

1084/1/2

The Secretary of State  
Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs  
Sponsorship Landscape & Recreation (National Parks)  
Zone 1/03, Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Temple Quay  
BRISTOL  
BS1 6EB

20<sup>th</sup> August 2007

Dear Sir

**South Downs National Park Consultation**

The Town Council has considered the recommendations of the Inspector regarding the creation of the South Downs National Park and would comment on them as follows:

- 1 Petersfield Town Council strongly objects to the Inspector's recommendation to exclude the non-chalk ridge areas from the proposed National Park. The A3 corridor, the Rother valley, the northern hangers and the Wealden heaths in East Hampshire are an integral part of the wider South Downs landscape, being clearly visible from many viewpoints on the South Downs. They contain landscapes of outstanding natural beauty and offer a 'superior recreational experience'. It is essential that they be included within the National Park.
- 2 The Town Council strongly objects to the proposal to exclude the larger settlements in East Hampshire from the proposed National Park. Petersfield and Liss lie within a much wider landscape that must be considered as a whole. This was recognised when the East Hampshire AONB was designated in 1962, all reviews that have taken place in the last 45 years and in the consultation documents on the proposed National Park (Local Authorities consultation in May 2002 and the formal public consultation in December 2002).
- 3 Reviews of the AONB since the construction of the A3 by-pass have confirmed the appropriateness of Petersfield's AONB status, recognising that the road has been constructed in cuttings in order to minimalise its visual impact and reduce

- traffic noise as far as is possible. As a consequence, Petersfield is largely hidden from view, except in distant aspects from the surrounding hills and at one point on the northbound A3 near the industrial estate. This is most definitely not enough to render the town unsuitable for inclusion within the National Park.
- 4 Petersfield Town Council strongly objects as a point of principle to the lack of a defined boundary for the area described by the Inspector as the A3 corridor. This is crucial to his recommendation to exclude this area from the National Park should the Minister not accept the proposed alternative boundary (Petersfield to Pulborough). The A3 corridor area should be accurately defined to enable the public to make specific comment before any Ministerial decision is made on the National Park boundary. Without a defined boundary to the A3 corridor area, the public are seriously disadvantaged in their ability to comment to Defra. Also, the lack of a defined boundary means the Minister cannot be fully informed of all the relevant factors affecting each of the Inspector's two recommended boundary options. If the A3 corridor is excluded from the National Park, the remaining land within the East Hampshire AONB must be included within a new AONB to protect the area from further development that would mar the views from the National Park. Bearing in mind that Petersfield and the surrounding areas have been thus designated for 45 years, it is inconceivable that the attractiveness of the area has disappeared.
  - 5 Petersfield Town Council also strongly objects to the fact that the Inspector has based his recommendations on a landscape assessment that has not been published, producing a boundary that has never been examined publicly and makes no mention of the historic landscapes and cultural heritage of the area.
  - 6 Petersfield Town Council considers that many of the proposed boundaries are difficult to define, with some passing through the middle of woodland or along lanes. This would result in different maintenance and funding regimes applying to the same woodland, or to wooded roadside verges when one side is within the National Park, and the other outside. If the proposed boundaries are to be adopted, it would be far preferable for them to follow the greensand ridge rather than as suggested by the Inspector.
  - 7 The Town Council supports the Inspector's recommendation to include further land in West Tisted, Rowlands Castle and West Hordean.
  - 8 The Town Council is also extremely disappointed at the limited range of questions posed in this consultation exercise and objects to the restrictive nature of the information requested. The Inspector's report raises many issues that require further comment and investigation. It is this Council's belief that the Public Inquiry should be re-opened to consider the whole issue before any further decisions are made in determining the Designation Order. The Council also

wishes to see a draft timetable published by the Secretary of State outlining the remaining stages for the designation of the National Park.

On a positive note, the Council was pleased to see the length of time for this consultation exercise extended to facilitate a wider response from local communities.

Yours faithfully

Neil Hitch  
Town Clerk