



THE MIDHURST SOCIETY

West Sussex Transport Plan 2022 to 2036

Draft for consultation

Extracts with relevance for Midhurst (part of SDNP area)

3. Vision and Objectives

3.1 Our vision is for a West Sussex transport network in 2036 that works for communities by helping to address the spatial economic challenges of the County, level up the coastal economy and provide access to employment and services countywide.

7. Area Transport Strategy for South Downs National Park

Spatial Context

7.124 The South Downs National Park was designated in 2010.

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.

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.**

4. Thematic Transport Strategies

Road Network

Network Classification

4.49 The County Council is responsible for ensuring that all infrastructure on the Primary Route Network (PRN) is appropriate for access to 40 tonne vehicles. There is currently a section of the PRN (A272 between A24 and Hampshire boundary) which is not suitable for the largest heavy goods traffic and is largely within the South Downs National Park which is protected, so limits the scope for improving the route. As PRN routes are now determined locally in consultation with neighbouring authorities, this presents an opportunity to reclassify this section of the PRN on environmental grounds.

4.51 The County Strategic Road Network (CSRN) generally provides the fastest and most direct routes between key destinations where priority is given to vehicles. Parts of the CSRN are already under pressure in a number of places such as parts of the A23 and A27 trunk roads which are the responsibility of Highways England, as well as parts of the A22, A24, A259, A264, A272, A284 and A2300 which are the responsibility of the County Council. **The Government has recognised this and through designation of a Major Road Network shown on figure 4 in Appendix C has sought to direct funding towards the most strategically important local roads.**

4.52 East-west routes can be particularly problematic. **Some routes also fulfil multiple roles due to the confluence of strategic and local trips that can conflict. When traffic flow exceeds capacity and results in congestion, this provides a reduced level of service which can lead to traffic rerouting via less suitable routes or peak-spreading.** Traffic rerouting can be particularly contentious as less suitable routes are often through rural and residential areas where the environmental impacts of increasing volumes of traffic lead to community concerns. If traffic grows in future, these existing issues may worsen and new issues may emerge on the network that require intervention. The challenge is to improve the road network and reduce use of less suitable routes while protecting the environment and increasing sustainable transport mode share. Some of these corridors are also used by buses and active travel modes so improvements will also create opportunities to enhance infrastructure for these modes. Where improvements are proposed to trunk roads that are managed by Highways England, this will be subject to their decision-making and processes.

5. Area Transport Strategies

South Downs National Park

5.7 Our transport strategy for the South Downs National Park is to:

- deliver improvements within existing highway land;

- facilitate the provision of on-street electric vehicle charging infrastructure, initially in the Pulborough and Storrington areas;
- deliver small scale 'tactical' highway improvements (e.g. signal upgrades that could include bus vehicle detection);
- consult on removing a section of A272 from the Primary Route Network;**
- improve active travel infrastructure;
- pilot new delivery models for shared transport services;
- use behavioural initiatives to tackle air quality

7. Area Transport Strategies

Transport Context

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.

7.132 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.

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.

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 Dynamic Demand Road Network (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
- Centurion Way extension north cycle route, project led by SDNPA

Long term (2032-36) priorities for the South Downs National Park

- Potentially local highway capacity enhancements (subject to need)
- Creating a transport network and transport improvements that respect rural needs, the rural landscape and rural character
- Creating a safer transport network in rural areas
- Developing opportunities to improve access to, and within the National Park particularly for walking, cycling and equestrianism
- Developing opportunities to improve and protect public rights of way through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)
- Seek to close footpath level crossings where alternatives can be used
- Midhurst to Petersfield cycle route

Harvey Tordoff
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