

MID SUSSEX
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Statement of Common Ground

**Mid Sussex District Council and South
Downs National Park Authority**

July 2024

1. List of parties involved

Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC)
South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA)

2. Signatories



Date: 22nd July 2024
Mid Sussex District Council
Ann Biggs, Assistant Director for Planning and Sustainable Economy



Date: 22nd July 2024
South Downs National Park Authority
Claire Tester, Planning Policy Manager

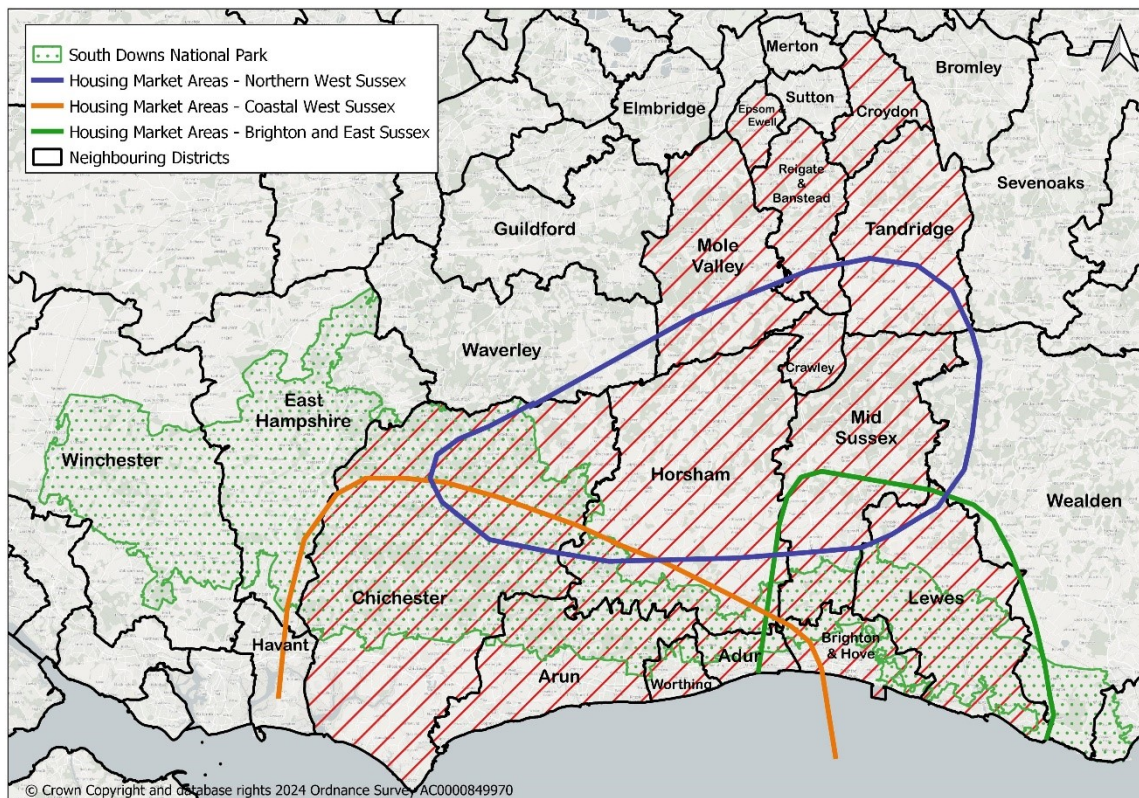
3. Strategic Geography

Mid Sussex District is situated within the county of West Sussex. Approximately 11% of Mid Sussex District falls within the South Downs National Park. The boundary is to the south of Burgess Hill, Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint.

MSDC is one of the local authorities that make up the Greater Brighton City Region, along with Arun, Worthing, Adur, Crawley, Lewes, and Brighton & Hove. With the exception of Crawley, parts of these neighbouring authorities also fall within the South Downs National Park.

Both MSDC and SDNPA are members of the West Sussex and Greater Brighton Strategic Planning Board, which has agreed a Memorandum of Understanding and a Local Strategic Statement (LSS). The LSS sets out strategic objectives and spatial priorities to support regeneration and sustainable growth.

Mid Sussex falls primarily within the Northern West Sussex Housing Market Area (NWS HMA), which also covers Crawley Borough Council and Horsham District Council. This has been confirmed by an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA, 2021), though the SHMA also recognises an overlap in the southern part of Mid Sussex with the Coastal West Sussex HMA and the Brighton and East Sussex HMA. The Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 excludes the part of the district within the South Downs National Park, and therefore excludes much of the Coastal West Sussex HMA and Brighton and East Sussex HMA that extends into Mid Sussex.



MSDC and SDNPA are at different stages in their Local Plan preparation, with SDNPA aiming to carry out a Regulation 18 consultation on a draft plan in early 2025. This Statement of Common Ground demonstrates that the duty to co-operate on strategic matters has been met during the preparation of the MSDC District Plan 2021-2039, in advance of the Plan's examination.

4. Strategic Matters

SDNPA's strategic cross-boundary priorities are as follows:

- Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Park and its setting.
- Nature recovery and making nature bigger, better and more joined up.
- Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.
- New homes including traveller accommodation and affordable homes for local communities.
- The local economy and jobs particularly in land management and the visitor economy.
- Sustainable travel into and across the South Downs National Park.
- Green and grey infrastructure serving communities in and around the South Downs National Park.

MSDC and SDNPA are signatories on separate Statements of Common Ground regarding water neutrality and the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC.

The Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 contains updated policies on nature recovery, climate change, the rural economy, sustainable travel, and infrastructure. The parties agree that there has been effective ongoing engagement on these policies as they have been prepared, leading to several policy amendments at the request of SDNPA. There are no outstanding matters for co-operation on these topics.

Strategic matters to be discussed in more detail below:

- Housing need including gypsy and traveller accommodation
- Impact on the South Downs National Park and its setting

Housing need

MSDC has an objectively assessed housing need for 19,620 dwellings over the District Plan period (2021-2039). In addition to completions since 2021 and commitments (existing allocations and permissions), this need will be met through the creation of three sustainable communities, a range of smaller housing sites, and an evidence-based windfall allowance. The District Plan provides an oversupply of 996 dwellings, adding resilience to housing delivery in Mid Sussex, should any commitments not be delivered as expected.

In the South Downs National Park, landscape conservation takes precedence over housing need. The adopted South Downs Local Plan (July 2019) provides for approximately 4,750 dwellings over the plan period, 2014-2033. Ongoing work on

the South Downs Local Plan Review will determine future housing supply over an extended plan period.

The parties agree:

1. The full identified housing need for Mid Sussex will be met through the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039, excluding land in South Downs National Park.
2. Of the 16 pitches for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople required over the Mid Sussex plan period, 13 will be provided through existing commitments. The District Plan allocates 6 further pitches at the significant site at Sayers Common – Policy DPSC3. This provides a small oversupply which is expected to come forward in the later years of the Plan, while the other significant sites are expected to provide financial contributions towards off-site provision.
3. The adopted South Downs Local Plan allocates a small number of sites in the National Park for gypsy and traveller accommodation, safeguards existing authorised sites from other uses, and allows intensification of existing sites. The Plan identifies no remaining unmet need in Mid Sussex, and SDNPA has not requested MSDC's assistance in meeting the National Park's needs for gypsy and traveller accommodation.

Impact on the South Downs National Park

The parties agree:

4. Site allocations in the Mid Sussex District Plan have been assessed through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and a site selection methodology has been applied. MSDC shared and invited comments from SDNPA on the methodology and conclusions of its site selection process ahead of Regulation 18 consultation on the District Plan.
5. MSDC has prepared a background paper to support the District Plan 2021-2039 that assesses the potential impact of the SHELAA sites considered to potentially be within the setting of the South Downs National Park. This background paper has been reviewed by SDNPA and comments received have been taken into account.
6. Policy DPC5: Setting of the South Downs National Park ensures that development on land that contributes to the characteristics of South Downs National Park will not detract from the visual and special qualities of the

National Park. Landscape assessments may be required with planning applications, and MSDC will assess relevant applications with regard to the South Downs Partnership Management Plan, South Downs Local Plan and other adopted planning documents and strategies. The final wording of Policy DPC5 is the result of effective and ongoing engagement with SDNPA.

7. There is no definitive area classified as the setting of the National Park. However, the parties agree that land allocated at Sayers Common may form part of the visual setting of the South Downs National Park and developments should be carefully designed to avoid adverse impacts. A proposed modification to policies DPSC3 and DPSC5 to include reference to the setting of the South Downs National Park will be agreed and put forward for consideration by the Inspector.
8. Development at Sayers Common will require appropriate landscape assessment and design, in accordance with site allocation policies and other policies in the Plan such as DPC5. The District Plan requires comprehensive masterplanning to be completed before planning permission is granted, and SDNPA will be consulted as this work progresses. There will be continued ongoing engagement between the parties to ensure that the setting of the South Downs National Park is protected.

5. Governance Arrangements

The authorities are committed to working positively together, sharing information and best practice throughout the plan preparation phase and beyond.

This co-operation and collaboration take place at senior officer and technical officer level. This Statement of Common Ground is signed at Head of Service level and will be reviewed at each key stage of plan-making. It will be updated to reflect progress made through effective co-operation.

In terms of governance, the parties agree:

9. MSDC and SDNPA have engaged on an ongoing basis throughout preparation of the District Plan 2021-2039 and consider that the duty to co-operate has been met.
10. The parties will continue to work collaboratively on plan preparation and evidence, whilst acknowledging each other's timetables and timescales.

11. They respect each other's right to develop their own plans that fit the specific circumstances of the local authority's communities.
12. The parties will meet at member and officer level to review emerging evidence and respond to new issues and changing circumstances.
13. The parties will update this SoCG as progress continues through the preparation of the local plans and development plan documents for each of the authorities.

6. Timetable for review and ongoing co-operation

LPA	Present Plan Adoption	Proposed Plan Review Date	Regulation 18 Date	Regulation 19 Date	Target Submission Date
Mid Sussex District Plan	March 2018	2022-2024	November 2022	January 2024	Summer 2024
South Downs Local Plan	July 2019	2024-2026	Winter 2024	Winter 2025	Summer 2026