

South Downs Local Plan Review

Community Involvement Plan for Early Participation in Summer 2024

I. Background

- I.1 The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is reviewing the 2019 South Downs Local Plan to guide development and the provision of infrastructure over the period to 2040. The Local Plan Review (LPR) will provide a vision for how the South Downs National Park will evolve over this time and a delivery strategy for how this will be achieved.
- I.2 Community involvement plays a vital role in the preparation of Local Plans. Existing requirements are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, there are two formal consultation periods for Local Plans:
- Regulation 18: Preparation of a Local Plan
 - Regulation 19: Publication of a Local Plan (Pre-Submission)
- I.3 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 introduces reforms to the plan-making process which will determine formal consultation periods for Local Plans under the new plan-making system, these are set to comprise:
- Early participation – new requirement to ‘notify’ and ‘invite’ participation at the start of the plan-making process
 - First mandatory consultation (8 weeks)
 - Second mandatory consultation (6 weeks)
- I.4 This Community Involvement Plan (CIP) covers the first ‘early participation’ stage at the start of the plan-making process, identified in the reforms to plan-making. The Authority needs to “notify” and “invite” views on what the plan should contain and gather feedback on key issues that should be addressed. It is also an important opportunity to gather the views of communities and key stakeholders on how they would like to be engaged throughout the process. Currently there are no statutory regulations setting out requirements for this engagement stage.

2. Role and Purpose of the Community Involvement Plan

- 2.1 The SDNPA first adopted its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in 2012, which sets out how the Authority will consult with all stakeholders, including local communities, businesses and public bodies, on planning matters. There have been several subsequent revisions to the SCI to take account of changes in the planning system. A further revision has been drafted to take account of the proposed new planning system under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, and this will be consulted upon as part of the summer 2024 community engagement.

2.2 Proposed revisions to the SCI recognize that there is no “one size fits all” approach to consultation; recognising that each stage of Plan preparation may require different approaches to reach audiences as widely as possible. The proposed revised SCI therefore requires that a bespoke Community Involvement Plan (CIP) be prepared or individual engagement or consultation exercises, which use the strategic principles of the SCI and further the aim to engage underrepresented groups.

2.3 The CIP should cover the following strategic principles set out in the SCI:

- a) Timely engagement and consultation
- b) Inclusive engagement and consultation
- c) Effective and efficient engagement and consultation
- d) Provide clear results and accountability on all engagement and consultation exercises

2.4 The SCI sets the following template for CIPs:

- Who is to be involved?
- Why people are being involved?
- When will people be able to get involved?
- How people will be involved?
- How the results of community involvement will be used.

3. Why are people being involved?

3.1 This early stage of participation on the Local Plan Review, is intended to engage people for the following reasons:

- Gather feedback on the **scope** of the Local Plan Review
- Identify **key issues** for the Local Plan Review to address
- Identify ways in which the LPR can contribute to **delivering the Vision** for the National Park
- Provide people with information on the LPR preparation **timetable**
- Gather information on **how people want to be engaged** in subsequent stages of the process, including consulting on a revised Statement of Community Involvement.

4. Who is to be involved?

4.1 The SCI commits to **inclusive engagement and consultation**, which is accessible to all those who want to take part. This early participation will seek to reach a wide representative of stakeholders including residents, local businesses and organisations and relevant public bodies with an interest in the future of the South Downs National Park.

4.2 The SDNPA will directly write to and notify the following:

- All individuals and organisations registered on the Local Plan consultee database

- Town and Parish Councils – both within and adjoining the SDNP
- County Councils, District Councils and Brighton & Hove Unitary Authority (within and neighbouring the SDNP)
- Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England
- Highways Agency
- Relevant utility service providers including water, gas and electricity
- Where not already covered above, other identified organisations or bodies whose activities benefit any part of the SDNP area e.g. housing associations, environmental, countryside and conservation groups and youth and elderly persons' groups.

4.3 Further publicity measures will be taken to reach a wide audience, such as:

- Publicity on SDNPA website and social media
- Publicity through regular SDNPA newsletters such as the Planning, School Learners and Our South Downs Business Newsletters

4.4. In line with the strategic principles of the SCI, additional outreach measures will be used to reach the following groups who are frequently underrepresented in Local Plan consultations:

- Young people
- People with disabilities
- People from socially deprived areas
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- People with no or limited internet access
- People with children/and or other caring commitments

4.5 Additional outreach measures may include (but are not limited to the following): bespoke consultation materials for young people, all online content to meet web accessibility standards and making available paper copies for those without access to the internet.

5. When will people be able to get involved?

5.1 The participation materials will be made available and engagement activities will run for **8 weeks** from the **start of June 2024**. This is in line with the requirements of the current SCI and also provides early opportunity to engage in the LPR prior to draft policies and allocations are published for consultation in the latter stages of the plan preparation timetable.

6. How will people be involved?

6.1 This early stage of participation will use a range of methods to involve people, including the following:

- Details of the LPR early stage engagement will be on the SDNPA website, including online survey / poll / and possible opportunity to make map based comments. This content may be hosted on a digital engagement platform. Online materials will be designed to be accessible using a mobile phone as well as other devices.
- Emails, letters and newsletter notifications
- Media release and social media posts

- Public notices, posters and postcards (including QR codes to online materials) made available at local venues such as libraries, visitor centres and village halls
- Short video explaining the role of the Local Plan Review
- Specific online content created to target young people aged 13-18 years old
- Virtual webinar, recorded and made available online
- In-person presence at events happening during the consultation period and which the SDNPA will be attending, including to try and better engage with underrepresented groups (previous years events have included Amberley Environment Day, Worth Eco Summit, SDNP ReNature Festival, Petersfield Eco Fair and Eastbourne Eco Fair)

7. How the results of the community involvement will be used?

7.1 Results of the participation activities will be used in the following ways:

- Feedback received will be used to **inform the development of the LPR and final version of the SCI**
- A **summary report** of responses will be prepared and published on the SDNPA website
- The summary of consultation responses will be **considered by Planning Committee** at the appropriate stage when making subsequent decisions on the SCI and policy formulation for the LPR.
- Feedback from the participation activity will be used to **update the consultee database**
- Feedback and response levels from different audiences will be used to **inform future consultation** activity on the LPR