

SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING NEWS

UPDATES FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Listed building to become apartments

An iconic Grade 2-listed building is being retained to provide 64 new homes and a number of ecological improvements.

Plans for the former St Dunstan's building, north of Marine Drive and to the west of Rottingdean, have been approved by the National Park Authority, subject to a Section 106 agreement to secure a substantial financial contribution for affordable housing in the National Park.

The huge property was constructed in 1938 in a small area of open downland as a rehabilitation centre for Blind Veterans – commanding some of the best sea views in the south.

More recently, it has been used to provide respite care for older veterans, but due to a decline in the number of veterans requiring the facility, the charity is relocating to a smaller premises in Rustington.

The plans by James Taylor Homes Group for the 4.75-hectare site include 64 market dwelling homes, as well



as a new gym and swimming pool. The dwellings will comprise 13 one-bedroom apartments, 19 two-bedroom, 31 three-



bedroom and one with four bedrooms.

The Grade-2 listed chapel at the site will be retained.

A total of 188 cycle parking spaces will be provided in a new cycle storage building to the front of the main building.

Carbon emissions will be almost halved via internal insulation improvements to the existing building, upgrading to an electric heating and hot water system, and the installation of solar panels.

Stella New, Development Management Lead, said: "This is such a unique listed building in a prominent coastal location that it really deserves a high-quality, bespoke approach.

"The proposal includes a number of design, heritage, landscape and ecological enhancements that will provide amenity, biodiversity and sustainable construction benefits."



Glory for glasshouse



A unique petal-shaped glasshouse has been commended by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), with judges describing it as an “exceptional piece of architecture”.

The Woolbeding Glasshouse and Silk Route Garden, in West Sussex, was entered into the Best South East Project Awards.

Although narrowly missing the top spot, the RTPI was full of praise for the project, which was given the go-ahead by the Authority four years ago and is now pride of place at the popular National Trust gardens.

The RTPI said the design “reflects the setting of a standalone parkland structure representing a feature characteristic of historic country houses which often continue the personalisation of their house and gardens through interventions within their landscape”.

It added: “The Heatherwick Studio-designed Glasshouse is, arguably, an exceptional piece of architecture in a very sensitive setting with both landscape and heritage impacts to consider.

“It is clear that this has required a very high level of negotiation between the South Downs National Park Authority, as custodians of a nationally important landscape, the National Trust, Heatherwick Studio and Savills.

“The judges were very impressed by the collaboration and negotiation required, underpinned by effective use of tools such as planning conditions, to successfully integrate a contemporary, highly distinctive piece of architecture into a very sensitive setting.”

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning for the National Park, said: “This beautiful structure echoes Victorian glasshouses and references to the large 19th century glasshouse that previously existed next to the mansion.

“It shows how National Parks can be bold and sensitive to landscape at the same time.”

Consultation coming



The South Downs Local Plan reaches its fifth birthday next July and the Government requires Local Plans to be reviewed every five years.

The work to review the Local Plan has started with updating the evidence for housing and other development needs and assessing the available sites to meet these needs. The Authority has asked parish councils to prepare Parish Priorities Statements (PPS) to inform the Local Plan Review and many of them will be consulting on these over the next few months.

Claire Tester, Planning Policy Manager for the National Park, said: “Please do engage with this consultation and make your views known to your town or parish council so they can take them into account in their PPS. This will help us to understand what people value about their communities and how they think changes should happen over the next 15 to 20 years”

The draft Local Plan Review will go through two rounds of formal public consultation prior to independent examination – the first expected between January and March 2025.

Claire added: “It’s so important we keep the Local Plan up-to-date so we can make sure that we are meeting the needs of our communities whilst also conserving and enhancing the special landscape qualities of the National Park.

“Having an up-to-date Local Plan also protects us from speculative developments that haven’t been through a Local or Neighbourhood Plan process.

“We will be retaining the award-winning landscape-led approach to our Local Plan and seeking opportunities to address climate change, re-nature the National Park and make it accessible to everyone..”

Keep up to date by joining the Local Plan Review mailing list and be notified of future consultations by contacting planningpolicy@southdowns.gov.uk

Update on the Land Availability Assessment



Around 300 locations were submitted to the Authority's "Call for Sites" exercise and an update is expected to be published this autumn.

Last summer the Authority launched a process whereby landowners could submit potential sites for housing, employment, renewable energy, care facilities, green spaces and biodiversity net gain, among others.

Around 300 sites were newly submitted or resubmitted to the Call for Sites, and approximately 540 sites in the previous Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment are also being reviewed.

Kate Stuart, Planning Policy Lead, explained: "This is part of the initial phase of evidence gathering for the Local Plan Review.

"These sites are now being assessed as part of the Land Availability Assessment (LAA) along with other sites known to the Authority, including reviewing sites previously considered.

"The LAA process does not allocate sites. However, it will identify sites which have 'potential' for further consideration through a range of technical work that will help inform future decisions on allocations in the Local Plan Review."

The Policy Team are currently working on site assessments, combing desktop evidence and carrying out site visits to understand potential constraints and opportunities, such as access, heritage and biodiversity, and an assessment of how any development could impact on or enhance the landscape.

Kate added: "We expect to publish our initial conclusions in the coming months."



Update on Shoreham Cement Works



Claire Tester, Planning Policy Manager, shares an update.



Last year we undertook public consultation on the emerging Shoreham Cement Works Area Action Plan (AAP). Thank you to everyone who engaged with the consultation and those who submitted responses.

We have fully reviewed all the comments received. Summaries of the comments have been published on our Shoreham Cement Works webpage, and if you would like to read comments in full, these are also available to view. Going forward, due to the progression of the Local Plan Review and the direction of travel on planning reforms which are moving away from AAPs, we are rolling the content of the AAP into the Local Plan Review. Feedback provided through the consultation will be taken into consideration as we develop the policies for the site through the Local Plan Review process. We will continue to develop the evidence base for the site which will inform the policy approach for the site, alongside the feedback provided.

Equestrian guidance

Following a 6-week public consultation last year, Planning Committee has formally adopted the Equestrian Development Technical Advice Note (TAN).

Consultees provided thorough and helpful input into the TAN, which is reflected in the final version.

The TAN is written for a broad audience and seeks to help us provide a consistent approach to equestrian development across the National Park, in particular by making clear the positive and negative impacts equestrian development can have on this important landscape. The TAN can be viewed [here](#)

Every day is a newt day!



Great crested newts are the biggest newt species in the UK and have been around for much longer than humans – a staggering 40 million years. But these pond-loving amphibians are in trouble across the country, with populations on the decline despite strong legal protection.

Now a new licensing scheme aims to give further protection to the creatures to help them thrive, streamlining paperwork for developers and using licence fees to pay for much-needed conservation work. It comes as the National Park Authority has been working with nearby local planning authorities, as well as NatureSpace Partnership and Natural England, on the licensing programme.

Kate Stuart, Planning Policy Lead, explained: “Great crested newts are protected under UK law which makes it illegal to harm or move them, or damage their habitat, unless a licence is in place.

“Previously the whole process of getting a licence could potentially be very long-winded.

“This new district-level scheme provides a quick and efficient process for applicants, and delivers long-term, landscape-scale nature recovery.”

So how does the scheme work? NatureSpace will first assess the development sites to determine the potential impact to great crested newts using their Natural England-approved metric.

Applicants are provided with a certificate that they can submit alongside their planning application, proving that they have compensated towards great crested newt conservation. Once planning permission is granted, the development can go ahead under the National Park’s Licence and if newts are found they can be moved to a safe location.

The fees applicants pay for the certificate are used to deliver conservation work off-site, which is carried out by the Newt Conservation Partnership, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Freshwater Habitats Trust.

Access is improved



Nikki Allen, CIL planning officer, gives an update on schemes benefitting from the Community Infrastructure Levy.

In 2022-2023 the Authority received just over £3 million in Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds, and gave out monies to 25 different projects.

One of the successful projects that completed last year was at Buzz Active, situated at Seven Sisters Country Park. Buzz Active was awarded £30,000 in CIL funding for improvements to the access to the river for paddle sport users. The works included riverbank repairs and reinforcement, protection of the area from further erosion and providing set places to launch and land from for the betterment of local paddling and water users, including those using Buzz Active outdoor centres.

Since the project was completed it has received many positive reviews. Visitors can now park adjacent to the launch site, giving ready access to a section of purpose built river bank with steps to allow easy access and egress, without overcrowding on the Buzz Active slipway or causing damage to the bank.

Since April 2023 the Authority has given out a further £242,200 to seven projects;

- £150,000 for the regeneration of the Cockshut Chalk stream.
- £28,000 to Easebourne Play Park for an eco-friendly WC.
- £18,000 to Meonstoke Infant School for a nature friendly, outdoor learning area in the school grounds.
- £13,500 to South Malling School for a new “Trim Trail”
- £11,400 to Liss Triangle Community Centre for repairs to the front wall of the building;
- £11,300 to Hampshire County Council for improvements and decluttering in Farrington.
- £10,000 to Lewes Railway Land Local Nature Reserve for improvements to the Mound by the Heart of Reeds.

Innovative eco-home wins RIBA awards



A striking eco-home project in the National Park has won two prestigious architectural awards.

The Black Timber House, at Rodmell near Lewes, has won the Royal Institute of British Architects' Southeast Regional Award and Small Project of the Year.

Designed by HAPA Architects', the building sits on the site of an old tennis court and uses local and sustainable materials. A plethora of passive ways to reduce energy consumption have been employed, including a high efficiency air source heat pump coupled, low temperature under floor heating and high thermal mass heat sink floors.

The house employs passive solar design, high levels of insulation and air tightness measures to make for an A rated house (A rated EPC).

Judges at RIBA said: "Externally, HAPA Architects' material palette of charred timber and copper is deftly handled to achieve a modern and sensitive response that speaks to the edge-of-village context."

And they added: "The Black Timber House is an exemplar of contextual modern design in a rural setting that also promotes low embodied carbon. More than this, though, it is a warm and welcoming family home designed with practicality in mind and built with considerable care, and for this it should be commended."

The National Park's Design Officer, Rafa Grosso-Macpherson, said: "The scheme sets a new bar for development on the edge of a village, through thoughtful contextual architecture that demonstrates an exemplary use of timber and is enhanced by sensitive landscaping."



Sustainable woodcarving studio takes top spot



A sustainable studio space for a nationally-renowned woodcarver was the winner of the coveted South Downs Award for 2023.

The Woodcarvers Studio in Nyewood, West Sussex, was a worthy winner at the annual Sussex Heritage Trust Awards.

Professional artist and wood sculptor Alison Crowther was presented the award by Ian Phillips, in his last engagement as Vice-Chair of the National Park Authority.

The special award is sponsored by the National Park and our judging team said:

"A hugely well-crafted building sitting comfortably in the landscape, which has enhanced the area. The use is an exemplary economic activity for a rural location and demonstrates that the right type of use can have a positive impact on landscape both within and beyond the site boundaries when adopting a site-selection and design ethos that sits well with the purposes of the National Park."

The South Downs National Park saw 15 Sussex Heritage Trust Award winners and six commendations across 10 categories, from residential schemes to public and community buildings to commercial projects. Each were presented a hand-crafted slate plaque by the Trust's President Lord Egremont.

Award winners included: Grade I listed church St Michael and All Angels in Berwick; Seven Sisters Country Park including a new Visitor Centre and conversion of the Dairy Barn; the extension, restoration and reorder of a Grade II listed Charlton Court Farmhouse in Steyning and the restoration of



Sussex Heritage Trust

design for the future,
respect for the past

Unique temple is built



A building characterised by peace and simplicity has been constructed in the village of Rake.

James Gorst Architects has completed a new temple complex that is open to the public.

The practice was selected following a two-stage design competition in early 2017 with a brief to replace a dilapidated 1970s structure.

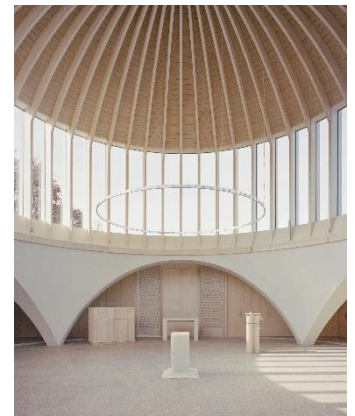
The new building comprises a temple, library, chapels, meeting spaces, a public foyer and catering kitchen within newly-landscaped grounds.

The rationalised plan is organised as a series of orthogonal pavilions connected by a cloistered walkway, facing onto a central courtyard garden.

The internal arrangement follows a progression from secular to ritual spaces, moving from a timber portico and social foyer at the visitor entrance in the east, through to the main temple space in the west.

The spaces allow for quiet contemplation and encourage a spiritual connection to the surrounding landscape.

Steve Wilkinson, Associate at James Gorst Architects, said: "Our aim was to create balance between the landscape, building and interiors, to form one coherent and harmonious design, exploring the relationship of the architecture to the spiritual context."



a rare agricultural 19th-century Grade II listed The Byre, near Polegate. King Edward VII Estate, in Midhurst, achieved two awards for further improvements and extensions to the main ex-sanatorium building, as well as its walkways and courtyards.

The awards are sponsored by Irwin Mitchell, as the headline sponsor, alongside other well-known Sussex companies Gravetye Manor, Savills, Henry Adams, Valley Builders, Covers, Harvey's Brewery, Lawson Commercial, Pilbeam Construction, RH and RW Clutton and Toovey's Auctioneers.

For a full list of all the winners go to www.sussexheritagetrust.org.uk



Winner – The refurbished visitor centre at Seven Sisters



Winner – St Michael and All Angels Church in Berwick



Winner - King Edward VII Estate near Midhurst

The past quarter at a glance in numbers...

Development management stats	
Appeals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate	19
Appeals started	16
Appeals determined	15
Appeals successfully defended	7
Statutory submissions received	947
Statutory submissions received via planning portal	793
Statutory submissions determined	1,057
Neighbours notified	4,764
Representations received	1,949
Consultations issued	2,669
Conditions imposed	3,366
Enquiries for planning advice	282
Enforcement complaints received	156
Enforcement cases opened	137
Enforcement related site inspections	89
Enforcement notices served	3
Enforcement cases closed	144

Data for Q1 (1 April to June 30, 2023)

Planning Committees

The next Planning Committee meetings will be held on 14 September, 12 October, 9 November and 14 December.

You can 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](#).

Bats to benefit from National Park funding



Restoring a nationally-important bat roost, the story of a town's "lost railway", improvements to a nature reserve and a new community eco-shelter are among the exciting projects to benefit from a National Park fund.

A range of inspiring initiatives across Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex have been awarded grant funding from the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF). The dedicated community fund is a partnership between the South Downs Trust, the official independent charity for the National Park, and the National Park Authority.

A grant of £10,000 was awarded to Sussex Bat Group and Vincent Wildlife Trust to renovate and maintain a barn in West Sussex that is a vital haven for the greater horseshoe bat). Once a cave-dweller, this bat species is now very rare in the UK and tends to roost in old buildings, such as churches and barns.

Daniel Hargreaves, Bat Programme Manager, said: "Greater horseshoe bats were once considered extinct in southeast England, so to discover a maternity roost in the South Downs National Park is incredibly exciting."

Just under £4,000 was awarded to a project at Benfield Hill Local Nature Reserve, in Brighton, to support the reserve's 30th anniversary celebrations. The grant will help provide two educational boards at the site, including information on chalk grassland habitat and wildlife.

Meanwhile, an initiative to create a new community eco-shelter in Petersfield will benefit from a grant of £10,000. A traditional wooden shelter, complete with a green roof, will be built at the community garden on the Adhurst Allotments to help encourage school visits and youth volunteering.

Just under £7,000 has been awarded to help produce four educational boards depicting the history of Steyning & Bramber Railway stations. The Steyning Line connected Horsham with the port of Shoreham-by-Sea, with connections to Brighton, for over 100 years until it closed in 1966. A route that was important for agricultural and industrial transportation, the line served the cement factory at Beeding and the brickworks at Southwater.

Meet the team...



This edition we catch up with Claire Tester, Planning Policy Manager at the National Park.

Three words that sum up your job in planning?

Diverse, challenging, satisfying.

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

My main role at the National Park is to lead the Planning Policy team that prepares and monitors our Local Plans and supporting documents. It means that I get to steer how we plan for development in the Park over the next two decades, making sure that new homes, workplaces and other necessary development meets the needs of our communities and visitors whilst also conserving and enhancing the Park's qualities as a nationally important landscape.

What appealed to you about working in planning?

During the mid-1980s my local community in Streat, near Plumpton was gathering evidence about the impacts of infilling a sand quarry with waste for a public inquiry. I got involved and in the process got hooked on planning!

Nearly 40 years later part of my remit is now minerals and waste planning in the National Park which includes Streat Sandpit (now infilled and fully restored) so it feels like I have gone full circle. During that time I have worked in Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey and Kent for County, District and Parish Councils, an AONB Partnership and now a National Park Authority. I have dealt with planning applications and prepared local and neighbourhood plans for every type of development you can think of – homes, workplaces, telecom masts, incinerators (yes including the one at Newhaven!), equestrian facilities, tourism accommodation and so on.

The beauty of working in planning is its diversity. It never gets boring because you are always learning new things.

Can you describe your typical day?

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Because planning is so diverse there is no such thing as a typical day. Since I started this role at the beginning of March my days have included getting to grips with our procurement rules so we can commission evidence base studies for the Local Plan Review; assessing potential development sites for that Review; recruiting new staff (and saying goodbye to old ones!); dealing with planning applications (left over from my previous role at Lewes); talking to Parish Councils about preparing 'parish priorities statements' (the new alternative to neighbourhood plans); and working with colleagues from other local planning authorities to address shared issues such as water and nutrient neutrality.

Best thing about working in planning for a National Park?

I previously worked for the High Weald AONB Partnership, which covers a similar sized area and has many of the same issues as the South Downs, but a staff team of only 7 FTE. I was the only planner in the team, so one of the things I really enjoy about working for the South Downs NPA is being back in a team of planners that I can share planning experiences and knowledge with.

What do you love about the South Downs National Park?

What isn't to love? I don't feel truly at home until I see those 'blunt, bow-headed, whale backed downs' in front of me. They have literally been the backdrop to my life so I find it hard to objectively analyse what is special about them. I just know that whenever I feel bad and worn down by life, walking on top of the South Downs surrounded by skylarks, wildflowers and the Weald stretched out in front of me can always bring me back to my happy place.

Currently reading/watching?

I'm a bit of a landscape history geek and I am currently reading 'Making One's Way In The World' by Martin Bell which explores how people have experienced landscapes over the centuries on ancient routeways.

Dream holiday destination and why?

A small, remote Scottish island, on my own. As an introvert I use up most of my social capacity at work, so on holiday I like being on my own in a beautiful landscape so I can recharge the batteries. When I do need company one of the benefits of working in protected landscapes is having contacts to visit in every holiday destination in the UK!

Picture credits

P1 Simon Carey Creative Commons; P2 left Lawrence Perry; P3 right Richard Reed; P4 left Freshwater Habitats Trust; P5 left Jim Stephenson; P6 right Rory Gardiner.