

Area Transport Strategy for South Downs National Park

Spatial Context

- 7.124 The South Downs National Park was designated in 2010 and includes parts of Adur, Arun, Chichester, Horsham, Mid Sussex Districts and Worthing Borough. The National Park extends beyond West Sussex to Winchester, Hampshire in the west and Eastbourne, East Sussex in the east.
- 7.125 The SDNP is a largely rural area. The settlement pattern in the West Sussex section of the National Park is comprised of two small towns; Midhurst and Petworth and many villages and hamlets. The population and economic statistics for the section of SDNP in West Sussex are shown within each of the Districts and Borough areas.
- 7.126 The SDNP is designated to protect the landscape but the area also includes a range of sites that are designated for their environmental qualities. The SDNP is also a designated International Dark Sky Reserve which aims to limit the effects of artificial light pollution.
- 7.127 The South Downs National Park Local Plan (SDNPLP) assessed development sites in Fernhurst, Midhurst and Petworth. Midhurst and Petworth total only a few hundred newly planned dwellings. The amount of housing planned is relatively small and plans for transport infrastructure improvements to mitigate development are limited due to the environmental constraints in the area which protect the area from major development.
- 7.128 The only strategic site in West Sussex identified in the SDNPLP is Shoreham Cement Works which is identified as an opportunity area with potential for mixed use development. Due to the challenges of developing this site, the National Park Authority intends to develop an Area Action Plan for the site that will set out how the site could be developed.

Transport Context

- 7.129 The A27 trunk road is the main east-west route that in places forms the southern boundary of the National Park. In some places, the A27 is also inside the National Park which will influence the approach to future improvements.
- 7.130 The A272 crosses the National Park and provides a link between Petworth and Midhurst and destinations that are outside the National Park boundary. However, the infrastructure on the section of A272 west of A24 is, in places, unsuitable for the largest heavy goods traffic.
- 7.131 The A24, A29, A280 and A283 also provide key routes through the National Park which form part of the Primary Route Network, linking coastal communities with those further north in the County and beyond.
- 7.132 In Midhurst and Petworth the historic built up area acts as a capacity pinch point on the highway network. The options for major highway improvements to address this issue are limited due to the environmental constraints of the area.

- 7.133 The Arun Valley Line provides rail connections between the National Park in West Sussex and the south (destinations such as Barnham, Chichester, Worthing and Southampton), and the north/east (destinations such as Horsham, Crawley and London). The Brighton Main Line also provides a rail connection to the National Park via Hassocks station which is close to the SDNP.
- 7.134 The bus network in SDNP is largely financially supported by the Local Authorities. Services can be infrequent, and some areas have no bus service at all.
- 7.135 The cycle network in the South Downs National Park includes Centurion Way, the Downs Link and the Barnham to Bignor route as well as the South Downs Way National Trail. These routes are mainly off-carriageway and shared use. They are more leisure routes rather than utilitarian, even though a few commuters may choose to use them to travel to employment or connect with train services to go further.
- 7.136 Equestrianism is important to the economy of the South Downs National Park as it provides jobs and attracts business. Not only are there numerous private and commercial riding schools, livery yards, studs and their supporting ancillary businesses, but there are also major tourist attractions such as the Goodwood and Fontwell racecourses and Hickstead All England Jumping Course.

Key Issues

- 7.137 Travel behaviour in the South Downs National Park is currently dominated by car travel while public transport and active travel modes are not seen as viable options for many journeys which leads to a number of issues. The current key transport issues in the South Downs National Park are:
- Congestion on the A27 during peak periods causes re-routing onto less suitable routes, through rural areas, to avoid congestion;
 - Overflow commuter parking within surrounding areas of rural train stations;
 - Traffic-related air quality management area at Midhurst;
 - Limited or no access to public transport;
 - There is a dominance of north to south bus routes that run through the National Park but very few east to west routes;
 - The cycle network is discontinuous and does not meet user needs;
 - Severance caused by the A27, the A24 and other main roads as well as the Arun Valley Line;
 - Limited access to services and service centres including market towns;
 - Limited access to the rural area for leisure and recreation by all modes of transport;
 - Inappropriate speeds on rural lanes.

Transport Strategy

- 7.138 Our transport strategy for the South Downs National Park is to encourage use of active travel modes by improving active travel infrastructure within

and to larger settlements such as Midhurst, Petersfield Chichester and Worthing. We want to explore the potential for new active travel crossing facilities of roads on the CSRN such as A24 and A283 to improve access to the South Downs.

- 7.139 To improve shared transport services, we will explore new service delivery models that may help to improve connections to nearby towns such as Dynamic Demand Responsive Transport services and undertake pilot projects to test the concept in areas such as north west of Chichester. We will also give greater priority to shared transport services at junctions on the A24 in the medium term.
- 7.140 Where it is necessary to deliver highway improvements to keep traffic moving, we will deliver small scale 'tactical' highway improvements and use traffic management techniques within existing highway land that will encourage traffic to use the CSRN. We will also consult stakeholders on the principle of removing part of A272 from the PRN to discourage use of this route. Improvements will also be designed sensitively to respect the qualities of the National Park designation.
- 7.141 Our approach to managing the network will also use behavioural initiatives to improve air quality in Midhurst and tackle inappropriate traffic speeds and use of unsuitable rural routes.
- 7.142 To encourage the shift to electric vehicles, we will initially facilitate the provision of on-street electric vehicle charging infrastructure in areas near Pulborough and Storrington where communities rely on on-street parking.

Short term (2022-27) priorities for the South Downs National Park

- On-street electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the Pulborough and Storrington areas
- Active travel infrastructure 'quick wins'
- Small scale 'tactical' highway improvements
- Supporting local services and access to services through innovation
- Working closely with the SDNPA to identify transport improvements which improve access to services and benefit visitors to the SDNP
- Remove A272 from Primary Route Network and associated signing

Medium term (2027-32) priorities for the South Downs National Park

- North – south sustainable transport corridor along the route of the A24 (including active travel facilities)
- Pedestrian and cycle crossings of the A24
- Air Quality Action Plan measures in Midhurst
- Supporting a bus network that is affordable and takes account of accessibility issues and the need to provide social inclusion and travel choices
- A number of piloting options are being looked at for DDRT services that are likely to include areas of the national park (north west Chichester for example) with a view to rolling this out to other rural areas if these pilot schemes are successful

