

Subject: Detailed Objection to Proposed Development Allocation in Hamsey

Dear Planning Policy Team,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed allocation of 30 new houses in Hamsey Parish as part of the South Downs National Park Authority's Local Plan Review. While I appreciate the need for housing, this proposal must not be assessed in isolation. It must be considered within the wider context of Lewes District Council's allocations of 11HY (150 houses) and 19HY (900 houses), as well as further planned and speculative developments along the A275 and surrounding areas. The cumulative impact of these developments will create severe, long-lasting consequences for local infrastructure, biodiversity, and the protected landscape of the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

This objection is made in support of Hamsey Parish Council, which shares these concerns about the long-term impact on the local community and environment.

1. The Cumulative Impact of Development in the Area

The South Downs National Park Authority has a legal duty under the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to conserve and enhance the National Park and its setting. This obligation extends beyond the Park boundary, requiring consideration of developments that would affect the special qualities of the SDNP.

While the proposed 30 houses may appear modest in scale, the combined impact of multiple nearby developments must be fully assessed. This includes:

- Lewes District Council's allocations of 11HY (150 houses) and 19HY (900 houses), both of which will significantly increase traffic and environmental pressures.
- Other speculative developments along the A275 corridor, which are creating an unsustainable pattern of growth.
- The knock-on effect on rural roads and communities as congestion increases, forcing traffic into quieter lanes.

This proposal, when considered in this broader context, raises serious concerns about sustainable development in the area.

2. Traffic, Infrastructure, and Road Safety

The A275 is already experiencing high congestion levels and worsening road conditions, with potholes and verge damage becoming increasingly problematic. Without careful planning and mitigation, further development will exacerbate these issues. Key concerns include:

- No Road Traffic Assessment Conducted: SDNP has not yet undertaken a traffic review. Lewes District Council will be running a separate road traffic assessment, and SDNP must consider these findings before making decisions.
- Increased Traffic Volume: The cumulative impact of developments will significantly increase vehicle numbers, particularly given the car-dependent nature of the area.

The A275, Ashcombe Roundabout, and Lewes Prison Crossroads are already under strain.

- Knock-on Effects on Rural Lanes: Beechwood Lane, The Drove and Offham roads will likely see increased rat-running and dangerous traffic conditions as congestion worsens.
- Flooding & Diversion Risks: Barcombe frequently floods, forcing vehicles to reroute through Cooksbridge worsening congestion and road safety.
- Parking Issues: Beechwood Lane has limited parking and further development could put pressure on Beechwood Hall's community parking, affecting local events and residents.

Given these factors, a full and thorough transport impact assessment is essential before this allocation can be considered.

3. Biodiversity & Environmental Concerns

The proposed site is part of the Weald to Waves nature corridor, a critical initiative for wildlife connectivity and ecological restoration. This corridor plays a crucial role in linking species-rich habitats from the Weald to the coast, and any development risks disrupting its function.

Key ecological concerns:

- Over 313 protected species have been recorded in the area, including bats, skylarks, and reptiles. Their habitats would be directly impacted.
- The Northend Stream is an essential spawning ground for sea trout, an indicator species of river health. Increased runoff and pollution would severely degrade water quality.
- Ancient hedgerows and veteran trees form vital wildlife corridors, providing nesting and foraging spaces for birds, bats, and invertebrates.
- Loss of dark skies and tranquillity—a key special quality of the SDNP—due to increased lighting and human activity.

The South Downs Local Plan emphasizes the need to protect and enhance biodiversity. Any development on this site must demonstrate a net environmental gain, rather than just mitigating damage.

4. Strain on Utilities & Services

The area already faces limitations in power, water, and drainage infrastructure, and additional development risks overloading these essential services.

- Water Supply & Drainage: The area relies on chalk aquifers with restricted water licensing. The sewage system is near capacity, and while Southern Water has projected space for 70 additional homes, the cumulative impact of multiple sites needs a full reassessment.
 - Power Supply Limitations: The area has limited power infrastructure, raising concerns about supply stability with further housing growth.
 - Limited Local Services & Employment: The site is not within walking distance of significant employment hubs or key services, meaning new residents will rely heavily on private cars for commuting, shopping, and daily needs.
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5. Acknowledging Positive Elements of SDNP Policies

While I object to this allocation, I want to acknowledge the South Downs National Park Authority's commitment to biodiversity, sustainable planning, and exceeding minimum environmental standards. The SDNP's focus on nature recovery, habitat connectivity, and regenerative design sets a high bar for responsible development.

Any development within the SDNP should align with these principles, prioritizing landscape-led, ecologically sensitive planning. If the SDNP is considering allocating sites, they should be designed with exemplary environmental standards, community-led housing models (such as a Community Land Trust), and enhanced biodiversity initiatives.

6. Request for Reassessment

Given the significant cumulative impact of development in this area, I strongly urge the South Downs National Park Authority to:

1. Reassess this allocation within the wider context of planned developments in the area, including Lewes District Council's sites (11HY & 19HY) and A275 corridor growth.
2. Ensure a full transport impact assessment is conducted, factoring in traffic growth, rural lane congestion, and flooding risks.
3. Prioritize biodiversity and environmental integrity, ensuring this site, if allocated, contributes to nature recovery rather than habitat loss.
4. Explore alternative community-led models, such as a Community Land Trust, to ensure any future development aligns with SDNP's high planning standards.

Conclusion

This development allocation, when considered with 11HY and 19HY, represents a significant risk to the sustainability, landscape, and biodiversity of the South Downs National Park and its setting. The cumulative impact on roads, infrastructure, flooding, and ecology has not been properly considered, and any allocation must align with the SDNP's commitment to landscape-led development.

I respectfully request that the South Downs National Park Authority carefully reconsider this allocation and take a holistic, landscape-first approach that truly conserves and enhances the National Park's special qualities.

Please confirm receipt of this email and register my objection formally.

Yours sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[Your Email]