



## **SOUTH DOWNS NETWORK**

*Working for the best possible National Park*

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Environmental Assessment Team  
Department for Communities and Local Government Zone 1/J6  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

20 January, 2012

Dear Madam / Sir,

### **Response to the Environmental report on the revocation of the South East Plan**

The South Downs Network is an alliance of around 50 environmental, conservation and local amenity organisations in the South Downs National Park area. Its purpose is to share information and best practice, to help prevent damaging development while supporting sustainable development in and around the National Park.

The South Downs Network is concerned that the full implications of the revocation of the South East Plan have not been thoroughly explored within the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). One concern is that cross boundary working under the new proposals is likely to be less well co-ordinated than under the strategic framework of the South East Plan. For example, this could make the provision of green infrastructure harder to realise, particularly across many local authority boundaries.

One clear area of policy that will be lost in the revocation of the South East Plan and not mentioned within the SEA, is the loss of protection for the settings of the National Parks and AONBs in the South East. Policy C1 and Policy C3 currently include the wording: “planning decision should also have regard to the setting of the Park” [C1] and “planning decisions should have regard to their setting” [C3]. This protection is not afforded by the draft National Planning Policy Framework, nor is there any guarantee that it will be picked up by all local planning authorities. Therefore an important level of protection could be lost.

During the Examination in Public into the South East Plan, the Inspector accepted that these policies were sufficiently different from national policies on nationally designated landscapes to

warrant being included within the South East Plan. Our members at the time felt that these were important policies to include because of the pressure for development within the South East, combined with the closeness of many AONBs and National Parks to large centres of population, meant that there was a real likelihood that significant damage could be done to the setting of the region's AONBs and National Parks. This pressure will not change with the revocation of the South East Plan and therefore it is important that some way is found to continue this protection.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Tony Whitbread

Chair  
South Downs Network