



South Downs Society

formerly Society of Sussex Downsmen

Protecting the Beauty of the Downs

HOUSING POLICY

OUR POSITION

We wish to minimise the land-take from new housing in order to conserve the special landscape qualities of the national park, and we seek to ensure that housing developments are located in the most sustainable sites, with brownfield and low landscape value sites developed first.

We will promote the provision of housing which residents of the national park can afford in order to sustain rural communities but the benefits must be assessed in the light of the landscape impact of each scheme and the level of affordable housing need in each area.

We will support good design, contributing to a 'sense of place', using materials that reflect or enhance locally distinctive building styles, and making prudent use of natural resources. We will support housing which complements its setting, seeking to ensure its assimilation into the landscape.

We will support housing which responds to the effects of, and reduces its contribution to, climate change.

HOW WILL WE HELP TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The above aims will be pursued through our responses to planning applications and our representations on development plans.

Affordable Housing

In the case of affordable housing, we will only support applications affecting greenfield sites where:

1. A full assessment has been made of the availability of previously developed land and buildings **AND**
2. There is a proven level of affordable housing need in the area (in that parish or an adjoining parish) which the application would satisfy **AND**
3. It is the best site available on all planning grounds, especially landscape impact, taking into account both the design and materials of the dwellings and their impact upon their setting.

Landscape Impact

In assessing housing development proposals, the following factors would be viewed favorably:

- no damaging visual impact from publicly accessible land
- the site is within a village or town, preferably using previously developed land or buildings
- sensitive conversion of significant existing buildings (even in the open countryside and outside existing settlements), subject to access to public transport, suitable road access and other sustainability factors, etc
- the development enhances the rural landscape or townscape of rural settlements or market towns.
- the proposal complies with a village design statement or similar community or neighbourhood plan and/or with a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment carried out by a district council.

We would usually object to:

- sites on the edge of (but beyond) existing built up areas
- new developments in hamlets or open countryside.