

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Planning Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>10 October 2024</b>
<b>By</b>	<b>Director of Planning (Interim)</b>
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Community Planning Update</b>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Update Members on the progress of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS) across the South Downs National Park</b>

**Note**

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**Recommendation:**

**The Planning Committee is asked to note the progress to date on the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS) across the South Downs National Park.**

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**Executive Summary**

The South Downs National Park Authority has set out a commitment in its Partnership Management Plan to support the development of high-quality community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the South Downs National Park – please see Outcome 9.2 and Policy 34. As such, support for community-led plans, and the volunteers who help to prepare them, contributes to the Partnership Management Plan. For the avoidance of doubt, community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS).

This report provides a biannual update to the planning committee about the preparation of community-led plans. The update is required as the main preparation of such plans is normally considered by Authority Officers under delegated powers. This report enables Members to note the breadth of community-led plans across the South Downs National Park, and the work currently being undertaken by Authority Officers and volunteers in their preparation. The report will also be used to inform the Authority Monitoring Report later this year. In summary:

- There are 62 designated neighbourhood areas in the South Downs National Park, of which 44 have “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans; and
- The Authority is the Lead Planning Authority for 7 of the 18 emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans; and
- The Authority has adopted 10 Parish/Village Design Statements, and a further 2 are being prepared as per the ninth edition of the South Downs Local Development Scheme.

The Authority is encouraging town and parish councils to engage proactively in the South Downs Local Plan Review, such as through the preparation of Parish Priorities Statements (PPS). The Authority has received and published 40 Parish Priorities Statements as of March 2024.

## I. Introduction

- I.1 The South Downs National Park Authority has set out a commitment in its Partnership Management Plan to support the development of high-quality community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the South Downs National Park – please see Outcome 9.2 and Policy 34. As such, support for community-led plans, and the volunteers who help to prepare them, contributes to the Partnership Management Plan. For the avoidance of doubt, community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS).
- I.2 The South Downs National Park Authority offers support to community planning groups at the statutory stages of plan-making, as required by legislation and Planning Practice Guidance. More specifically, the Authority:
- Responds to all Regulation 14 and 16 public consultations where an NDP may have a potential effect on the South Downs National Park and/or its setting; and
  - Supports all Authority-Led NDPs that require examination and referendum; and
  - Supports and undertakes the administrative process for adopting P/VDS as supplementary planning documents.

### Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)

- I.3 An NDP is prepared by a qualifying body (usually a town or parish council) as per the process / requirements set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. An NDP sets out a vision for the community and includes non-strategic planning policies which have been assessed to be in conformity with the Adopted Local Plan – in this case, the South Downs Local Plan. Once the NDP has passed a successful community referendum – and has been “made” by the local planning authority – the NDP becomes part of the Development Plan for the respective designated neighbourhood area.
- I.4 There are 44 “made” NDPs in the South Downs National Park, with a further 18 emerging NDPs at various stages of preparation – please see Section 2, and Appendices 1 and 2. If an NDP includes land both inside and outside of the South Downs National Park, the Authority agrees with the other local planning authority about who will be the Lead Planning Authority for that NDP. This is normally based on whether most of the parish population lives inside or outside the South Downs National Park. Of the 18 emerging NDPs, the Authority is the Lead for 7, of which 2 have confirmed that they do not wish to proceed.

### Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS)

- I.5 A P/VDS is used to identify, describe, and/or outline the distinctive and local landscape character, design and special qualities of a parish/village, especially those characteristics, design and qualities which are highly valued by local residents.
- I.6 The National Planning Policy Framework [December 2023] emphasises the importance of achieving well-designed and beautiful places. The Framework also explains that design guidance can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale, and that to carry weight in decision-making, such guidance should be produced as part of a plan or as a supplementary planning document. The Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for the preparation and adoption of a supplementary planning document, whilst the South Downs Statement of Community Involvement adds further requirements in relation to public consultation.
- I.7 A supplementary planning document adds further detail to policies in the Adopted Local Plan – in this case, the South Downs Local Plan. As its name suggests, the document is intended to supplement, rather than replace, existing planning policies. This means that although it is capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions, it does not, itself, form part of the Development Plan. As such, if adopted as a supplementary planning document, a P/VDS would supplement – and provide further detail and guidance to help interpret and implement – South Downs Local Plan Policies SD4 (Landscape Character) and SD5 (Design),

and the South Downs Design Guide, in relation to planning applications in a specific local area.

- 1.8 There are 10 adopted P/VDS in the South Downs National Park, with a further 2 P/VDS being prepared as per the ninth edition of the South Downs Local Development Scheme. These emerging design statements are for Upham and West Meon in Winchester District.

**2. The Authority’s Activities in relation to Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS).**

- 2.1 The Planning Committee was provided with a community planning update on 11 April 2024. Since then, the following has taken place, or is anticipated to take place:

- **Bramshott & Liphook NDP** was subject to Reg16 consultation in March-April 2024.
- **Bramshott & Liphook NDP** was subject to examination in May-July 2024.
- **Bramshott & Liphook NDP** will be subject to referendum on 23 October 2024.
- **Coldean NDP** was subject to Reg14 consultation in June-July 2024.
- **East Dean & Friston NDP** is subject to Reg14 consultation until 14 October 2024.
- **Peacehaven & Telscombe NDP** is currently subject to examination.
- **Petersfield NDP** was updated with minor modifications on 26 September 2024.
- **Pulborough NDP** is subject to a focused consultation until 08 October 2024.
- **West Saltdean NDP** was subject to Reg14 consultation in May-June 2024.
- **Selborne VDS** was adopted as a supplementary planning document in April 2024.
- **Upham VDS** was subject to its first public consultation in May-July 2024.
- **Upham VDS** is likely to be subject to its second public consultation in Autumn 2024.
- **West Meon PDS** is likely be subject to its second public consultation in Autumn 2024.

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)

- 2.2 There are 62 designated neighbourhood areas in the South Downs National Park, of which 44 have “made” NDPs – see Appendices 1 and 2. The 44 made NDPs form part of the Development Plan, alongside the South Downs Local Plan and the Minerals & Waste Local Plans. The remaining 18 designated neighbourhood areas are at various stages in the NDP process as set out in **Table 1** below.

Stage	Total NDPs	Authority Lead
<b>Made</b>	44	18
<b>Referendum</b>	1	0
<b>Examination</b>	2	0
<b>Reg16 submission stage</b>	0	0
<b>Reg14 pre-submission stage</b>	4	1
<b>Plans in preparation</b>	7	4
<b>Plans not proceeded</b>	4	2
<b>Designated neighbourhood areas</b>	62	25

**Table 1:** Status of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) as of September 2024.

- 2.3 **Plans not proceeded.** The 4 neighbourhood areas that have chosen not to proceed with the NDP process are Sheet, Singleton, Sompting, and the parish cluster of Steyning, Wiston, Ashurst and Bramber. The former two are wholly within the South Downs National Park, and the latter cluster agreed to disband and withdraw from their designated neighbourhood area. Since this time, the Bramber and Steyning NDPs have been “made” by the Authority.
- 2.4 **Plans in preparation.** There are 7 NDPs currently in preparation which have not yet reached the first formal stage of public consultation – i.e., Regulation 14 pre-submission. The South Downs National Park Authority is leading on the Alfriston, Easebourne, Funtington, and Greatham NDPs. There has been no preparation in relation to the Easebourne NDP, however the parish council did prepare a PDS which was adopted by the Authority in February 2023. As for the Alfriston, Funtington, and Greatham NDPs, the most recent correspondence was received in 2022/23. In terms of the 3 NDPs which are being led by other local planning authorities, these are the Lynchmere, Plaistow & Ifold, and Westchamnett NDPs. Authority Officers continue to liaise with the Lead Planning Authorities to offer advice and input where this is necessary to deliver the purposes and duty of the South Downs National Park.
- 2.5 **Reg 14 pre-submission stage.** There are 4 NDPs currently at the Reg 14 pre-submission stage. These are the Coldean, East Dean & Friston, West Chiltington, and West Saltdean NDPs. The Coldean and West Saltdean NDPs are being led by Brighton & Hove City Council and their pre-submission consultations were completed in Summer 2024. In terms of the East Dean & Friston NDP, this is being led by the Authority and the pre-submission consultation is live until 14 October 2024. As for the West Chiltington NDP, this is being led by Horsham District Council and a number of pre-submission consultations have been carried out.
- 2.6 **Reg 16 submission stage.** There are currently no NDPs at the Reg 16 submission stage.
- 2.7 **Examination.** The Peacehaven & Telscombe and Pulborough NDPs are currently at examination. In terms of the former, this is being led by Lewes District Council and the examination is ongoing. As for the latter, this is being led by Horsham District Council and the Examiner’s report from September 2021 concluded that the NDP should proceed to referendum subject to modifications. However, the Pulborough NDP has not yet proceeded given the water neutrality issues associated with the Sussex North Water Supply Zone. A focused, 6-week consultation on new Policy 16 (Water Neutrality) – and modifications to Policies 2, 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 13 – was carried out between 27 August and 08 October 2024. Prior to this, the Horsham Local Plan 2040 was submitted for Examination in July 2024 and includes a strategic policy on water neutrality.
- 2.8 **Referendum.** The Bramshott & Liphook NDP has been subject to a successful examination and will proceed to referendum on 23 October 2024.
- 2.9 **Plans made.** The made NDPs are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.10 **Plans updated.** Petersfield Town Council previously requested minor modifications to the Petersfield NDP. These included corrections, clarifications, updated maps and references, and some changes to the supporting text in relation to superseded national and local planning policies. The Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph 084a) explains that a local planning authority may make minor updates to a NDP at any time (but only with the consent of the qualifying body), and that consultation, examination and referendum are not required. The Authority has prepared a modification statement, and this was considered by the town council’s “Finances & General Purposes Committee” on 19 September 2024.

Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS)

- 2.11 The Authority has adopted 10 P/VDS as supplementary planning documents, and a further 2 P/VDS are currently being prepared as per the ninth edition of the South Downs Local Development Scheme. A summary of the status of P/VDS across the South Downs National Park is provided in **Table 2**.

**Table 2**

<b>Parish / Village Design Statement (P/VDS)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Buriton VDS</b>	Adopted	10/08/2017
<b>Clapham PDS</b>	Adopted	10/11/2022
<b>Easebourne PDS</b>	Adopted	09/02/2023
<b>East Dean &amp; Friston VDS</b>	Adopted	14/04/2016
<b>Hambledon VDS</b>	Adopted	09/09/2021
<b>Liss VDS</b>	Adopted	10/07/2014
<b>Lodsworth PDS</b>	Adopted	13/10/2016
<b>Swanmore VDS</b>	Adopted	12/09/2019
<b>Worldham VDS</b>	Adopted	10/09/2015
<b>Selborne VDS</b>	Adopted	11/04/2024
<b>West Meon P/VDS</b>	Preparation	2024/25 Q4
<b>Upham VDS</b>	Preparation	2024/25 Q4

**Table 2:** Status of Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS) as of September 2024.

### **3. Parish Priorities Statements (PPS) - An Alternative to Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS)**

- 3.1 The Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 has introduced Neighbourhood Priorities Statements. These are statements prepared by the local communities that summarise their principal needs and prevailing views for their local area. The statements are intended to provide a “light touch” alternative to NDPs. Whilst the statements do not carry the same weight as NDPs, the legislation requires local planning authorities to “have regard” to the statements when preparing local plans.
- 3.2 In February 2023, as an informal pilot of this approach, the Authority invited all town and parish councils to prepare “Parish Priorities Statements” (PPS) to inform the South Downs Local Plan Review – incl. development allocation and what facilities and amenities are needed to accompany such allocations. A template was provided which followed the format and content of the Neighbourhood Priorities Statements as set out in the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023. The template enables any PPS to be easily evolved into a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement as further legislation and guidance is published.
- 3.3 There are 176 town and parish councils in the South Downs National Park. As of March 2024, 40 PPS have been submitted and published by the Authority – equivalent to one fifth of all town and parish councils. There are some town and parish councils who feel that their existing NDP and/or P/VDS clearly sets out their aspirations, whilst others have prepared a combination of NDP, P/VDS and/or PPS, or none at all. It is understood that some town and parish councils are still preparing their PPS, and/or may choose to prepare a PPS once it is clear about which sites may progress as allocations in the South Downs Local Plan Review.
- 3.4 The Authority encourages town and parish councils to consider preparing PPS as these offer an alternative and efficient way to influence the South Downs Local Plan Review. Moreover,

the Authority will continue to accept and publish PPS as and when they are received and will “have regard” to them so far as is possible depending on the stage of the review.

**4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The South Downs National Park Authority receives funding – known as the “New Burdens Grant” - from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support NDP work. The NDP cost to the Authority (excl. staff costs) is normally covered by the grant. If a town or parish council decide to review their “made” NDP, then the Authority can use the grant to cover the review cost, as proportionate to the scope of the review.
- 4.2 A table listing the 44 “made” NDPs is shown in Appendix I. The examination and referendum costs for the 18 emerging NDPs is unlikely to exceed the grant.
- 4.3 In terms of P/VDS and PPS, there are no costs to the Authority beyond existing staff costs.

**5. Other Implications & Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

- 5.1 There are not considered to be any risks associated with this report or decision. In terms of any other implications (beyond resource implications), please see **Table 3** below.

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	None.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	None. All is within budget and/or grants received.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The Authority seeks to achieve best value in all the work it undertakes on community planning across the South Downs National Park. Working in partnership with town and parish councils is an effective way to share costs and reduce the burden on plan making for community planning. That said, the Authority encourages town and parish councils to consider preparing Parish Priorities Statements as these offer an alternative/efficient way to influence plan-making.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate Plan Objectives does this deliver against?	PMP Outcome 9.2 and Policy 34. Community planning also has the potential to contribute to the three corporate plan objectives in relation to climate change, nature recovery, and a National Park for all.
Links to other projects or partner organisations?	Development Plan for the South Downs National Park and neighbouring local planning authorities.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority’s climate change objectives	NDPs provide an opportunity to prepare more localised policies on climate change.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	The requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 is considered for appropriate expenditure and programmes undertaken by the Authority.

<b>Implication</b>	<b>Yes*/No</b>
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Due regard has been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equalities Act 2010. The qualifying body with responsibility for preparing an NDP must prepare a Consultation Statement demonstrating how they have consulted the local community and statutory consultees. The Examiner who assesses the plan will consider whether the Consultation Statement meets regulatory requirements.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None.
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None.
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None.

**Table 3:** Other implications for community planning in the South Downs National Park.

## **MIKE HUGHES**

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Appendices	Appendix 1 - A Table of "Made" Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) Appendix 2 - A Map of Designated Neighbourhood Areas & "Made" Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)
SDNPA Consultees	Legal Services; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; and Director of Planning (Interim)
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	None

