



To:  
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6<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021

Dear Mr Waller-Gutierrez

### **THE DESIGN GUIDE (DRAFT) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

Please see our submission of the following pages.

#### **About the South Downs Network (SDN)**

The SDN was formed over 30 years ago to campaign for the formation of the National Park and the protection of the environment. The SDN is made up of over 40 independent groups and charities across the South Downs National Park including organisations such as CPRE and the Wildlife Trusts in Hampshire & Sussex. We share information and campaign for the best possible environment to protect the beauty and landscape of the National Park and its environs with the aim of a sustainable future and meeting the carbon challenge.

More information:

[About Us – South Downs Network](#)

[Our members – South Downs Network](#)

Yours sincerely

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## Thanks to the SDNPA

The SPD has clearly involved a lot of hard work and has much excellent content but to be useful to its target audience needs amendments to help applicants provide the SDNP with the outcomes it is seeking to achieve.

Here are our detailed comments:

### Zero Carbon Building Design

The development of the SDNPA's Sustainable Construction SPD which aims to reduce CO2 emissions by at least 20% is to be supported but we hope the Design SPD can be more ambitious.

We take our advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) 2021 Progress Report to Parliament of 24th June 2021: The CCC's annual assessment of UK progress in reducing emissions and biennial assessment of progress in adapting to climate change.

In June 2021 the Government's CCC<sup>1</sup> issued a very important report. In the summary to the report the CCC made 5 points. The second of which was:

*"An ambitious Heat and Buildings Strategy, that works for consumers, is urgently needed".*

They also said with reference to their 50-point recommendations for England:

*"Bring forward proposed plans to address overheating risk in homes through Building Regulations".*

We realise that the government has not acted on this advice yet, but we are encouraged by Government statements in the lead-up to COP26 scheduled to be held in Glasgow from 1-12 November 2021.

Even without the backing of government legislation we believe the Design SPD could appeal to developers to go that one stage further and actually build zero carbon buildings from now onwards!

In June 2019, the Government set a commitment in the Climate Change Act 2008 for the United Kingdom to reach 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. More than two thirds of councils across the country have now declared a climate emergency. However, the declaration is just the start. Planning authorities must now start appealing to developers to do the right thing and ensure their buildings have net zero emissions.

We believe there is nothing legally preventing the National Park from asking ALL developers to include in their planning application:

***A statement, backed by technical information, of how they intend to achieve net zero carbon emissions with the proposed development.***

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<sup>1</sup> The Climate Change Committee (CCC) is an independent, statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008.

We are not talking about the impossible. Please don't forget that the UK Government was going to implement zero carbon homes until 2015 when the [Treasury axes plans to make new homes carbon neutral from 2016](#).

There is help around to achieve Zero Carbon homes. See Appendix B for our reference examples.

In any event the Design SPD should provide a clearer focus to the existing policy and guidance. These documents should be highlighter at the beginning of the document:

1. **Policy SD48** - sets minimum energy efficiency and water use standards for residential and non-residential uses. Policy SD48 also requires development proposals to incorporate proportionate measures to address climate change adaptation and mitigation.
2. **Sustainable Construction SPD**: - Provides further guidance to support the implementation of the Local Plan policies:
  - Policy SD2: Ecosystem Services,
  - Policy SD3 Major Development,
  - Policy SD22: Parking Provision (where it relates to electric vehicle charging),
  - Policy SD48 Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources.
3. The SPD therefore supports Local Plan Objective 6: To adapt well to and mitigate against the impacts of climate change and other pressures. It covers a number of detailed matters relating to new development including energy and water efficiency, the use of low or zero carbon energy, use of sustainable materials, minimising waste and measures for adapting to climate change.
4. **Policy SD2: Ecosystem Services**:
  - a) Sustainably manage land and water environments
  - b) Protect and provide more, better and joined up natural habitats
  - c) Conserve water resources and improve water quality
  - d) Manage and mitigate the risk of flooding
  - e) Improve the National Park's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change
  - f) Increase the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means
  - g) Conserve and enhance soils
  - h) Support the sustainable production and use of food, forestry and raw materials
  - i) Reduce levels of pollution
  - j) Improve opportunities for peoples' health and wellbeing; and
  - k) Provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources which contribute to the special qualities of the National Park.
5. **Ecosystem Services** Technical Advice Note (TAN) – this assists and guides the implementation of Policy SD2.

## Solar Panels

We are concerned with this phrase in 3.1.3.4: "in the most visually sensitive locations, PV may not be appropriate". If solar panels were the only way of providing energy from the sun this would be appropriate but we understand there are now a number of suppliers of solar **tiles**. The image below shows how closely they match slate tiles. At least in areas where slate tiles are common, would it not be reasonable to include a reference to solar tiles and not just solar panels? Here is a link to one such supplier of solar tiles: <https://www.gb-sol.co.uk/products/pvslates/default.htm>



Also, buildings should be designed to accommodate battery storage units.

## National Model Design Code & the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

It is good to see references to the National Model Design Code & the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), but we would have expected referencing to such paragraphs as:

"79. To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby".

"80. Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes .....” In particular we would draw your attention to: "e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it: - is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and - would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area".

and

Section 12. (Achieving well-designed places) in detail as there are 10 detailed paragraphs (126 to 136) covering design.

## Key Design Expectations

As the SPD says in the introduction, - for each issue in Part 3, there are blue boxes which distil the SDNPA's key design expectations. The South Downs Network have listed these in Appendix A. There are 64 in total. Along with the 79 policies of the National Park Local Plan and the other SPDs together with the NPPF (223 paragraphs) and the National Design code there are quite a lot of items to check through to ensure compliance in any application. To help the applicant, whether householder or developer/architect, it would be very helpful if these expectations could be listed in the form of a checklist for ease of reference and for cross checking compliance. We believe therefore a simple checklist in this design SPD would be by helpful to SDNPA officers, applicants, and local organisations.

## Design for villages and towns

We recommend that a revised Design SPD include 3 special sections:

Large towns - such as Petersfield and Lewes. Compared with most areas in the National Park these are medium size urban areas and should be treated as such. Special attention should be made for their conservation area and neighbourhood plans.

Villages - we understand there are 176 villages in the National Park and many of these should receive special treatment because of their rural setting &/or conservation area requirements. Design of developments in these villages will be very different to those in large towns. Accordingly, guidance should be clearly focused for those settlements.

Rural settings - For those developments not in towns or villages special care must be taken to ensure they comply with the NPPF design requirements. We would wish to avoid this type of change:

Crowlink: Development of Buildings in the Heritage Coast Area



This property was given permission by the SDNPA in 2018 - see SDNP/18/03799/HOUS

*The building circled in red was the original cottage. How could the SDNPA allow such a large expansion in an exposed position?*

## Tourist developments

We are pleased to see that the Design Guide covers Offices, Industrial, Commercial, Retail and Public Buildings. We are concerned the SPD doesn't cover the development of 'tourist sites either for events or for those of a more permanent basis like Drusillas near Alfriston. Drusillas has been an asset to the

local area for a number of years and is located near a Trunk Road that avoids cars travelling through narrow lanes to access it. Hopefully, with new bus investment, Drusillas will now be served by a regular bus service in addition to the local Cuckmere bus service. However, without specific guidance, tourist sites could be developed in locations that could be injurious to the local community or the landscape. Design guidance is needed for campsites and major exhibition sites to ensure that they are located in the most appropriate location and cause the minimum visual and noise impact for the local community. The Design SPD should have particular relevance to major exhibition sites. In these cases, planning applications must be guided to ensure sustainable transport rather than attracting tourists exclusively via car transport. For example, we wish to avoid the noise and emissions from car transport from events such as Boomtown Festivals which we understand are supported by the Park. Here is an ariel photo of the Boomtown event in 2018:



*2018 photo: This festival event shows many hundreds of acres of cars parked for something over 60,000 attendees at Cheesefoot Head near Winchester in the National Park. A more sustainable solution needs to be found for such events.*

## **North Street Development – Lewes**

We may be mistaken but there appears to be no reference to the North Street development in Lewes.

This is 15-acre brownfield site to the immediate north west of the centre of Lewes. It is one of the most significant development sites in the South Downs National Park. The National Park has seen fit to include a special section about North Street in its local plan (see page 177) and includes a special policy - SD57. The redevelopment of the Lewes 'North Street Quarter' was embodied in a planning application approved in 2016 by the National Park. After the extended period of consultations and planning applications leading to the permission granted in 2016 the main developer, Santon North Street Ltd (owned by MAS REI) has pulled out. We understand the site has been sold to Human Nature who aims to submit a different scheme for planning permission in the early part of 2022.

We recommend the SDNPA visit the [Phoenix Project Design Festival](#) which takes place on 10-12th September 2021. Human Nature are working on plans for a new walkable, renewably powered, green neighbourhood on the former Phoenix industrial site in Lewes, East Sussex.

Design of this very sensitive and important site in the National Park is a key consideration and we believe the SDNPA DESIGN GUIDE SPD should be updated to recognise the importance of this large brownfield site. Currently the Guide does not reference brownfield site development. We believe a different approach is required for the development of this site than any other brownfield site in the National Park including the redevelopment of the former Syngenta site near Fernhurst.

We commend these articles/reports:

[‘Where should we Build New Homes?’](#) by the RTPI

[Ensuring Responsive Development on Previously Developed Land](#) by CPRE

[Better Brownfield](#) by Policy Exchange/Create Streets

### **New agricultural buildings**

There is no mention at all of new agricultural buildings. We agree with the Friends of the South Downs when they say, -

“It is crucial omission, as the huge modern agricultural sheds, built of unsympathetic materials and of industrial appearance, together with their associated large areas of concrete yards, can have an enormous adverse impact on the landscape, in particular views from the South Downs. This impact can be exacerbated when WEPs are produced with little planning input meaning plans are not landscape led. This guidance could be made more useful for those drafting WEPs. The SDNPA seems resigned to the notion that little can be done about agricultural buildings. For instance, in the report on the Iford Farm development, the design officer’s comment was simply that the proposed vast sheds had to be accepted for what they are. But even if it’s difficult to resist such developments, surely there are ways to mitigate their effects? For instance, guidance could be given on siting to minimise their impact; subdued colours, such as dark green or brown, would be preferable to the usual conspicuous white or grey; sympathetic cladding materials, such as timber, could be used, and maybe even green roofs; screening by tree planting, mounding and other landscaping should be required. Shiny roofs are best avoided where visible from the South Downs”.

### **Public footpaths/bridleways**

We agree with the Friends of the South Downs when they say, -

“The guidance here is insufficient. Where rights of way pass through housing schemes, developers typically provide these to the minimum possible width. There are countless locations where the only pedestrian access to the South Downs from towns and villages is along long and narrow alleys between houses and tall fences. These alleys are difficult to find, intimidating to walkers and encourage crime. They discourage people from visiting the Downs on foot. Section 1.2 (i) states “The routes and amenity of existing rights of way should be respected.” This wording is obscure and unhelpful. Much clearer and firmer guidance needs to be given. The SPD should explain that rights of way should be integrated into the ‘circulation plan’ and layout of developments so that they are inviting to pedestrians and benefit from natural surveillance. They should be of generous width, attractively landscaped and well signposted”.

## Cycle infrastructure design

We are pleased to see references in the document to cycling but unless we are mistaken there seems to be no reference to the government's guidance for local authorities on designing high-quality, safe cycle infrastructure: [Cycle infrastructure design \(LTN 1/20\)](#)

We suggest a modification to the SPD to cover cycling infrastructure design with specific reference to the government's design guidelines.

## Garages/Housing Development/Sustainable Transport

We agree with the statement "Garages are a very inefficient way of accommodating cars as research shows that only around half are actually used for that purpose". We would suggest that the priority should be for secure cycle/mobility scooter storage rather than for car storage. Reducing the number of garages can improve the design options for innovative layouts of housing estates rather than providing individual garages for each house. In the main larger towns of the Park such as Petersfield and Lewes there should be a move away from the conventional concept of 'semi-detached housing plus garage and front/back garden. The Park should encourage the design of developments of houses and apartments accessed via traffic free streets and pathways. Both these towns have good rail links. Hopefully, with new investment from the government via the 'Bus Back Better' programme, they will be served by more frequent bus services.

## Integrated cooling & heating systems

We noticed that there is a reference to both air source and ground source heat pumps in just one paragraph. Also, we noticed that apart from the reference to cooling from shaded areas there is no reference to the design of homes to ensure that they are cooled to cope with ever increasing summer temperatures in England. The design SPD should include reference to this important factor.

Also, bearing in mind the increasing problem of climate change and the need to move over to zero carbon systems of heating and powering homes and businesses there should be a greater focus on the design and location of air source and ground source heat pumps. The building design must include a ground floor site for a heat pump with any appropriate noise baffles/noise absorbing panels. Here is one example of an acoustic enclosure: <https://www.viron.co.uk/domestic/>

For apartment blocks ground source heating should be considered with the pipe network located under grassed area, Interiors must be designed to accommodate the larger sized radiators. Where large arrays of solar panels with batteries can be accommodated electric heating should be considered.

We believe it can't be just on a best-efforts basis and entirely left up to the developer. Firm guidance should be provided.

The government has announced that **by 2025**, all new homes will be banned from installing gas and oil boilers and will instead be heated by low-carbon alternatives.

Accordingly, we would hope that your Design SPD should be modified to include requirements for the provisioning of houses with alternatives to gas central heating. We do not think it's enough to rely upon the fact that it 'might be possible' to convert a boiler to hydrogen rather than natural gas. Design guidance should specifically require all buildings to be built to renewable energy standards. We also suggest the SPD be updated to include the design of community/district heating systems for larger development.

## **'Designing in' bus infrastructure**

We are concerned that there are 99 references to car parking but NO references to buses in the document. As you will know the government has produced a white paper entitled Bus Back Better. As a result of publishing this document the government is now asking highway authorities to submit bus service improvement plans (BSIPs). Part of these BSIPs is to improve infrastructure such as:

- bus turning areas
- bus access to housing estates and shops
- bus lanes
- bus stops and lay-bys
- bus stations

We would ask that you include design advice and support for bus infrastructure.

To support our case, we would refer you to Transport for the South East (TfSE) who are developing an implementation plan to encourage the provision of sustainable transport and one of their themes is the provision of 'transport hubs.' We think it is fair to say that we can cross reference bus stations to transport hubs.

The provision of better bus and rail services are an integral part of the strategy for tackling climate change and we would welcome your support in the Design SPD for all aspects of sustainable transport.

## **Light pollution**

Thank you for making reference to:

- The South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve, (designated in May 2016)
- Dark Night Skies in section 15 of the Design SPD
- The Dark Night Skies Technical Advice Note (TAN)<sup>2</sup>
- Street Lighting General Design in the Design SPD<sup>3</sup>

There is considerable light pollution in the small number of larger towns of the National Park and on the edge of the National Park. However, in many of the areas of the National Park there is little light pollution. In our opinion inappropriate street lighting causes considerable light pollution but fortunately many of the 176 parish council areas in the National Park do not have street lighting. This helps maintain the Dark Skies status of the Park. We would hope that the Design SPD can reinforce the need to avoid light pollution and the provision of street lighting where none has existed before<sup>4</sup>. Sadly, and despite the existence of the National Park's Dark Skies policy, light pollution is increasing. We therefore

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<sup>2</sup> The TAN uses the sky quality measurements categorising into a number of dark zones. These are shown in Figure 2 of the Dark Night Skies TAN. The zones reflect the quality of the sky overhead, the IDSR designation and the general level of street lighting.

<sup>3</sup> There is no statutory requirement on local authorities in the UK to provide public lighting and the law states that 'the highways act empowers local authorities to light roads but does not place a duty to do so'

<sup>4</sup> Except where it is necessary for safety purposes.

ask you to strengthen your Design SPD to emphasize the need for the reduction in light pollution and compliance with the National Park's Dark Skies policy.

Here are some examples of current light pollution problems:

1. The National Park planning permissions being given for housing and commercial buildings in rural areas which often include the provision of large picture windows which caused light to spill out over the surrounding countryside. The holiday lodges at Swanborough are a good example of light pollution spilling out from the lodge accommodation picture windows:



2. On a larger scale the light pollution from the Amex Football Stadium (part of the site is in the SDNP) is an extreme example. Lighting is used in winter months to grow the grass:



Light Pollution at the Amex Stadium © Steve Geilliot

This photo features in this article: [Light pollution by CPRE Sussex](#)

3. Installation of lighting without planning permission which adds to light pollution. Below is an example of extreme pollution of lighting which has been installed at the front of Lewes railway station without planning permission:



4. The installation of street lighting on new housing estates in the SDNP where the surrounding area has no street lighting. Over intensive street lighting which is exacerbated by high level LED lighting and or badly designed street lighting. Here are some examples of articles on the subject:

[Public Health England issues LED street lighting warning](#)  
[LED streetlights reduce insect populations by 50%](#) by the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

### **Affordable Housing**

There is only one mention of affordable housing in the Design SPD. This is despite SDNPA having a policy aiming at the provision of 50% affordable housing. Affordable housing should take much greater prominence in the Design SPD.

Many of the illustrations used in the SPD are clearly not of affordable housing. Indeed, the front cover of the SPD illustrates housing at Chandler's Wharf (repeated in fig 13.2) where properties sell for over £1,000,000!

It would be much better if the SPD showed designs of houses which could practically be affordable. We would refer you to the [Lewes District Council's Affordable Housing SPD](#)

The Park's "duty to seek to foster social and economic well-being" should be reflected in good design examples for affordable housing but this is missing, despite it being a key policy that 50% of housing should be affordable.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

We are pleased that neighbourhood planning gets a mention in in section 1.20. However, we are very concerned that the importance of neighbourhood plans is diminished by the wording in this paragraph 1.20. Please would you amend the paragraph to point out that neighbourhood plans are a statutory planning document and carry the same weight as local plans. As such a "neighbourhood development plan" is part of the statutory development plan for the area it covers, and it has the same legal status as a local plan.

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the [Localism Act](#).

The plan-making framework is defined in the NPPF paragraph 18: Policies to address non-strategic matters should be included in local plans that contain both strategic and non-strategic policies, and/or in local or **neighbourhood plans** that contain just non-strategic policies. See also paragraph 21, 29 and 37.

### Rural Highway Design

Thank you for making reference to this important aspect of design in section 7.1 'RURAL HIGHWAY DESIGN' We support your reference to 'Roads in the South Downs'. However, we believe this document and any reference in the proposed design SPD needs to be updated to take account of safety for non-motorised vehicle users. We think reference should be made to walking, cycling, horse riding and mobility scooter used on rural lanes in the National Park. You might say, - 'What has safety to do with design?' We believe that road design has a direct relationship with safety. Your reference in Fig 12.39 (Appropriate, low key, streetscape design in Buriton) partly alludes to this.

What is missing is reference to the use of [Quiet Lane designation](#) in association with development in the National Park to avoid the expansion of 'rat runs' on previously quiet lanes. An example of a potential 'rat run' being developed is in association with the planning permission recently given by the National Park to the [fourth arm of the roundabout near Lancing College](#). Without a Quiet Lane designation Coombe Lane could see a significant traffic increase:



We would also commend our own report on [Quiet Lanes](#).

See appendices following

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## **Appendix A**

### List of Key Design Expectations:

<b>No.</b>	<b>key design expectations</b>
1	1.1 LANDSCAPE STRATEGY
2	1.2 ACCESS AND PERMEABILITY
3	1.3 ORIENTATION
4	1.3 ORIENTATION
5	1.4 DENSITY
6	1.5 LEGIBILITY AND STREET HIERARCHY
7	1.6 PERIMETER BLOCKS
8	1.7 ACTIVE FRONTAGES
9	1.8 THE COUNTRYSIDE/SETTLEMENT EDGE
10	2.1 ENHANCING LOCAL CHARACTER
11	2.2 RESTORING POSITIVE CHARACTER
12	3. DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS
13	4. HOUSEHOLD EXTENSIONS
14	4.1 ROOF EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS
15	4.2 FRONT, SIDE AND REAR EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS
16	5.1 SINGLE DWELLINGS
17	5.2 FARMSTEAD DEVELOPMENTS
18	5.3 RURAL HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION
19	5.4 SHOP FRONTS
20	5.5 NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
21	5.6 MULTI-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
22	6. SCALE
23	6.1 GRAIN
24	6.2 MASSING
25	7. PUBLIC REALM
26	7.1 RURAL HIGHWAY DESIGN
27	7.2 STREETS
28	7.3 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE (POS)
29	7.4 PLAY SPACES
30	7.5 NATURAL SURVEILLANCE
31	8. PARKING & SERVICES
32	8.1 PARKING
33	8.2 SERVICES AND ANCILLARY STRUCTURES
34	9. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
35	9.1 CONSERVING AND ENHANCING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (GI)

36	9.2 TREES
37	9.3 SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE
38	9.4 GREEN ROOFS AND WALLS
39	9.5 ORNAMENTAL PLANTING
40	10. RESIDENTIAL AMENITY
41	10.1 PRIVATE GARDENS
42	10.2 COMMUNAL GARDENS
43	10.3 BALCONIES
44	10.4 PRIVACY AND DAYLIGHT
45	11. BOUNDARIES
46	11.1 RESIDENTIAL BOUNDARIES
47	11.2 EDGE OF COUNTRYSIDE BOUNDARIES
48	11.3 PUBLIC BOUNDARIES TO NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
49	11.4 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE BOUNDARIES
50	12. MATERIALS
51	12.1 BUILDING MATERIALS
52	12.2 SURFACE MATERIALS
53	13. ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL
54	13.1 ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND PROPORTIONS
55	13.2 ROOFS
56	13.3 WINDOWS
57	13.4 ENTRANCES AND DOORS
58	13.5 CHIMNEYS
59	14. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
60	14.1 PLACE MAKING
61	14.2 PUBLIC ART
62	14.3 INTERNAL SPACE AND ACCESS STANDARDS
63	14.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DESIGN
64	15. DARK NIGHT SKIES

## Appendix B

### Information of designing Zero carbon homes

The [Passive House Institute](#) (PHI) is an independent research institute that has played an especially crucial role in the development of the Passive House concept - the only internationally recognised, performance-based energy standard in construction.

[How to design Eco, Passivhaus and Zero Carbon Houses \[2021 UK Edition\]](#) by Urbanist Architecture

[Designing Buildings Wiki](#)

[Feasibility of zero carbon homes in England by 2016: a house builder's perspective](#) by Loughborough University

[Designing zero carbon homes: an architects perspective](#) by Elaine Toogood Architect,

[Plans to decarbonise UK housing stock welcomed by RTPI](#) (refers to the National Deal for Net Zero homes is one of several recommendations put forward in a report, 'Ambition 2030: A Partnership for Growth', developed over the past 12 months by the Covid Recovery Commission - a coalition of the UK's top business leaders.

[Royal Town Planning Institute to achieve net zero emissions by 2025](#)

[Net zero and nature recovery targets at centre of consultancy-led investigation into design codes for RTPI](#)