

ARUNDEL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: SECOND REVIEW

MADE POLICIES REVIEW: MARCH 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 Arundel Town Council (ATC) is undertaking a second review of its neighbourhood plan. A review session was held with members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) on 1 March 2023. The purpose of the session was to assess the success or otherwise of the 21 policies of the made Arundel Neighbourhood Plan Review (ANP2 – to 2031) of December 2019, of which 11 policies were retained by that plan from the original Neighbourhood Plan (ANP1 – to 2029) of April 2014. Its purpose was to guide the scope and nature of the modification of ANP2 to create a new Neighbourhood Plan (ANP3) to be made in 2024 to cover a longer plan period to be determined. The preference of ATC is to make modifications to ANP2 that do not ‘change the nature of the plan’, hence only requiring an examination.

1.2 The session also reflected on the changing national and strategic planning policy context since the adoption of ANP2, notably with revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the challenges that have faced Arun District Council (ADC) in bringing forward a new Local Plan and in maintaining a healthy housing land supply. It noted too that the northern half of the ANP area lies in the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) area and it has begun to review its adopted Local Plan.

1.3 This report summarises the nature of the discussion held and makes recommendations for how the project should proceed. It includes an updated analysis of the ANP2 policies, noting any key modifications that are advised, as well as some further analysis of potential additional policy ideas. Finally it notes how the project may be structured to carry out the evidence and modification work.

2. Policy Context

2.1 There have been revisions to the NPPF since ANP2 was adopted. ANP2 was examined against the 2019 version. In most respects the latest NPPF of 2021 continues to assert the same spatial policy objectives in respect of balancing growth with environmental constraints. If and how that context changes with the wider review of the planning system – most recently framed within the Levelling Up & Infrastructure Bill and further changes to the NPPF – is still too early to tell.

2.2 ADC had begun to bring forward its Local Plan Review in 2019, abandoning its intended Non-Strategic Site Allocations DPD to release the resources for that purpose. However, decisions have been made through 2020 – 2023 to pause, restart and pause it again. The most recent Local Development Scheme (i.e. the timetable for plan preparation) of January 2023 gives no indication of a new timetable nor confirms a plan period. It is assumed that once the Government has made its changes to the NPPF and the Bill passes through Parliament that ADC will provide no further update to inform ANP3.

3. Change in the Neighbourhood Area

3.1 The town has seen little change since 2019. Problems that ANP1 and ANP2 sought to tackle remain – access to affordable housing, traffic and parking – although worries about the future of some community assets have not come to pass. The town continues to be popular with tourists, with an indication this is fuelling the demand for second homes and short term homestays. It appears to have survived the Covid pandemic well with very few vacant town centre properties and an increase in home working increasing footfall. The Arundel A27 Bypass project continues to evolve, supposedly with a 2025 start. A recent consultation looked at detailed route options. In the meantime, congestion remains a significant problem for the town.

3.2 Of the six sites allocated for development in ANP1 and ANP2 only one ('Bevan & Bevan' in River Road for 13 homes) has been built out, though two have planning consent (the Gas Works on Ford Road (38 homes) and the Stewards Rise land off Ford Road (90 homes)). There has been no progress on the Castle Stables (in the SDNPA area) or Police Station sites and proposals for the joined 'Blastreat/Greenhurst' site for an older persons accommodation scheme that was contrary to the allocation policy were refused on appeal. Encouragingly, planning consent has been granted for a business and nursery scheme on the Mill House Farm site.

3.3 In which case, of the indicative housing target of 110 homes provided by ADC for the plan period to 2031, the allocations have delivered (built + committed) a total of 141 homes, with 52 homes still to come through planning (36 in the ADC area). For that reason, it is not considered necessary in strategic policy terms for ANP3 to allocate additional land for housing, even with its proposed longer plan period to 2040.

4. Policy Assessment

4.1 The following table sets out a summary assessment of the ANP2 policies based on the discussion at the session. To help understand how ANP3 may look, we have attributed new policy numbers for those made policies that we recommend are retained and/or modified and for the new policies we recommend are added.

ANP1/2 No.	ANP3 No.	POLICY TITLE	NOTES & RECOMMENDATIONS
AR1	AR1	Arundel Built Up Area Boundary	Review and modify to take account of any consented schemes. Add policy wording to reflect Local Plan policy wording to remove any weakness in relying on the LP being deemed out of date in the tilted balance. Recommendation: retain and modify.
AR2	-	Land off Ford Road	Scheme consented in 2022 in accordance with the allocation policy but not yet implemented. Important to retain in case consented scheme not implemented and new application made. However, for ease of reference, should be amalgamated with other housing site allocations in one new policy. Recommendation: retain and amalgamate into new Policy AR2.
AR3	-	Land at Fitzalan Road	No planning consent yet sought for policy compliant scheme. Consider a review of the viability appraisal and possibility of modifying policy parameters to encourage a scheme to come forward, either for the joined site or separately (as Blastreat is still operational). For ease of reference should be amalgamated with other housing site allocations in one new policy and add the content of the second paragraph of Policy AR5 ('Swallow Brewery') to the allocation policy and add the brewery to the list of Buildings of Character. Recommendation: retain and amalgamate into new Policy AR2.
AR4	-	The Police Station	No planning consent yet sought. Continue to engage with Sussex Police investigate relocation or mixed-use scheme comprising housing and a smaller retained operational facility. Consider using a Neighbourhood Development Order to demonstrate a suitable, acceptable and viable scheme. Recommendation: retain, modify as necessary and amalgamate into new Policy AR2.

AR5	-	Swallow Brewery	Policy was important in appeal decision on the Policy AR3 site. Better therefore to amalgamate its second paragraph with that site allocation and add to the list of Buildings of Character. Recommendation: relocate wording to new Policy AR2 as suggested and delete.
AR6	AR8	Community Facilities	The policy continues to have value in recognising the importance of the town's wealth of community facilities. For completeness it can include the specific policy provisions for the Victoria Institute and Arundel Lido of ANP1 policies 7 and 8. Recommendation: retain and modify.
AR7	AR4	Town Centre	The town centre continues to change to reflect the demand for tourist-related uses, e.g. cafes and restaurants. There is a new pharmacy. On balance, the mix of town centres uses creates a viable and vital town centre. There have been changes to the Use Class Order and to Permitted Development Rights since ANP2, limiting the ability of planning policy to control the mix in any event. Suggest keep under review but retain as worded. Recommendation: retain.
AR8	AR5	Business Hubs	Still considered to be important, especially since Covid and increasing home working. The Mill House Farm and emerging Castle Stables proposals indicate a market demand. Recommendation: retain.
AR9	AR10	Green Infrastructure Network	National policy has evolved since ANP2 and will continue to do so with the new Biodiversity Net Gain, Environmental Improvement Plan and Local Nature Recovery initiatives coming into force over the next year or so. There is also more data available to inform policy and potential identification of land suited to these specific GI purposes. Review data and work with Sussex Nature Partnership to consider new policy options. Recommendation: retain and modify.
AR10	-	Canada Gardens LGS	Continues to serve an important purpose in protecting precious open land. For completeness add to Policy AR11. Recommendation: relocate and delete.
1	-	Presumption in Favour ...	No longer a requirement to accommodate presumption in favour content of the NPPF in policy. Recommendation: delete.
3	-	Housing Supply	No longer needed on its own but useful to summarise new housing supply position to 2040 in first part of new Policy AR2 for completeness. Recommendation: delete.

4	AR2	Housing Site Allocations	The River Road scheme has been built out so delete. The Castle Stables scheme now seems unlikely as the owner wishes to use the site for business units. However, the site is considered large enough to incorporate a business (Class E(g) – former Class B1) and residential uses. Suggest for discussions with the landowner to incorporate into a new site-specific policy separate to new Policy AR2. Recommendation: delete and replace with new Policy AR2 for all retained site allocations and with new Policy AR6 on the Castle Stables site.
6	AR9	Transport, Access & Parking	Reflect output from the new Arundel LCWIP (due late spring 2023) in modified policy wording. Recommendation: retain and modify.
7	-	Victoria Institute	The facility remains popular with no local desire to see its loss. Consider deleting the second part of the paragraph. For completeness, add to a modified policy on Community Facilities (AR8). Recommendation: retain and modify.
8	-	Arundel Lido	The facility remains popular with no local desire to see its loss. For completeness, add to a modified policy on Community Facilities (AR8). Recommendation: retain and modify.
9	AR7	Mill House Farm	It is understood that some pre-application discussions have been held for a policy compliant scheme but an application has not been submitted. Important to retain in case consented scheme not implemented and new application made. Recommendation: retain.
10	-	Assets of Community Value	No longer necessary but for completeness, add a reference to the supporting text of the modified policy on Community Facilities (AR8). Recommendation: delete.
11	AR11	Local Green Spaces	Continues to serve an important purpose in protecting precious open land in and on the edge of the town. Add Canada Gardens from Policy AR10 for completeness and make clear that all LGSs are part of the Policy AR10 GI network. Recommendation: retain and modify.
12	AR12	Flood Defences	Improvements have been made to the local defences with more scheduled. The policy continues to encourage investment. Recommendation: retain.
13	AR16	Buildings of Character	Policy continues to be important in recognising value of non-designated heritage assets (NPPF §203). Add Swallow Brewery from AR5 for completeness and review after the production of the Town

			Character Appraisal (see new Policy AR15 below) to add any missing assets. Recommendation: retain and modify.
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5. Potential Additional NP Policies

5.1 Some additional policy ideas were discussed. Design policy has evolved considerably with the National Model Design Code and new guidance in the NPPF (with more to come). It was noted that although one of the most renowned historic towns in the country, there is no Conservation Area Appraisal nor other recent character assessment covering the wider town area, which was considered a weakness. There is a (free) technical support package on design coding, but this may be limited in its application without a thorough, underpinning character appraisal. Examples at Marlborough in Wiltshire, Newport Pagnell in Bucks and Beaconsfield (also Bucks) were discussed.

5.2 There was also some interest expressed at the session in adding policies on climate change related topics. This is becoming common policy territory for neighbourhood plans, which are quickly responding to the changing national policy landscape – the Environment Act 2021 will mean that biodiversity net gain and local nature recovery become legal obligations from November 2023, at least at the development management stage. More is emerging on how plan making should embrace these ideas but it is still early days; other neighbourhood plans that are further advanced are pointing to the possible options that the ANP3 could include.

5.3 The ideas that were briefly discussed were:

No.	TITLE	NOTES
AR3	Primary Residence	As with other similar towns – we discussed Stow on the Wold as an example – it appears that the loss of existing homes to second homes and short term homestays is skewing the local housing market. Primary residence policies have been made in neighbourhood plans (for example in Cornwall and Purbeck) where there was clear evidence to show the harmful social effects of unmanaged supply. This will be required here too if such a policy idea is to succeed. The data sits with ADC as housing authority – this should be discussed with them in the first instance. Recommendation: new policy if evidence is supportive.

AR6	Castle Stables	At present part of ANP1 Policy 4, this now needs a new site-specific enabling policy – see above. Recommendation: new policy.
AR13	Renewable Energy	There is some leeway for neighbourhood plans to make positive policy showing where (and where not) such schemes may be suitable, especially in environmentally sensitive areas like Arundel. Suggest this is explored further to see if value can be added to ADC’s Policy ECC DM1. Recommendation: new policy if evidence is supportive.
AR14	Zero Carbon Buildings	Noted that some neighbourhood plans have made zero carbon building policies incentivising the use of the PassivHaus (or equivalent) standard. This may be suited to Arundel though there may be sensitivities with its historic areas and buildings. Suggest reviewing the template policy and considering how it may apply within the Conservation Area. Recommendation: new policy.
AR15	Design Code	As noted above, this is now a firm neighbourhood plan policy area. Its evidence may also identify new Buildings of Character for Policy AR16. But will need some form of character appraisal from which the Code can be derived, either for the Conservation Area or the wider town. Recommendation: new policy and the production of a Conservation Area Appraisal to inform the Code.
AR17	Areas of Character	A character appraisal may identify candidates for Areas of Special Character (per ADC Policy HER DM4). In some places this may be as an interim measure if the appraisal concludes that a modification of the Conservation Area may be justified (as this could only be agreed and undertaken by ADC as planning authority). Others may simply be areas where the essence of their character has been retained, albeit not of a standard that would justify a Conservation Area designation. ADC has criteria for defining Areas of Special Character, which would be followed by the appraisal. Recommendation: new policy if evidence is supportive.

5.3 With this proposed modified policy scope, it is considered unlikely that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will be required, although the modified plan will need to be rescreened by ADC for both SEA and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) once the scope has been agreed. ADC has a proforma for this process. If one or both is deemed necessary by ADC, there are technical support packages available via Locality.

5.4 More generally it is recommended that ANP3 should include some new text explaining the successes of ANP1 and ANP2 to show continuity. The provision of new consolidated Policy Maps will show how the policies are understood and applied.

6. Project Structure

6.1 It is considered that there is not a significant amount of new work required in the tasks above. There are a small number of sites to consider further – Castle Stables, the Police Station and maybe Blastreat/Greenhurst – and some green infrastructure mapping and policy development to be done. The Primary Residence policy idea will also need some data collection and analysis. The main task will be the production of a character appraisal and design code.

6.2 We therefore think that there will be no need for the NPSG to create task teams as it ought to be able to manage these tasks itself, perhaps with each task led by an NPSG member, but involving others on the group and those from outside as co-optees. Once the proposed scope of the modifications above is agreed, we will produce a more detailed project brief for each task.

6.3 Either part way through those tasks, or towards their end, NPSG should decide how it wishes to engage with the local community to test out its emerging policy ideas, as well as the modifications to existing policies. It will be vital that the community is able to participate in expressing policy preferences and validating (or otherwise) emerging evidence before policy ideas are formulated too far. This will be for the NPSG to judge but formulating an early ‘communications plan’ is normally a very helpful first step in this regard.

7. Project Plan, Professional & Technical Support

7.1 Once the scope is agreed we will provide a new project plan. It will show the activities across the stages of modifying the plan through to submission. The stages thereafter – examination and referendum – are managed as before by ADC. The project plan will show how we will deploy our support based on our experience on other similar projects. It also shows the dependency of some tasks on others to enable the NPSG to understand and plan for the consequences of slippage. The goal has been to show how the project may feasibly be completed by March 2024.

7.2 We will advise the NPSG through its monthly meetings (normally online, though we need not attend every meeting) and by liaison between the key officers in the meantime.

7.3 In respect of the Locality technical support packages, there are no immediate needs. However, the Design Code package may be needed (which does not include character appraisal) and so may the SEA/HRA package. If used, we will oversee the Locality contractor briefing and manage the quality and timing of their outputs on behalf of the NPSG as we normally do for clients.

7.4 The scope of project work assumes that ADC officer time will be limited. It will be vital that liaison is positive and timely. To this end, it will be helpful to discuss this report with them once approved by the NPSG; to invite an officer to attend occasional NPSG meetings; and to seek their informal views on the first draft ANP3 before the statutory Reg 14 version.