

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **19 September 2024**
By **Nature-based Solutions Manager**
Title of Report **Glynde Estate Whole Estate Plan Endorsement**

Decision

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to endorse the Glynde Estate Whole Estate Plan at Appendix I.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2015, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) introduced the concept of Whole Estate Plans (WEPs) to encourage open dialogue between land-owning organisations and the SDNPA. The WEPs look to promote collaboration between individual estates and the SDNPA to help achieve the ambitions of both continuously striving for synergy, opportunities and understanding whilst ensuring estates are suitably equipped to meet the challenges they face in the 21 Century land management. A WEP is a non-statutory plan, which demonstrates the overall position, and aspirations an organisation has, as an Estate. Plans do not have to cover a specific timeframe and may be updated to reflect changes in circumstance or withdrawn if appropriate.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 WEPs are a progressive and almost unique approach by a Local Planning Authority (LPA) or National Park Authority (NPA) in the UK as they look to foster good working relationships with key stakeholders and facilitate better understanding of the issues surrounding sustainable rural estate communities – of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They are not focused on or to be limited to planning matters but rather the whole husbandry of the Estate – farming, woodland management, conservation, access provision, cultural heritage etc. This enables the Estate to demonstrate how they contribute to the policies and outcomes identified in the South Downs National Park Authority 2020- 2025 Partnership Management Plan and support response to the [DEFRA \(2024\) Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework \(31 January 2024\)](#).
- 2.2 The South Downs Local Plan (2019) sets out many of the planning policies to be used in the determination of planning applications in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and recognises the significant influence of the Estates across the SDNP and the impact the management activities of these Estates has in the short, medium and long term. Policy SD 25 p.103 of the SDNPA (2019) Local Plan states, “*positive regard will be had..... where development proposals are part of a WEP that has been endorsed by the National Park Authority and deliver multiple benefits in line with the purposes and special qualities of the National Park*”. The inclusion of a development proposal within a WEP, however, does not guarantee that planning permission will be granted and any proposal will still need to comply with relevant development plan policies. A WEP can also be used to help guide and support funding bids,

future neighbourhood plan production, agri-environment and forestry schemes and with other Natural Capital projects. Beyond the finished product, the WEP process also provides value in terms of relationship building; between the Estate and the SDNPA, as well as the local community.

3. The Whole Estate Plan Process

3.1 Guidance on producing WEPs was published in March 2022 and is available online.

3.2 The process catalogues the various elements of a WEPs journey into five sequential stages allowing easy tracking and clarity for estates on the exact point of the journey they are currently on whilst clearly identifying next steps. Stage 1 is the inception stage and sets the framework for the WEP journey including introducing the process that must be adopted to achieve endorsement. Stage 2 focuses on the early draft, the Member site visit and the first internal SDNPA consultation involving Members and officers. Stage 3 builds on the feedback from the first consultation, which informs the final draft. This stage also contains the second and final internal SDNPA consultation. Stage 4 focuses on the creation of the final version of the WEP informed by the feedback received in the second consultation. This stage also includes the endorsement at P&R Committee. Stage 5 is the post endorsement stage and outlines the requirements of an Estate once the WEP has been successfully endorsed. This stage includes commitment to annual reviews, which track performance against the action plan.

Figure 1. Below shows the process.

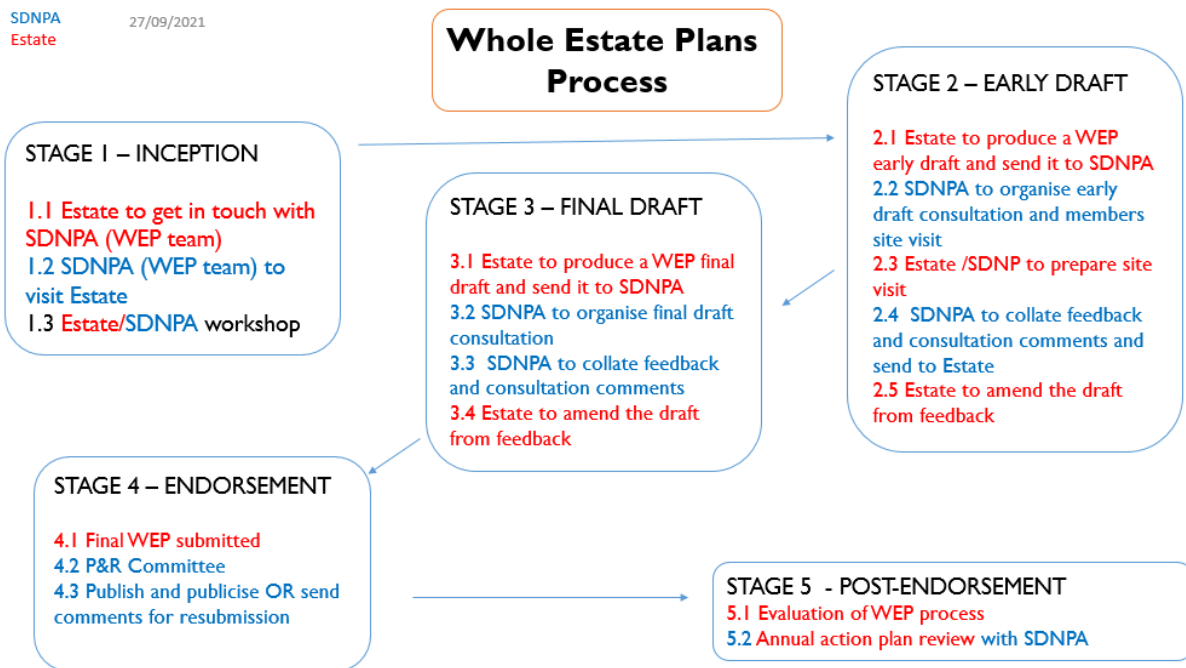


Figure 1. SDNPA WEP Process

4. Issues for consideration

4.1 A WEP is comprised of four elements.

- A Vision, which highlights the estates priorities.
- An Asset Audit, which provides a complete picture of all the assets of the estate, both physical and non-physical.
- Ecosystem Services and Analysis, helps to identify the benefits obtained from nature, put value to them and build them into decision-making and management.
- An Action Plan is the response to the analysis findings and identifies key actions and projects.

Figure 2. below which shows the four elements of a WEP in an infographic.

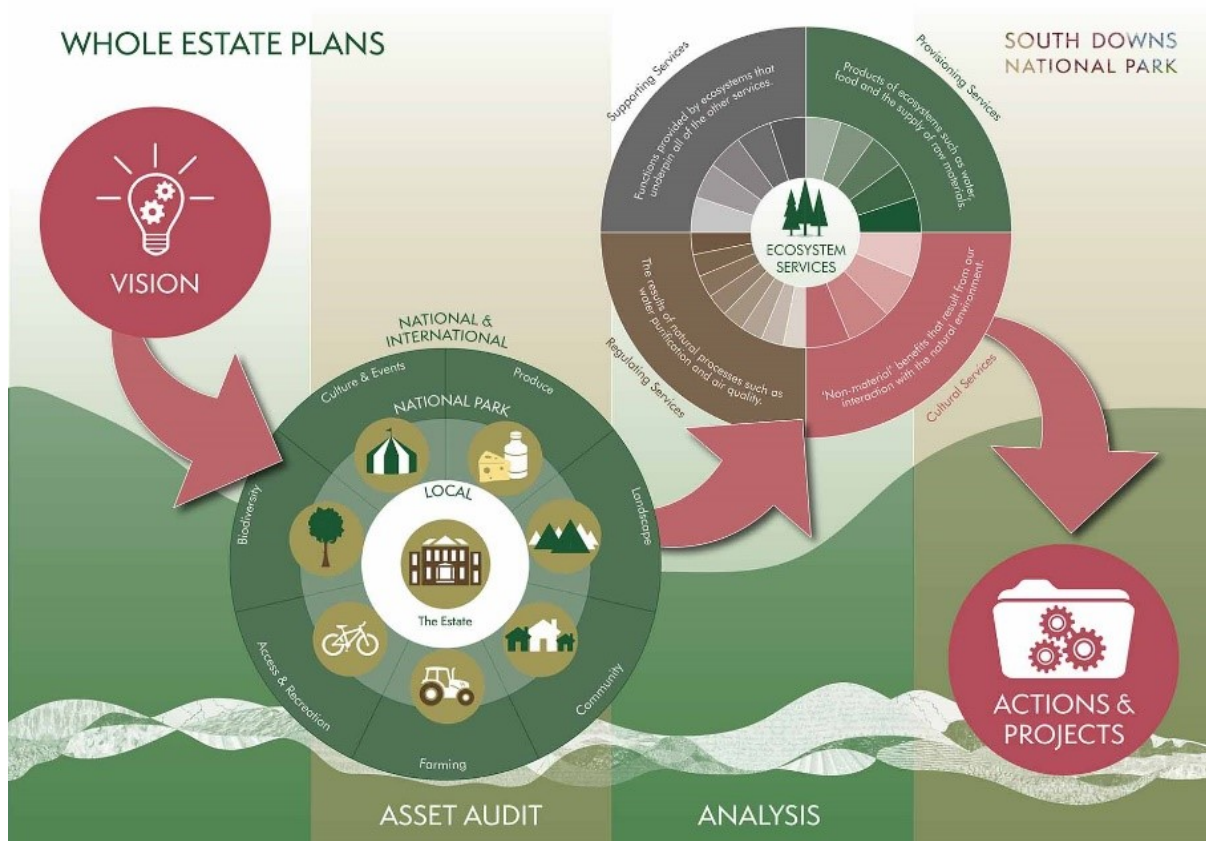


Figure 2. SDNPA WEP Elements infographic.

- 4.2 Officers look at how all these elements relate to each other, i.e. is the Vision a genuine representation of the actions proposed, and are the actions evidenced by the Asset Audit and Ecosystem Services Analysis? Estates should also be able to demonstrate that they have engaged with the local community during the process of producing the WEP.
- 4.3 Glynde Estate initially engaged with the WEP process in early 2018 resulting in the creation of an early draft in October 2018, however, the Covid Pandemic halted works on the WEP as the Estate focussed its efforts on battling with the challenges of operating in a Covid locked-down society. Following the Pandemic and the economic aftermath, much reflection took place, acting as a catalyst for the Estate to re-evaluate its future plans. This resulted in the realisation that the current 2019 Early Draft WEP was not fit for purpose in meeting the needs of Glynde Estate in a post Covid world and therefore required a complete re-write to more accurately reflect the aspirations of the Estate.
- 4.4 After much needed time to reflect, Glynde Estate, with support from consultants Rural Solutions Ltd, re-engaged with the WEP process in January 2023. Following a public consultation event held at the Estate on 10 May 2023, the early draft was submitted on 8th February 2024, which triggered the first of two internal consultations with the NPA. The Estate also hosted a Member Site Visit on 27 February 2024. The final draft was submitted on 23 May 2024, which acted as the catalyst for the final internal NPA consultation.
- 4.5 To ensure the WEP passed efficiently and effectively through the governance structures of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), the Glynde Estate WEP progressed through the complete SDNPA process articulated in Item 3 above, to ensure that SDNPA Members were afforded the opportunity to consider and feedback on the WEP. Members were consulted on the early draft WEP in early February 2024, at the Member Site Visit held in late February 2024 and on the final version where Members were given the opportunity to feedback through the final consultation held in June 2024.
- 4.6 The Glynde Estate, located in East Sussex, is a 2,428 hectare estate that has its assets split between two locations separated by seventeen miles. The larger, core holding is centred

around Glynde Place in the East of the South Downs National Park and consists of 1,877 hectares of land and is the focus of the Whole Estate Plan. Glynde Estate includes lowland farmland, chalk downland, parkland, estuarine flood plain, permanent pastures and circa 384 hectares of forestry and woodland. The estate has 180 houses and cottages, 70 commercial units and five farm holdings.

- 4.7 The WEP for the Glynde Estate (Appendix 1) covers a period between 2024 to 2040.
- 4.8 Glynde Estate conducted a public consultation event in the form of a drop-in session held on the 10 May 2023 in an attempt to engage the community in the process. This event successfully engaged 95 members of the local community.
- 4.9 Since January 2023 officers from across the SDNPA have had meetings with representatives of Glynde Estate to discuss issues. During the early draft consultation (8 February 2024), Member Site Visit (27 February 2024) and final draft consultation (23 May 2024) both officers and Members were provided with opportunities to comment on the emerging versions of the WEP.
- 4.10 The WEP for the Glynde Estate has progressed in accordance with the SDNPA WEP Process and Guidance.
- 4.11 The WEP has been well received by officers across the SDNPA, and officers are encouraged by how comments and issues raised throughout the process have been taken on board and the WEP amended accordingly. Overall, the WEP fits well with the Authority's Partnership Management Plan and supports the delivery of the UK Government Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (2024).
- 4.12 The following provides a summary assessment of each of the four elements that make up the WEP.

Vision

- 4.13 The Glynde Estate 'Vision' pledges that by 2040, *"the landscape, heritage, natural and built capital the estate cares for, the businesses Glynde Estate hosts and the communities it forms part of are as healthy, vital, engaged, connected and successful as they can possibly be."* The WEP goes further by setting four core objectives to provide a guiding set of principles for the future management of the land and investment in the Estate. These are, Viable living landscapes, Community vitality, Vibrant and relevant heritage, and Sustainable economic futures.

Asset Audit

- 4.14 The Asset Audit, referred to in the WEP as 'Contributing to the South Downs National Park Qualities' provides a thorough account of all the features, activities and services on the Estate. These include; heritage, natural capital assets, farming, environmental designations, biodiversity, freshwater habitats, semi-improved grassland, woodland, and number of hectares in environmental stewardship schemes. It also highlights some of the challenges facing the Estate such as 15% of the Estate in a Flood Zone and 57% of the Estate within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ). This is well evidenced and supported by maps, which are successful in explaining and demonstrating how the Estate fits in the SDNP context. It especially achieves this by presenting the assets on the Estate through the 'lens' of the special qualities as defined by the South Downs National Park Authority. The Asset Audit also contains a helpful infographic on page 21.
- 4.15 It is considered that the Asset Audit provides a comprehensive review of the assets and provides a solid foundation for expanding or developing the projects within the Action Plan.

Ecosystem Services and Analysis

- 4.16 On page 31, the Estate provides a comprehensive Ecosystem Services Chapter in the WEP that is categorised into four sections: Supporting Services, Provisioning Services, Cultural Services and Regulating Services. The analysis of this ecosystem services section, follows and takes stock of the key themes arising from the vision and the four core objectives. Although moving away from presenting the findings in a table format, this analysis is clearly evident, with consideration afforded to the current performance and condition of the Estate, whilst

also identifying the strengths, challenges and opportunities whilst setting out where action and investment is required to enable delivery in the future.

- 4.17 It is considered that Glynde Estate have demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of what they have as well as articulating clearly the opportunities and challenges facing the Estate which inspire the final section of the WEP, Project Plan and Outcomes for All.

Project Plan and ‘Making it Happen’

- 4.18 The Glynde Estate WEP has cleverly captured and embedded its required actions and projects ‘to make the plan happen’ across the WEP rather than opting for a more traditional Action Plan that follows the Ecosystem Services and Analysis Chapters as witnessed in previous WEPs. The Vision section not only sets the vision for 2040 whilst also providing guiding principles for future management of and investment in the Estate but also looks to articulate the Estate’s response to achieve the outcomes it seeks. This high level outcomes orientated table can be found on page 7, titled, *Towards our Vision; our proposed response to achieve the outcomes sought*. In addition to this table is a Project Plan which can be found on page 80. The Project Plan represents a deeper dive into the projects that the Estate will hope to deliver in the future in pursuit of its vision.
- 4.19 Following on from the Project Plan Chapter the Estate has written an ‘Outcomes for All’ Chapter to articulate the close alignment between the Estate’s objectives and those of the Authority. This concluding chapter, sets out how the projects identified in the previous Chapter will directly support the Outcomes in the SDNPA Partnership Management Plan 2020-2025.
- 4.20 It is considered that there is a clear link between the analysis work outlined in the Ecosystem Services and Analysis Chapters and the future actions the Estate is committed to delivering in response. The inclusion of the table on page 7 demonstrates the Estate’s commitment at high level whilst the Project Plan on pages 80-82 provide a more granulated project focussed account of the Estate’s response. The Project Plan offers SMART targets listed in the table on pages 80-82 which are welcome and will provide clarity for The Estate when ‘Making it Happen’ (p6).
- 4.21 For the reasons set out above, the Glynde Estate Whole Estate Plan is recommended for endorsement.

5. Options & cost implications

- 5.1 There are no direct cost implications associated with the consideration of the endorsement of the WEP.
- 5.2 If endorsed, the Authority will continue to work with Glynde Estate to realise some of the projects identified. The Authority will also conduct annual performance reviews in line with Stage 5 of the SDNPA WEP process.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 If the WEP is endorsed, it will be placed on the SDNPA website and officers will be made aware that it is now a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.

7. Other Implications

Implication	Yes/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No, although applications for grant funds or planning permission may be submitted for consideration relating to actions highlighted within the WEP.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No. If endorsed, the WEP will be included on the SDNPA website, however update and review of the document is the responsibility of the Estate. If the WEP is amended, it will need to be considered again by Officers and Members.

How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	N/A
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	<p>Outcome 1: Landscape & Beauty</p> <p>Outcome 2: Increasing Resilience</p> <p>Outcome 3: Habitats and Species</p> <p>Outcome 4: Arts & Heritage</p> <p>Outcome 5: Outstanding Experiences</p> <p>Outcome 6: Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Outcome 7: Health & Wellbeing</p> <p>Outcome 8: Creating Custodians</p> <p>Outcome 9: Great Places to Live</p> <p>Outcome 10: Great Places to Work</p>
Links to other projects or partner organisations	N/A
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	The vision pledges that Glynde Estate will have materially increased the volume of carbon captured by its natural capital against the 2024 baseline whilst also vastly reducing its carbon usage across the estate's activities.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	This decision has no direct equalities implications. This document will be used to inform future decisions by the Authority, which will be subject to their own equalities impact assessments.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None

8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 8.1 There is the potential for a reputational risk for the SDNPA through failure to endorse the WEP, without substantive reasons, after an Estate has gone through the process of producing a WEP that meets the criteria for endorsement. This risk is mitigated through the committee process and the requirement for the committee to give appropriate reasons for its decisions in public. There is also a risk of WEPs being misunderstood and considered as

planning documents only, or being interpreted as a 'green light' for development. Both of these risks are mitigated by providing continued support to Estates, case officers and other interested parties and providing guidance on the SDNPA website.

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Appendices	I. Glynde Estate Whole Estate Plan
SDNPA Consultees	Countryside Policy Manager; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	SDNP Partnership Management Plan SDNPA (2022) Whole Estate Plans Guidance SDNPA New WEP Process

