

23/07/2026

National Park's new Local Plan moves another step forward

More than 2,700 representations on the South Downs National Park's new Local Plan are currently being analysed in preparation for the next important stages of the planning process.

The latest consultation on the new South Downs Local Plan closed on 23 June, with 2,700 comments submitted from around 1,300 people and organisations.

All representations received during the consultation, together with supporting evidence and submission documents, have been registered and are now being reviewed by officers at the National Park Authority.



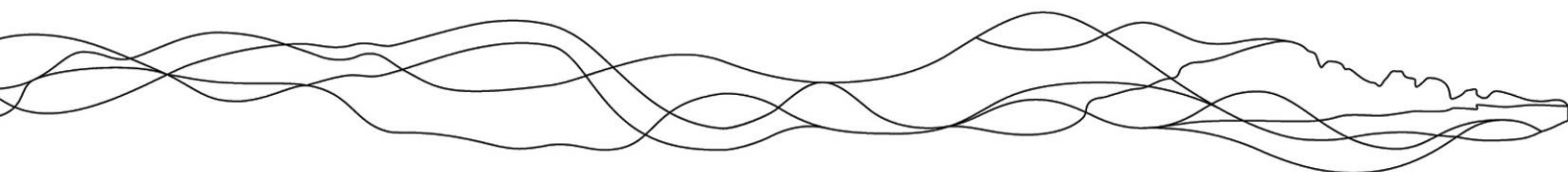
The new Local Plan will guide how and where development takes place in the National Park over the next two decades, replacing the current Local Plan adopted in 2019.

The goal of the Local Plan is to address vital issues such as the need for affordable housing, quality development, restoring nature, climate action, a flourishing rural economy and helping local communities thrive.

In November and December this year, the National Park's Planning Committee and the Full Authority will consider the outcomes of the consultation, including any proposed modifications to address the representations and any other changes since the Local Plan was agreed last March.

Subject to this consideration, the new Local Plan, together with any proposed modifications and the latest consultation representations, will then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination and published on the National Park Authority's website.

Claire Tester, Head of Strategic Planning for the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "This is such an important plan for the future of this wonderful National Park and I'd like to thank each and every person who has responded so far to the consultations.



“One of the key concerns from the community that came up in our latest consultation was that the South Downs Local Plan includes more proposed housing and other development given that this is a National Park.

“We have statutory purposes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, and to help people understand and appreciate those assets. However, we also have a statutory duty to foster the economic and social wellbeing of our communities.

“The South Downs is Britain’s most populated National Park with more than 113,000 residents, living in one of the four towns and smaller villages and settlements, and we have nearly 6,000 businesses.

“Therefore, it’s important we plan for the future and the continued vitality of these towns and villages, supporting local facilities and ensuring there are suitable homes, particularly affordable homes for local communities.

“This is a plan about innovative and diligent placemaking, so with appropriate, sustainable growth comes significant wider benefits for people, including health and wellbeing, habitat creation for wildlife, community infrastructure, jobs and climate action.”

During the latest consultation, concerns were also raised about the addition of new sites for potential development, as well as questions over significant changes to sites that were previously consulted on.

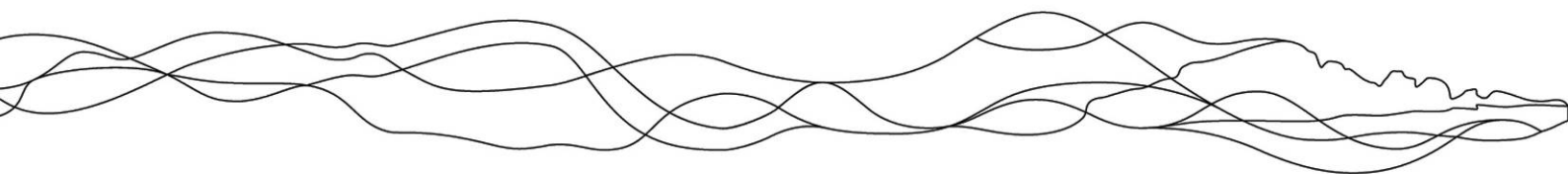
Claire said: “It’s important that we listen to the feedback received at each consultation stage. This includes feedback from some of our partner councils that the Local Plan should do more to address housing needs in the area. Following a consultation in early 2025 the National Park Authority reviewed all the existing sites and additional ones submitted during that consultation and this led to new sites being added to the Local Plan consulted on this spring.

“The submission of new sites at all stages of plan preparation is a recognised part of the plan-making process.

“Comments made on all these proposed sites will be considered by the Authority prior to submission of the Local Plan and by the Inspector during the examination.”

The Planning Inspectorate are expecting around 100 Local Plans from across the country to be submitted for independent examination before 31 December 2026.

This means there may be a delay before the examination hearings can take place.



By January next year, the National Park Authority expects to receive confirmation of the appointed Inspector(s) and dates for examination hearings.

Claire added: “All those who told us that they wanted to be heard at the examination hearings will be contacted in advance of these hearing dates and given further guidance on how to participate. Should the Inspector be minded to recommend modifications to the Local Plan, there will be a further six-week consultation on these modifications during the examination.”

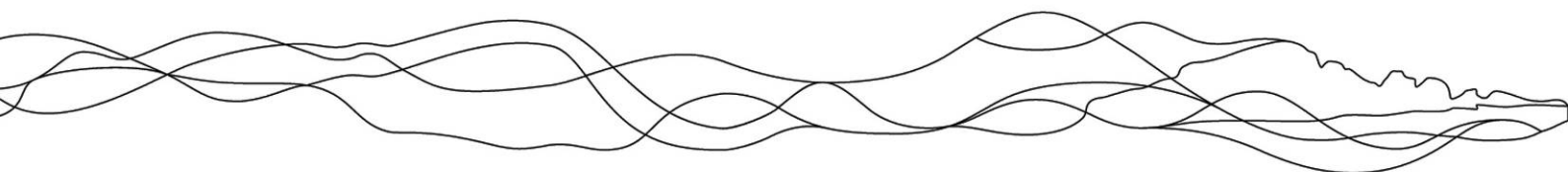
After completing all the required stages, it’s hoped that the new Local Plan will be adopted in 2027. From then on, all planning applications will be considered against policies in the new Local Plan.

To see the proposed Local Plan visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/new-south-downs-local-plan/

Ends

Notes to Editors

- Among some of the key proposed policies in the new Local Plan are:
 - Landscape-led – so conserving and enhancing the South Downs landscape is considered strongly with any planning application that comes forward.
 - A total of 58 policies on core issues, including landscape, design and heritage, nature recovery, water and pollution, housing, the economy, green, blue and community spaces and transport and infrastructure.
 - A total of 77 site allocations spread across the National Park, delivering 3,559 new homes, including affordable homes, as well as employment and gypsy and traveller pitches. Sites chosen include brownfield sites and those in and around existing settlements.
 - An overall housing provision of 6,735 homes between 2024 and 2042. This includes existing planning permissions and allocations from neighbourhood plans that have been developed with local communities. This would meet the National Park’s housing need of 323 homes per year and would support more than 2,000 new jobs.
 - Key strategic sites for development such as North Street Quarter, in Lewes, and Shoreham Cement Works. Shoreham is earmarked as a potential mixed-use development of residential, commercial and community spaces with the capacity to support up to 400 homes and significant employment opportunities.



- The current Local Plan is available here: www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/south-downs-local-plan/local-plan/
- The South Downs National Park has one of the most unique built environments within a protected landscape in the UK. As Britain's most populated National Park with over 113,000 residents, it spans 15 different local authority areas across three counties and has four bustling market towns. It boasts 167 conservation areas – more than any other National Park in the UK – as well as 18 distinctive landscape types, over 1,000 designated spaces for wildlife and well over 5,800 listed buildings. Dealing with around 5,000 planning cases a year, the National Park is one of the country's top 30 busiest Planning Authorities.

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