



AQUIND Limited

AQUIND INTERCONNECTOR

Environmental Statement – Volume 3 – Appendix 15.5 South Downs National Park

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The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 – Regulation 5(2)(a)

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APPENDIX 15.5 SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

1.1. INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

1.1.1.1.

The character of the South Downs National Park ('SDNP') is defined in its Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDNPILCA), (LUC, December 2005), updated 2011. The local landscape character of the SDNP to the north, north west and north east of the Converter Station / Converter Station Area falls within the Downland Mosaic Landscape Character Type D and more specifically D2a (Enclosed) Hambledon to Clanfield Mosaic Landscape Character Area. Key characteristics of this LCA of relevance to the Converter Station Area and its immediate surroundings include:

- The prominent chalk ridge (of the Meon anticline) and dipslope with a localised secondary escarpment running between Soberton and Clanfield.
- The secondary escarpment supports chalk grassland, assarts, and hanger woodland. A secondary row of hills, relating to this secondary scarp include Home Down, Broad Half Penny Down, and Windmill Down.
- Significant areas of ancient woodland at Hyden Wood, Coombe Wood and The Holt form an area with a sense of enclosure.
- Surface clay capping along the lower dipslope results in a more enclosed landscape with extensive areas of early enclosures, woodland fragments and thick hedgerows. Area of open arable land runs through the centre of the character area where 18th and 19th century field predominate. However, a number of historic features have been preserved
- A number of important chalk grassland and woodland sites occur within this character area including Butser Hill and Peake Wood.
- The settlement pattern is dispersed across the downland with nucleated villages on the dipslope of the downland e.g. Hambledon, linked by a network of narrow rural roads.
- A number of minor designed landscapes.
- The downs contain a well established network of public rights of way and a strong hierarchical network of roads.
- Prominent telecommunication masts on the skyline at Wetherdown and Butser Hill.

- Panoramic views from Butser Hill and Old Winchester Hill, and from the dipslope towards the south coast and the Isle of Wight (LUC, 2011).

1.1.1.2. Specific characteristics unique to this area are:

- Prominent chalk ridge and dipslope with a localised secondary escarpment running between Soberton and Clanfield
- Secondary escarpment supports chalk grassland, asserts and hanger woodlands including Hambledon Hangers SINC. The dipslope is overlain with deposits of clay-with-flint and acidic clay soils that support a mosaic of small, irregular fields (related to early enclosure of the landscape), bounded by thick hedgerows and high incidence of woodland
- A secondary row of hills lying south of this secondary scarp (at Home Down, Broad Half Penny Down and Windmill Down) form open elements within the enclosed mosaic
- Settlement pattern characteristic of dispersed farmsteads across the downland with nucleated villages e.g. Hambledon located in more sheltered area of the dipslope.
- This part of the character area is defined as an “enclosed” landscape sub type.
- Tranquillity disrupted in places by large modern farm buildings and pylon lines.
- Character well served by PROW including the South Downs Way National Trail, Monarch’s Way and Wayfarers’ Walk.

1.2. SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN

1.2.1.1. The South Downs National Park Local Plan 2014-2033, Adopted 2 July 2019, (South Downs National Park Authority, 2019) defines the Park spatially into five broad areas and four river corridors informed by landscape characteristics, ecosystem services and special qualities referred to in South Downs Special Qualities Paper for the Local Plan.

1.2.1.2. The Downland Mosaic Landscape Character Type (‘LCT’) lies within the Local Plan’s broader definition of “Dip Slope”; an area which extends the entire length of the South Downs.

1.2.1.3. The Local Plan states that the “Dip Slope” includes five of the six of the Special Qualities (SQ) which contribute to the designation of the National Park and led to policies relating to Safeguarding Views, Relative Tranquillity and Dark Night Skies (SD6, SD7 and SD8 respectively).

1.2.1.4. Special qualities applicable to the “Dip Slope” include:

- SQ1: Diverse, inspirational landscapes and breath-taking views;

- SQ3: A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internally important species;
- SQ4: An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprises;
- SQ5: Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences; and
- SQ6: Well conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage.

1.2.1.5. It should be noted that “SQ2 Tranquil and unspoilt places” is not referred to in relation to the “Dip Slope”.

1.2.1.6. The SDNP Partnership Management Plan (Shaping the future of your South Downs National Park, South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan, 2014-2019, (South Downs National Park, 2013)) fed directly into landscape policies in the Local Plan. The most relevant statement it contains is Outcome 1:

“The landscape character of the National Park, its special qualities and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by efficiently managing the land and the negative impacts of development and cumulative change”.

1.2.1.7. The PMP policies include:

- *“Policy 1: Conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the landscape and its setting, in ways that allow it to continue to evolve and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change and other pressures”;* and
- *“Policy 3: Protect and enhance tranquillity and dark night skies.”*

1.3. INTERNATIONAL DARK SKIES RESERVE

1.3.1.1. The SDNP was awarded International Dark Sky Reserve status in 2016 (South Downs National Park Dark Sky Reserve Application, (South Downs National Park Authority, 2016)).

1.3.1.2. The South Downs Dark Night Sky Lighting Technical Advice Note, (South Downs National Park Authority, April 2018) details how development proposals can conserve and enhance the dark night skies, alongside technical guidance.

1.3.1.3. The Advice Note promotes locations within the SDNP where people experience the South Down’s darkest skies. Two of the promoted locations, Old Winchester Hill and Butser Hill, are included within the 8 km study area of the Converter Station.

1.3.1.4. The Advice Note divides the SDNP into distinct zones, refer to Plate 1. Land to the north of the Converter Station lies within E1a Intrinsic Rural Darkness, whilst land to the west and east lies within E1a Transition Zone. The Advice Note states that E1a and 1b are vulnerable to light pollution, situated between larger urban settlements and surrounding darker skies, refer to Plate 2.

1.3.1.5. It is considered that the impacts of the Converter Station Area on the International Dark Sky Reserve are negligible during its construction, operation and decommissioning and have therefore been scoped out of this assessment.

1.3.1.6. The Onshore Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan ('CEMP') (document reference 6.9) states that construction work would be restricted to daylight hours to avoid disturbance to visual receptors including immediate residential receptors as well as bats and other species.

1.3.1.7. During the operational phase, the Converter Station would be unmanned. Lighting up to 15 m high as referred to on the Parameter Plans (document reference 2.6) would only come on in exceptional circumstances and there is no lighting within the remainder of the Converter Station Area including the Access Road.

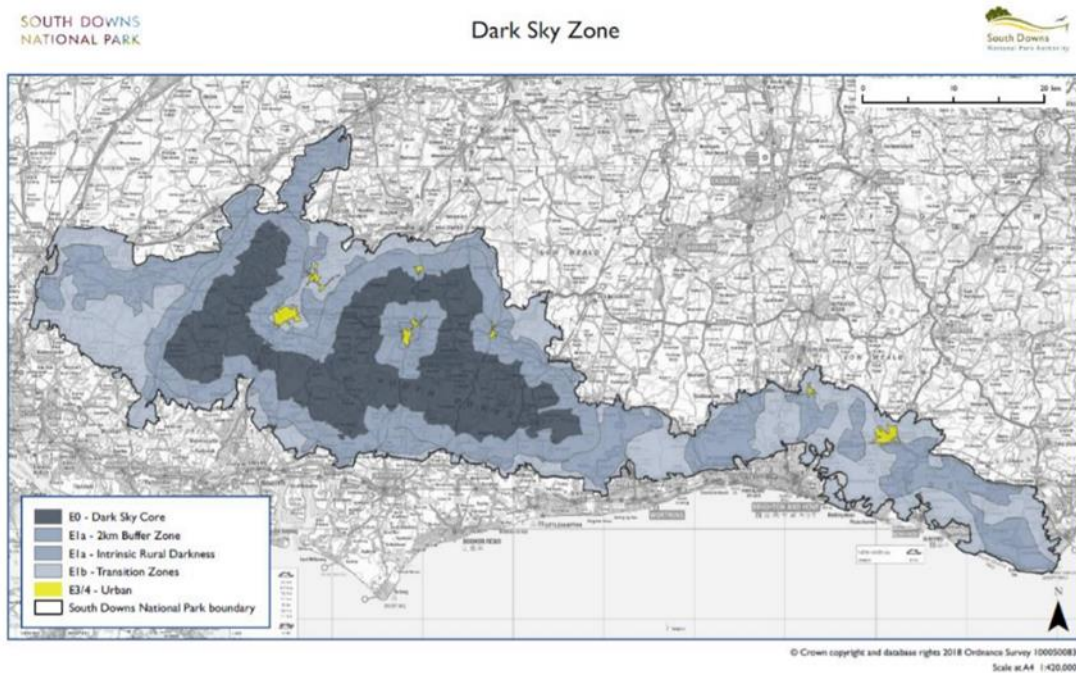


Plate 1 - South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve – Dark Zones

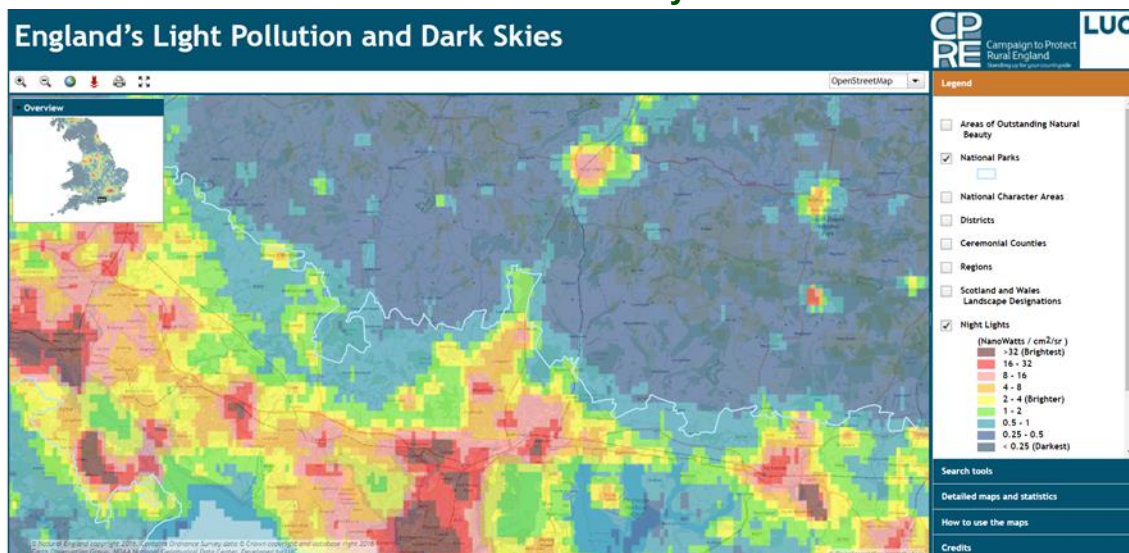


Plate 2 - Light Pollution and Dark Skies, CPRE

1.4. TRANQUILLITY

- 1.4.1.1. The SDNP study on Tranquillity (Tranquillity Study, (South Downs National Park Authority, 2017) outlines the key factors which contribute to tranquillity. Supporting maps indicate that the Converter Station, Converter Station Area and immediate surroundings fall between an intermediate (yellow) to low (orange) value for tranquillity, with two specific locations to the west and within the SDNP attaining a higher value (which it is assumed is near Broadhalfpenny Down and Pitthill Farm) refer to Plate 3 below. Intermediate areas, are areas most vulnerable to change and where further harm should be avoided with every opportunity taken to enhance it.
- 1.4.1.2. The study indicates that work is ongoing and further survey work will test whether specific locations have a higher or lower tranquillity than previously thought.

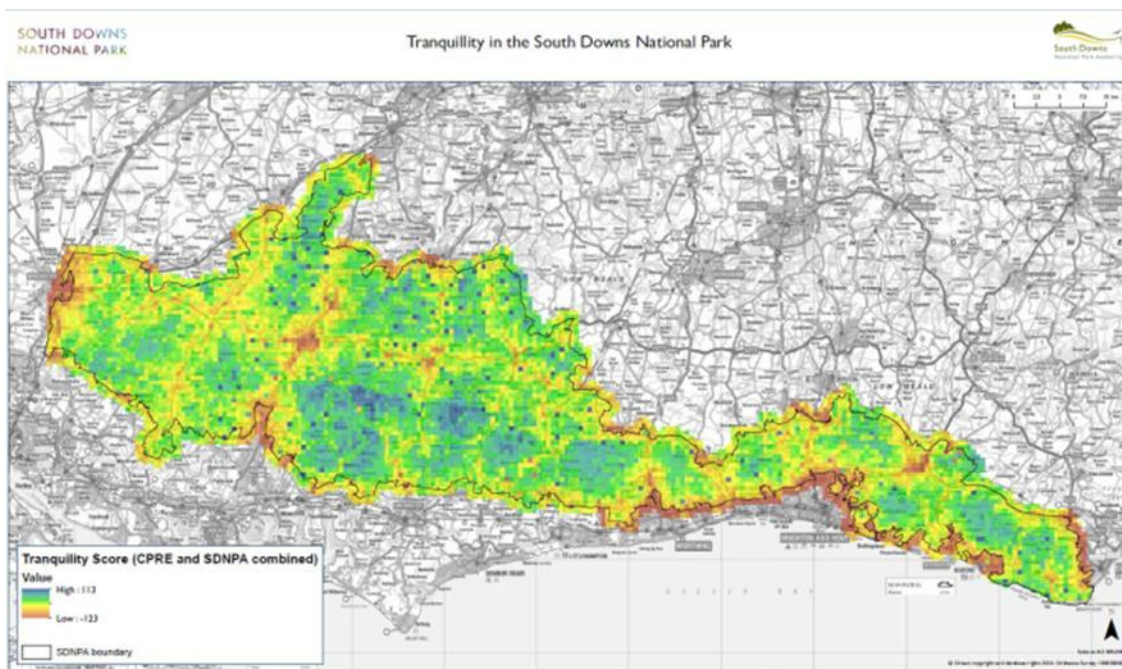


Plate 3 - Relative Tranquillity Scores for the South Downs National Park Area

1.5. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CONVERTER STATION AREA TO THE SETTING OF THE SDNP

- 1.5.1.1. A brief review was undertaken to determine whether the Converter Station Area contributes to the setting of the SDNP utilising the 3 km study area agreed with LPAs and the SDNPA, referred to in Table 1 below. The review used criterion in the South Downs Landscape Background Paper to the Local Plan, (South Downs National Park Authority, September 2017), and considered in this context SQ1 and the associated landscape features within the surrounding SDNP LCA D2 (enclosed).

Table 1 - Review of the Converter Station Area to the setting of the SDNP within a 3 km study area

| Criterion | Relevance of criterion in the context of the Converter Station Area and 3 km surroundings |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Landscape quality (Intactness, condition and influence)</p> | <p>Mixed:</p> <p>Land around the Converter Station and Converter Station Area and which lies within the SDNP is a one of contrasts ranging from open to enclosed. Moving progressively towards the Converter Station landscape condition changes from good to medium / poor and incongruous features in the landscape are more prominent. Landscape character has been eroded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The modernisation of farming resulting in some larger field patterns to the west of Broadway cottages. • Hedgerows/ hedgerow trees which have either been lost to accommodate arable farming or are unmanaged with some gappy. • The prominence of larger modern farm buildings including to the southwest at Denmead Farm, northwest off Broadway Lane and west close to Broadway Cottages and Broadway Lane. • Diversification of land use with the subdivision of fields into numerous small paddocks edged by electric fences and set aside for horse grazing as well as areas for off road mountain biking • Concentration of overhead pylons linking with Lovedean Substation. • Concentration to the north and northeast of the Converter Station of smaller properties (including mobile homes and a scrap yard) which conveys a temporary, unsettled feel to the western boundary of the Converter Station along Old Mill Lane. |

| Criterion | Relevance of criterion in the context of the Converter Station Area and 3 km surroundings |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Scenic quality (sense of place, striking landform, visual interest, appeal to senses)</p> | <p>Mixed:</p> <p>Whilst the landscape to the northwest and north of the Converter Station is dominated by its landform generating from higher ground a strong sense of openness, this becomes less apparent around the Converter Station and on lower ground.</p> <p>It is not considered that the Converter Station and its immediate surroundings has a clear or recognisable sense of place, that there are striking landforms, that there is visual interest in the patterns or landcover, or would appeal to the senses.</p> |
| <p>Relative wildness (remoteness, lack of human influence, openness and exposure, enclosure and isolation passing of time and return to nature)</p> | <p>Mixed:</p> <p>The Converter Station and its immediate surroundings is one of contrasts ranging from a sense of openness on higher ground to the north and northwest of the Converter Station with panoramic views across to Portsdown Hill, to enclosed at a low elevation with well vegetated lanes.</p> <p>There is a sense of remoteness moving further north away from the Converter Station evidenced by the lower number of dwellings and more expansive views. Equally from higher ground inter visibility is still maintained across to Portsmouth.</p> |
| <p>Relative tranquillity (Contributors to and detractors)</p> | <p>Mixed:</p> <p>Tranquillity levels increase progressively in value moving into the National Park from outside its boundaries.</p> <p>Tranquillity associated with the Converter Station Area is mixed. Positive factors which contribute to tranquillity include the relatively unmanaged woodland / hedgerows, native deciduous trees, sense of openness and panoramic views on higher ground, and peace and quiet in specific locations. This contrasts with the unsettled nature of some of the surrounding properties and land uses including those set aside for horsiculture and recreation, presence of overhead lines clustering around Lovedean Substation and an associated low “hum”.</p> |

| Criterion | Relevance of criterion in the context of the Converter Station Area and 3 km surroundings |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Natural heritage features (geological / geomorphological, wildlife and habitats, built environment, archaeology and designated landscapes, historic influence | <p>Mixed:</p> <p>Whilst land to the northwest and north within 3 km of the Converter Station reflects the rolling hills and associated chalk landform of the SDNP LCT, moving progressively towards the Converter Station and on lower ground this landform becomes less apparent.</p> <p>Evidence of ancient woodland, mature hedgerows and shelter belts is noticeable throughout the 3 km area around the Converter Station.</p> <p>Whilst the LVIA agrees that the historic landscape character within 3 km of the Converter Station has remained relatively intact, fields associated within HCLT 1.16, within the Converter Station Area and through which the Access Road would run have altered over time. Fields in this area (originally small with wavy boundaries) have changed due to agricultural practices resulting in the widening of fields and loss of hedgerows.</p> <p>The presence of some buildings and associated local materials reflect the local vernacular and use of chalk throughout the area.</p> |
| Cultural Heritage (land management practices, written description, artistic representations and associations with people, places or events | <p>There are no published references to any cultural heritage within the area.</p> |

*Criterion above were taken from the South Downs Landscape Background Paper which were drawn from factors defined by Natural England to assess natural beauty Appendix 1 “Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England” (Natural England, 2011).

- 1.5.1.2. It is considered that the Converter Station Area and its contribution to the SDNP setting is mixed resulting in a medium sensitivity. Whilst some landscape features which contribute to natural beauty and therefore SQ1 echo those identified in SDNP LCA (namely landform, a sense of contrasts and extent of woodland), landscape quality and condition have been eroded by the presence of the existing Lovedean Substation, associated overhead lines, a change in agricultural practices and horticulture. In addition, an unsettled feel is generated by the temporary nature of some of the properties and land uses to the west and northwest impacting on tranquillity.
- 1.5.1.3. Inter visibility between the Converter Station and Converter Station Area and the SDNP within a 3 km radius is limited in short distance views to the immediate edge of Old Mill Lane, Broadway Lane (east), and an unnamed road (U218) connecting the two, to the north. Whilst in the middle distance there are likely to be views of the Converter Station from higher ground partially screened by the intervening topography and relative position of surrounding vegetation.

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