chalk. There are also a number of sites of archaeological and biodiversity interest designated within the proposed South Downs National Park that are subject to national and regional protection.

Implementation

2.151 In the interim period, prior to designation of the National Park the Sussex Downs AONB continues to be protected by national planning policy set out in PPS7 and saved policies NC7 and NC8 in the adopted Brighton & Hove Local Plan (July 2005). Current strategies to enhance the South Downs AONB, including the South Downs Management Plan and Downland Initiative will continue to be implemented until replaced by a NPA strategy. The Stanmer Park Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Management Plan 2003 sets out the programme of work to achieve the restoration and management of Stanmer Park.

2.152 Once the National Park is designated the council will seek effective partnership working with the SDNPA, adjoining local authorities and landowners to contribute towards protecting the setting of the National Park and providing sustainable access and appropriate gateway facilities. The city council will work towards promoting joint working structures with the SDNPA, landowners and adjoining local authorities. Those areas of AONB land that will fall outside the National Park boundary will be covered by SA4 Urban Fringe.

2.153 Protecting biodiversity will be implemented through core policy CP5 Biodiversity; improving sustainable transport to and from the National Park will be addressed through CP8 Sustainable Transport and promoted by the Healthy City core policy CP4.