

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	23 January 2014
By	Director of Planning
Title of Report	South Downs National Park Local Plan Options Consultation Document
Purpose of Report	To consider the Options Consultation Document and recommend that the National Park Authority publish it for the purposes of consultation.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the Options Consultation Document at Appendix I to this report; and**
 - 2) Recommend to the National Park Authority that the Options Consultation Document is published for the purposes of consultation.**
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1. Introduction and Summary

- 1.1 When the South Downs National Park Authority became the local planning authority for the National Park in April 2011 it inherited the existing adopted local plans and core strategies of the constituent authorities. The Authority has subsequently been working with several of its local authority partners on joint core strategies to help provide an up-to-date planning policy position in parts of the National Park.
- 1.2 However, until a National Park wide Local Plan is formally adopted by the National Park Authority the area will continue to have a patchwork of local plans and a multitude of policies covering different parts of the National Park. The *Options Consultation Document (Appendix I)* represents the first stage in the National Park Authority, working in partnership with its stakeholders, producing a Local Plan for the whole National Park.

2. The Options Consultation Document

- 2.1 Work on the Local Plan has been progressing since 2011 with the production of several evidence base studies. These studies have been a combination of in-house local plan projects, corporate projects with the Strategy and Partnerships Directorate and joint-working with other local planning authorities.
- 2.2 Since October 2012 the Local Plan Member Working Group has been meeting monthly to discuss the emerging evidence base studies and subsequently the draft topic papers that have formed the basis of the *Options Consultation Document*. Since early 2013 the Working Group meetings have been open to all SDNPA Members. In addition, all SDNPA Members have been sent links to the draft topic papers as they have been emerging.
- 2.3 The Options consultation is a non-statutory stage of the local plan process but it is proposed that it will represent, and be badged as, the Regulation 18 stage (*Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012*), whereby the local planning authority makes stakeholders aware of its intention to produce a local plan. The proposed *Options Consultation Document* is divided into 10 chapters:
 1. Introduction
 2. A Portrait of the South Downs National Park
 3. Landscape and Natural Resources

4. Historic Environment
5. Design
6. Settlement Strategy
7. Housing
8. Economy and Tourism
9. Community Facilities and Infrastructure
10. Transport and Accessibility.

- 2.4 The development of the Local Plan and the choice of issues that the proposed *Options Consultation Document* builds on the conversations and engagement which have been ongoing through the development of the South Downs National Park Vision, the Special Qualities, the *State of the National Park Report* and, most recently for the development of the *Partnership Management Plan*. Each chapter covers a different topic, but there is considerable cross-over and important links between the chapters and issues. Links between chapters and also to other reference material are proposed to be highlighted in side bars throughout the document.
- 2.5 The document covers 53 of the key planning issues that will be addressed by the National Park Local Plan. For most of the 53 issues there is a 'what we propose to do', setting out the proposed approach for the Local Plan taking into account the legislation and national policy that relates to National Parks, followed by one or more potential other policy options. The consultation will ask respondents for their views on the 'what we propose to do' sections and the other options. It also asks respondents if there are any other options they would like considered. The appendices to the document (**Appendix 2**) include a glossary of terms and further information.
- 2.6 The intention is that the consultation on the *Options Consultation Document* will commence in February 2014 and run for eight weeks until April 2014, in line with the National Park's *Statement of Community Involvement*. It is anticipated that the *Options Consultation Document* will primarily be accessed online, with a consultation software system recently procured to allow responses on individual paragraphs and Issues and Options to be made by respondents. There will also be paper copies made available for those who wish to have a hard copy. A non-technical summary document will also be made available.
- 2.7 SDNPA planning policy officers to meet with as many stakeholders as possible within the consultation period, including Hampshire and Sussex Parish Council groups, representatives of other local authorities, the South Downs Network, South Downs Society, South Downs Land Managers Group, South Downs Local Access Forum and South Downs Partnership.
- 2.8 Responses will be accepted in one of three ways:
- the preferred consultation response is online via the consultation website
 - by filling in an electronic comment form and emailing to the SDNPA.
 - by filling out a paper copy comment form.
- 2.9 The intention is that a Sustainability Appraisal of the *Options Consultation Document* will be carried out once the *Options Consultation Document* is published. The results of the SA will feed into the Preferred Options and subsequent stages of the Local Plan.
- 2.10 The SDNPA planning policy officers will analyse the responses received through the consultation and these will be reported back to the Planning Committee.

3. Resources

- 3.1 The Options consultation and the analysis and reporting of the responses will require significant South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) staff and Member resource. The Planning Policy team has four officers and a budget focused on the Local Plan work: the Planning Policy Manager, Local Plan Lead and two Planning Policy Officers.
- 3.2 However, with the staff restructure, there will be significant input from the new teams (Living Landscapes, People and Places and Sustainable Futures) to ensure that the Local Plan

reflects the priorities for the National Park as set out in the Special Qualities, the *State of the Park Report*, the vision and recently adopted *Partnership Management Plan*.

- 3.3 A consultation software package is being procured for the purposes of the local plan consultations and this will assist officers in being able to analyse the responses in an efficient and effective manner.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 **Risk:** if the *Options Consultation Document* is not agreed by the National Park Authority for the purposes of consultation there will be a delay to the timetable for the Local Plan, including adoption, set out in the revised Local Development Scheme. The consequences of such a delay will be a delay to the adoption and implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy and the risk of planning by appeal.

- 4.2 **Mitigation:** The *Options Consultation Document* is a non-statutory part of the local plan process and it does not sign the Authority to any particular planning policy stance. The intention is to have as a recommendation to the NPA that any minor amendments that Members wish to see included in the final version of the document can be delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee and Chair of the Authority.

- 4.3 **Risk:** the Options Consultation is not carried out in an effective way, with not all officers and Members of the SDNPA and key stakeholders fully engaged.

- 4.4 **Mitigation:** effectively carrying out the communication and engagement strategy for the Options Consultation for both internal and external audiences and fully involving the Communications team.

5. Crime and Disorder Implication

- 5.1 There are no implications arising from this.

6. Human Rights Implications

- 6.1 There are no implications arising from this.

7. Equalities Act 2010

- 7.1 None

8. External Consultees

- 8.1 None

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Appendices 1. South Downs National Park *Options Consultation Document*
2. South Downs National Park *Options Consultation Document* Appendices

SDNPA Consultees Chief Executive Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Planning, Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Director of Operations, Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer & Legal Services.

Background Documents None