

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	14 November 2024
By	Director of Planning (Interim)
Title of Report	Local Plan Review: Regulation 18 Consultation
Purpose of Report	The purpose of this report is for Planning Committee to consider and recommend that the National Park Authority approves the Regulation 18 consultation for the South Downs Local Plan Review and consults on it in accordance with the Community Involvement Plan.

Decision

Recommendation:

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Agree the Community Involvement Plan for the Regulation 18 consultation (Appendix 1).**

The Committee is recommended to recommend to the NPA:

- 2. That, subject to any comments of the Planning Committee being considered, the National Park Authority approves the Regulation 18 consultation for the South Downs Local Plan Review (Appendix 2).**
 - 3. To delegate authority to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee and the Chair of the Authority, to make any minor and presentational changes required to the Regulation 18 consultation document.**
-

Executive Summary

The South Downs Local Plan Review commenced in May 2022 and is progressing in accordance with the timetable agreed as part of the Local Development Scheme in December 2022. This envisages:

- Regulation 18 public consultation January-March 2025;
- Regulation 19 publication of the proposed submission Plan January-March 2026;
- Submission to the Planning Inspectorate for examination July-September 2026; and
- Subject to a successful examination, adoption April-June 2027.

In March 2024 Planning Committee agreed to carry out an additional 'early participation' consultation on the scope of the Local Plan Review and how people wished to be involved in it. This included consulting on the Project Initiation Document for the Local Plan Review, the Local Development Scheme and the Statement of Community Involvement. This consultation was carried out between 8 July and 16 September 2024 and its results are covered by the preceding report on this agenda.

The purpose of this report is to explain the purpose of the Regulation 18 consultation, set out how we propose to carry it out and summarise its contents, regulatory assessments and evidence base.

I.0 National Context

- I.1 The South Downs Local Plan Review is being prepared during a time of significant changes in the national planning system. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) sets out the framework for a new plan-making system which will be introduced via secondary legislation. The transition date to this new system was initially any Local Plans submitted to the Planning Inspectorate after 30 June 2025, but Government recently consulted on moving this date back to December 2026. This transition date is crucial to whether the South Downs Local Plan Review needs to accord with the existing plan-making system or the new one proposed in the LURA. Part of the reason for carrying out the consultation in summer 2024 was to comply with the requirements of the new system so that the Plan could be resilient to these changes in legislation. If the December 2026 transition date is confirmed in the final NPPF, and the Local Plan Review meets its agreed timetable, then it will be submitted and examined under the existing plan-making system. This lessens the risk of the project because there is very little detail or guidance on how the new plan-making system would work.
- I.2 National planning policy has also changed significantly over the course of the Plan's production. In December 2023 the then Conservative Government revised the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to be more flexible about Local Plans meeting housing need figures. In July 2024 the new Labour Government published a consultation concerning further proposed revisions to the NPPF reversing these changes and strengthening the requirement for Local Plans to meet housing need figures and work cooperatively with neighbouring authorities to address any unmet needs. The consultation also proposed a new 'standard method' for calculating those housing need figures which significantly increased them. A detailed report on this draft NPPF came to Planning Committee in September. The changes to the NPPF are still draft, and a finalised version is expected by the end of 2024. However, the Written Ministerial Statement accompanying the proposals in July is a material consideration and clearly sets out the Government's agenda for growth, including the aspiration to deliver 1.5 million homes during this Parliament.
- I.3 Importantly, it should be noted that the proposed changes to the NPPF do not weaken the protections for National Parks in paragraphs 182 and 183. They are still afforded the highest landscape status, great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty, conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage, and the scale and extent of development is 'limited'. Permission should be refused for major development (defined by taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated) other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.
- I.4 The 2010 Circular for English National Parks and the Broads confirms that National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing and the expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services (paragraph 78). Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) says that NPPF policies for protecting National Parks may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs for development in full through the plan-making process, and they are unlikely to be suitable areas for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining (non-designated) areas.
- I.5 Section 245 of the LURA, which amends the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, strengthened the previous 'duty of regard' to the purposes of National Parks to a duty to 'seek to further' those purposes. This duty applies to ourselves as a National Park Authority, to our neighbouring Local Planning Authorities and to other statutory bodies including the Planning Inspectorate.
- I.6 Further changes to legislation and national policy are expected next year, including National Development Management Policies, which will replace the decision-making elements of the

NPPF with statutory national policies carrying the same weight as Local Plan policies and trumping them where there is any conflict. These are likely to have a significant impact on the scope and content of Local Plan policies. Once the NPPF is revised consequential changes are also expected to the PPG, including clarification on whether National Parks should use the new standard method to calculate housing need and how any figures should be distributed between them and intersecting local authorities. These changes will be taken into account when preparing the proposed submission Local Plan for publication under Regulation 19 in early 2026.

2.0 Purpose and Content of the Regulation 18 Consultation

2.1 The Regulation 18 Consultation is the first statutory consultation under the current plan-making system (The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012). The regulations specify that:

- “(1) A local planning authority must—
- (a) notify each of the bodies or persons specified in paragraph (2) of the subject of a local plan which the local planning authority propose to prepare, and
 - (b) invite each of them to make representations to the local planning authority about what a local plan with that subject ought to contain”.

2.2 The contents of a Regulation 18 consultation are therefore quite broad and can vary between a very high level ‘issues and options’ type document to a full draft Local Plan. It is, however, the only formal opportunity for a Local Planning Authority to consider the representations received and use them to shape the final Local Plan. The next ‘Regulation 19’ publication will be of the Local Plan the Authority intends to submit for examination, and all representations are sent to the Planning Inspectorate with only limited opportunities for the Authority to make further modifications to the Local Plan. It is important therefore that the Regulation 18 consultation contains enough information to get good quality feedback from statutory consultees, the community and the development sector to inform the final policies and allocations.

2.3 It is proposed that this Regulation 18 consultation will include:

- An introductory chapter explaining the purpose of the Local Plan Review and what the consultation will cover;
- The vision and objectives for the Local Plan Review;
- The proposed thematic policies (identifying changes compared to the current Local Plan);
- Existing Local Plan site allocations which have not been implemented and will be carried over into the Local Plan Review (again identifying any changes);
- New proposed site allocations; and
- Settlement maps showing existing Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan allocations alongside the proposed new ones.

2.4 What it does not include are:

- The explanatory chapters, supporting text and monitoring information. These will be updated for the Regulation 19 Submission Local Plan.
- Any discussion about overall housing need figures. This is due to the uncertainty at national level as described above and because further work and discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, the Planning Inspectorate and neighbouring LPAs will be carried out in 2025 to establish the appropriate need figure to use as the starting point for the housing provision in the National Park.
- Any conclusions about overall housing supply figures. The Authority has carried out a very comprehensive and robust assessment of approximately 800 sites put forward in this and previous Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan processes and has published its

provisional findings. Those sites that are considered to merit allocation are included in this consultation, however these will be reviewed in the light of feedback and any further evidence. Additional sites have recently been put forward which are yet to be assessed, and further sites may be submitted at Regulation 18 or later stages in the Local Plan Review process. It is therefore not possible to give a final position on overall housing capacity and supply at this stage.

3.0 How the Regulation 18 Consultation will be carried out

- 3.1 As required by the Statement of Community Involvement, a Community Involvement Plan has been produced for the Regulation 18 consultation, and is appended to this report at **Appendix I**.
- 3.2 In summary, this says we will run a formal consultation for a minimum of 8 weeks in January to March 2025. The consultation will be open to all and will seek to inform and receive comments from the widest possible range of people. Methods of consultation will include:
- Email notifications to the statutory consultees set out in legislation, these include Town & Parish Councils, County and District Councils and relevant Unitary Authorities, government agencies and relevant utility service providers.
 - Email notifications to other organisations, groups or individuals who may have an interest in the Local Plan Review, including access forums, countryside and conservation groups, youth and elderly persons' groups and the development sector.
 - Email notifications to everyone registered for Local Plan updates.
 - Publicising the consultation through the SDNPA website, social media, through press releases, articles in regular South Downs Newsletters and radio and local TV coverage where opportunities arise. We will also provide content for Parish and Town Councils to include in their regular communications with residents.
- 3.3 During the consultation period the following activities are proposed to encourage and inform participation:
- Use of an online consultation platform to display and provide opportunity to comment on the consultation document in an accessible and engaging format, with use of maps and an online exhibition space;
 - Publish a short video explaining the role of the Local Plan Review and how to respond;
 - Create specific consultation content / events to target young people aged 13-25 years old;
 - Publish a virtual webinar, recorded and made available online;
 - Put on LPR roadshow events – 5 drop-in exhibitions across the National Park, open outside of school and working hours with at least one event held on a Saturday;
 - Hold Parish and Town Council meetings in each of the three county areas across the National Park; and
 - Hold or attend relevant stakeholder meetings including (but not limited to); farmers breakfasts, agents forum and youth councils.

4.0 Summary of Proposed Policies and Allocations

- 4.1 This is a Local Plan Review and its starting point is an award winning South Downs Local Plan which has many elements that remain relevant and fit for the future of the National Park. These include:
- Its landscape-led approach, reflecting the primary purpose of National Park designation – to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area;
 - An ecosystems services approach, recognising that human influences are part of a much wider natural capital system which provides us with goods and services such as clean air and water and food;

- A medium dispersed growth strategy, reflecting the multi-centric character of the many towns and villages spread across the National Park and the need for their communities to thrive and grow sustainably.

4.2 The Local Plan does, however, need to be updated to take account of changes at a national and local level, revised National Park priorities and to add in new site allocations to extend its plan period to 2042.

Vision and Objectives

4.3 The vision for the National Park was set during its first Partnership Management Plan and covers the period to 2050. This same vision was used for the adopted Local Plan, which also included a suite of objectives setting out how the Local Plan should contribute to meeting that wider vision. The vision was consulted on as part of the summer engagement and 85% of respondents were either neutral, satisfied or happy with the existing vision. However, some suggestions for improvements were received. The vision will also be considered as part of the current review of the Partnership Management Plan. In the light of this ongoing work it is recommended that the wording of both the vision and objectives remain unchanged in the Regulation 18 consultation, and any further comments be considered prior to finalising the Regulation 19 version.

Policies

4.4 The adopted Local Plan includes 55 thematic policies, split into:

- Core Policies (overarching principles of development);
- Strategic Policies (fundamental to achieving the vision); and
- Development Management Policies (providing more detail on specific issues).

4.5 For Regulation 18 stage the policy numbers remain as per the existing Local Plan to make it easier for people to see what changes are proposed, with new policies numbered NEW1 etc. At Regulation 19 stage these policies will be comprehensively re-numbered. However, for this consultation the policies have just been re-ordered in the document into the following groupings to make them easier to find:

- Core Policies
- Environment: Landscape & Heritage, Climate Action, Nature Recovery, Water & Pollution
- National Park for All: Homes, Resilient and Vibrant Communities & Economy, Infrastructure

4.6 Some of the policies remain fit for purpose and are proposed to be carried forward into the Local Plan Review unchanged. Many have minor amendments to account for changes such as to the Use Classes Order or national policy and guidance. The following policies have substantial changes, have been given a full review or are entirely new:

- **SD2:** Ecosystems Services – expanded to include Regenerative Design and Environmental Net Gain.
- **SD25:** Development Strategy – clarifications and increased opportunities for appropriate community-led development outside of settlement boundaries.
- **SD5:** Design and **NEW1:** Accessible Homes – amendments to design criteria, addition of space standards and daylight and sunlight standards, and a new policy covering accessible homes standards.
- **SD12:** Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage – amendments reflecting legislation changes and National Park purposes, Historic England advice and relevant evidence documents.

- **NEW2** Designated Sites Hierarchy and **SD9**: Nature Recovery – separated out designated sites hierarchy from SD9, which now includes Biodiversity Net Gain and links to Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- **SD10 and NEW3-NEW7** International Sites – separated out each International Nature Site with updated policy criteria including on water and nutrient neutrality.
- **SD11**: Trees, Woodlands, Hedgerows and Scrub – addition of scrub as an important habitat and amended criteria to reflect national policy and standing advice from Natural England.
- **SD48**: Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources – updated requirements for net zero operational carbon, reducing energy use and avoiding fossil fuels, reducing embodied carbon, maximum water consumption standards and sustainable building materials.
- **SD51**: Renewable Energy – amendments to clarify the scale and type of renewable energy development acceptable within this National Park, supporting community energy schemes and identifying potential sites for solar installations.
- **SD17**: Protection of the Water Environment, **SD49**: Flood Risk Management and **SD50**: Sustainable Drainage – amendments promoting a catchment and landscape-led approach, prioritising nature-based solutions and increasing protections for water quality and quantity.
- **SD26**: Housing Supply – additional criterion safeguarding existing dwellings. New housing figures to be added at Regulation 19 stage.
- **SD28**: Affordable Homes – amendments to size of developments where a proportion of affordable homes will be sought, the tenure of such housing and who should manage them, intended to address local needs and past delivery issues. Also clarity about the weight to be given to non-compliance if there are viability issues and the use of review mechanisms. Additional criterion supporting redevelopment of existing affordable housing areas at higher densities.
- **SD29**: Rural Exception Sites – amendments to support delivery of rural exception sites by community-led groups by allowing up to 20% of the housing to be market housing where it is essential to the delivery of the affordable housing.
- **SD30**: Replacement and Subdivision of Dwellings – clarification that this policy applies to subdivisions as well as new build replacements, and that it applies inside and outside settlement boundaries. Limitations on size of new dwellings clarified within the policy, based on floorspace rather than numbers of bedrooms.
- **SD31**: Householder Development – expansion of policy to include all householder development, addition of specific design criteria for this type of development and limitations on size of extensions clarified within the policy, based on floorspace rather than numbers of bedrooms.
- **SD32**: Rural Workers Dwellings – previous agricultural and forestry workers’ dwelling policy expanded to include all rural workers. Functional and financial tests remain unchanged, so will still have to demonstrate an essential need relating to the land holding.
- **SD33**: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople – policy rationalised and linked to up-to-date needs assessments. Previously identified allocation sites listed but further work needed to address land supply issues.
- **SD35**: Employment Land – policy updated with current evidence on the need for office, industrial and warehousing space and changes of use from industrial to office facilitated to address the imbalance in uses identified in the Employment Land Review.

- **NEW8:** Viticulture, Winemaking and Wine Tourism – new policy to reflect the increasing importance of this sector, and the specific challenges and opportunities around wine making and tourism in a protected landscape.
- **SD23:** Regenerative Tourism – amendments reflecting the UK National Parks’ adoption of ‘Regenerative Tourism’ which seeks net positive benefits to National Parks from such development.
- **SD45:** Green Infrastructure – amendments to reflect Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Principles.
- **SD46:** Public Open Space, Sport and Recreation – amendments to reflect Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Standards and the Fields in Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sports and Play, and links to local evidence studies. Revised table of standards applies across the National Park rather than having different standards for each district.
- **SD47:** Local Green Space – updated list of allocated Local Green Spaces based on the Local Green Space Assessment 2024.
- **SD20:** Walking/Wheeling, Cycling and Equestrian Routes – amendments to incorporate ‘wheeling’ terminology (includes manual and powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters) and clarify that non-motorised user routes can continue beyond National Park boundaries.
- **SD44:** Telecommunications – scope of policy confined to telecommunications as other utilities infrastructure is dealt with under SD42. Amendments to clarify that the site should be the least harmful of the realistic options in terms of its impact on National Park purposes and any mitigation needs to be appropriate to the landscape and ecology of the site and its immediate surroundings.

Existing Site Allocations

4.7 The adopted South Downs Local Plan includes 37 site allocations, nine of which have been implemented. The remaining 28 need to be carried over into the new Local Plan. In some cases planning permission has been granted for development on these sites and the policy criteria need to be updated to take account of evidence submitted at application stage. Other amendments are proposed as a result of pre-application discussions or a change in circumstances. These changes are summarised below.

- **SD56:** Shoreham Cement Works (Strategic Site) – this is a full review of the allocation taking into account the evidence gathered as part of the Area Action plan process. Detailed design criteria have been incorporated, but the mix and quantum of uses is still subject to further work in 2025.
- **SD57:** North Street Quarter (Strategic Site) – substantial changes have been made to this policy to reflect evidence submitted for the Pheonix and Former Bus Station planning applications. The policy has been split into three sub-areas to make it clearer to apply as these areas are now coming forward separately. Further work is needed to establish the mix and quantum of uses on the Eastgate (Wenban Smith) site.
- **SD63:** Land South of the A272 at Hinton Marsh, Cheriton - minor change to delete criterion j) as the area of land previously intended for public access has been replaced by other land in the estate which is secured for public access through a stewardship scheme.
- **SD64:** Land South of London Road, Coldwaltham - minor change to Use Classes Order reference.
- **SD65:** Land at Park Lane, Droxford – substantial change to reduce the capacity from 26 to 5-10 homes due to sewer capacity constraints. This number of dwellings would no longer require a full Transport Assessment.
- **SD66:** Cowdray Works Yard, Easebourne – minor change to Use Classes Order reference.

- **SD71:** Land at Petersfield Road, Greatham – minor change to Use Classes Order reference and to revise capacity to match planning permission granted on appeal for 37 dwellings.
- **SD74:** Land at Castelmer Fruit Farm, Kingston – minor change to revise capacity to take account of planning permission granted for 10 dwellings (replacing 1 existing so net 9).
- **SD76:** Land at Old Malling Farm, Lewes – minor change to revise capacity to up to 226 homes to match planning permission.
- **SD77:** Malling Brooks, Lewes – minor change to the Use Classes Order reference and update to criterion f) on ecology.
- **SD79:** Holmbush Caravan Park, Midhurst – minor change to include Class C2 (residential institutions) use.
- **SD86:** Land at Loppers Ash, South Harting – minor change to delete criterion 1a as it is considered difficult to achieve whilst minimising the hard surfaced areas as per 2b.
- **SD88:** Stedham Sawmill, Stedham – substantial change to reduce allocation site area and delete reference to new commercial space as pre-application discussions indicate that the existing commercial development is to be retained.
- **SD89:** Land South of Church Road, Steep – minor change to reduce site area and quantum in line with recent planning application (resolution to grant).

New Site Allocations

4.8 48 new site allocations are proposed for consultation as set out in the table below. These sites were identified through the Land Availability Assessment 2024 (Provisional Findings), which reviewed approximately 800 sites across the National Park. They have been tested through the Sustainability Appraisal and other evidence studies, and the Site Selection Paper explains why these sites have been chosen for inclusion within the Regulation 18 consultation. Comments on these proposed sites are sought from statutory consultees, the community and the development sector to inform the next version of the Plan.

4.9 The allocation details include a map identifying the site and set out issues that will need to be addressed, but this is not formal policy wording at present. Further work is needed before these allocations can be confirmed in the Regulation 19 Local Plan, and it is anticipated that further sites will be submitted for assessment as part of the response to this consultation (as is usually the case at Regulation 18 stage).

Reference	Site Address	Capacity
Strategic Sites		
EA215	Land west of Liphook / Land at Westlands Park	250 homes (including 66-unit care home) 12-14 traveller pitches Quantity of other uses tbc

LE039	County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes	240 dwellings 3,500 sqm County Hall requirement and other uses tbc
LE141	East Sussex College, Mountfield Road, Lewes	225 homes
Other Sites		
WE014	Alfriston Court, Sloe Lane, Alfriston	25-30 C2 care home units
HO037-038	East Street Farm, Amberley	25-45 homes
EA161	Land south of Lovell Gardens, Binsted	12 homes
EA005	Land at Greenways Lane and Kiln Lane, Buriton	11 homes
CH003	Land East of Coombe Crescent, Bury	15 homes
CH199	Land east of A286 and north of Mill Lane, Cocking	25 homes
LE090	Land at Beechwood Lane, Cooksbridge	30 homes
LE148	Land rear of 71 East End Lane, Ditchling	5 homes
CH147	Midhurst Community Hospital and 1-2 Rotherfield Mews, Easebourne	120 C2 care home units / C3 retirement units or 35 C3 homes
CH203	Land at former Easebourne School, Easebourne	8-10 homes
CH206	Land west of Budgenor Lodge, Easebourne	20 homes
CH026	Land at Hawksfold, Fernhurst	6-8 homes
AR009	Former Allotments north of The Quadrangle, Findon	20 homes
MI014	Land east of Lodge Lane, Hassocks	30 homes
LE118	Land at Beaumont, Wellgreen Lane, Kingston	5 homes
LE124	Audiburn Farm, Ashcombe Lane, Kingston	5 homes
LE103	Land behind the White Hart, 55 High Street, Lewes	5 homes
LE114	Land at the rear of 49-55 St Anne's Crescent, Lewes	5 homes

LE133	Springman House, 8 North Street, Lewes	16 homes
LE134	The Shelleys Hotel, 136 High Street, Lewes	8 homes
EA216	Land at Westlands, Liphook	8 homes
CH215	Land West of The Street, Lodsworth	10 homes
CH165	Land East of Pitsham Lane, Midhurst	50-75 homes
CH217	Land at Forest Road, Midhurst	5 homes
CH218	Former Bus Depot, Pitsham Lane, Midhurst	6 homes
CH222	Land adjacent to The Grange Car Park, Midhurst	10 homes
CH074	Land west of Valentines Lea, Northchapel	25 homes
WI100	Land at Old Green Farm, Owslebury	5-10 homes
WI101	Land at Whites Hill Farm, Owslebury	5 dwellings 1,500 sqm employment
EA067	Land at Penns Place, Petersfield	35 dwellings & Sports hub
EA071	Land south of Paddock Way, Petersfield	100 -150 C2 care home units / C3 homes
EA225	Land at Festival Hall, Petersfield	20 homes and commercial floorspace
EA182	Land at Drum Court, The Spain, Petersfield	21 homes
EA187	Land at Windward, Reservoir Lane, Petersfield	5 homes
EA195	The Courtyard, Heath Road, Petersfield	8 homes and 170sqm commercial
CH092/ CH093	Land at Rotherbridge Lane, Petworth	14 homes
CH096	Land north of Northend Close, Petworth	18 homes
CH236	Land west of Village Hall, Rogate	9 homes
LE109	Land at Seaford Golf Club, Firlie Road, Seaford	12 homes
EA200	Land off Merryfield Road, Sheet	8 homes

AD001	Land off Steepdown Road, Sompting	30 C3 dwellings / C2 care home units
EA212	Land north of Winchester Road, Stroud	15-20 homes
WI102	Land north of Dodds Lane, Swanmore	15 homes
WI056	Land north of Hewlett Close, Twyford	15 homes
EA043	Land at Farnham and Station Roads, West Liss	30 C3 homes and/or 60 bed C2 care home units

Settlement Maps

- 4.10 The South Downs Local Plan sits alongside 45 made Neighbourhood Development Plans, many of which also allocate sites. To help people understand the whole picture for their communities, settlement maps are included at the end of the Regulation 18 consultation document showing existing Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan allocations alongside the proposed new ones.

5.0 Regulatory Assessments

- 5.1 There is a legislative requirement to carry out the following Assessments of the Local Plan Review:

- Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)
- Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- 5.2 In addition, a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is also recommended under the East Sussex Health & Wellbeing Engagement Process & Protocol.

- 5.3 Draft versions of these Assessments will be published on the SDNPA website at [South Downs Local Plan Review](#) ahead of the National Park Authority meeting in December 2024, but they will continue to be updated as further information becomes available and as the Local Plan Review evolves.

Integrated Impact Assessment

- 5.4 The Integrated Impact Assessment incorporates the SA/SEA, the EqIA and the HIA. It does this by using a set of objectives which cover all the relevant issues, and then assessing the development strategy, policies and allocations of the Local Plan Review against these objectives. The outcomes from this Assessment should then inform the choices made about the content of the Local Plan Review.

- 5.5 A Scoping Report for the SA/SEA was consulted on in 2023. Following the incorporation of EqIA and HIA a revised version of the Scoping Report was consulted on over the summer of 2024. The Integrated Impact Assessment was adjusted to respond to consultee comments and then used to assess the Regulation 18 consultation document.

- 5.6 The recommendations from the Integrated Impact Assessment on policies are as follows:

- **Core Policy: SD3 Major Development** - Proposals for major development should submit a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA).

- **Strategic Policy SD4: Landscape Character** - Planning applications for major development to submit a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA).
- **Strategic Policy SD12: Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage and Development Management Policy SD13: Listed Buildings** - Both policies should refer to accessibility to the building and/or historic environment and within the building (if appropriate).
- **Strategic Policy NEW1: Accessible Homes** - Viability work will enable consideration on percentage of accessible homes. Recommendation that there is tightening of the wording around 'not to be practical' and this to be included in the policy or reasoned justification. Consideration given to location of accessible housing.
- **Strategic Policy SD29: Rural Exception Sites** - There needs to be a clear cross reference between this policy and policies on dark skies and tranquillity and pollution.
- **Development Management Policy SD30: Replacement & Subdivision of Dwellings** - Recommend there is cross referencing with other policies relating to accessible and adaptation housing.
- **Development Management Policy SD32: Rural Workers' Dwellings and Strategic Policy SD33: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople** - There needs to be a clear cross reference between the above policies and those relating to dark skies and tranquillity and pollution.
- **Strategic Policy SD34: Sustaining the Local Economy** - It is recommended that the policy refers to impacts on the use of resources and supporting renewable energy. These matters could be included in the reasoned justification and/or links provided.
- **Strategic Policy SD36: Town and Village Centres** - No change recommended to the policy but consider that a reference should be included to support local retail/facilities in smaller settlements where possible.
- **Strategic Policy SD23: Regenerative Tourism** - A recommendation that reference should be included regarding accessibility to and within tourism facilities.
- **Strategic Policy SD45: Green Infrastructure** - Recommendation that the policy include blue infrastructure.
- **Strategic Policy SD20: Walking/Wheeling, Cycling and Equestrian Routes** - Recommendation that the policy could be enhanced by including key routeways and long distance walks such as the South Downs Way.
- **Strategic Policy SD19: Transport and Accessibility** - Recommendation to improve synergies between the policy and those focussed on dark skies, light pollution, and climate change.
- **Development Management Policy SD43: New and Existing Community Facilities** - The policy has limited focus on design, impact on landscape, sustainable transport links and accessibility within the building and gender neutral facilities. Does this include sports pavilions and other community buildings? This could be outlined in the supporting text. Recommend the policy refers to gender neutral/accessibility within and to the building and sustainable transport.
- **Development Management Policy SD22: Parking Provision** - Recommend there are improved synergies between the policy and those focussed on dark skies, light pollution, and climate change.
- **Development Management Policy SD46: Provision and Protection of Public Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities and Burial Grounds/Cemeteries** - There are some synergies, but many other links are missing such as use of resources, water management, design, heritage, light pollution, renewable energy and transport links. These are considered important for sustainability.

Recommendation that the policy refers to accessibility within and to the building and sustainable transport.

- 5.7 The above recommendations will be considered alongside the response to the Regulation 18 consultation to inform the Regulation 19 version of the policies. The assessment of the broad strategic options and site allocations will also be taken into account at the next stage, including consideration of whether policy criteria for site allocations can address any of the negative impacts identified. A further iteration of the Integrated Impact Assessment will be published alongside the Regulation 19 Local Plan and submitted with it for examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

- 5.8 The Habitats Regulations Assessment looks at the impact of the Local Plan Review on the 20 European Habitats Sites within or nearby the South Downs National Park. These are:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – designated for habitat types and species considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level (excluding birds);
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) - classified for rare and vulnerable birds and for regularly occurring migratory species; and
- Ramsar Sites - wetlands which are of international significance.

- 5.9 The 20 sites are:

Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar	The Mens SAC
Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA	Pagham Harbour SPA and Ramsar
Butser Hill SAC	River Itchen SAC
Castle Hill SAC	Rook Clift SAC
Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA/Ramsar	Shortheath Common SAC
Duncton to Bignor Escarpment SAC	Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC
East Hampshire Hangers SAC	Solent and Dorset SPA
Ebernoe Common SAC	Solent Maritime SAC
Kingley Vale SAC	Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA
Lewes Downs SAC	Woolmer Forest SAC

- 5.10 Impacts are assessed using ‘impact pathways’. There are seven potential impact pathways which could link to development within the South Downs National Park. These are recreational pressure, atmospheric pollution, water quality, nutrient neutrality, water quantity, loss of functionally linked habitat and urbanisation.
- 5.11 An initial screening process considers impacts without mitigation. If there is a ‘likely significant effect’ then an ‘appropriate assessment’ is carried out to determine whether the Local Plan Review is likely to result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the protected sites alone or in combination with other plans and projects.
- 5.12 Outcomes of the Assessment so far are recommendations to:
- Amend NEW3 (Arun Valley SPA) to require site specific HRA for developments and include reference to Bewick’s swans;
 - Work with East Hampshire District Council to develop Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures for all net new housing within 5km of the SPA and Woolmer Forest SAC and potentially Shortheath Common SAC;
 - Amend NEW10 (Wealden Heaths European SPA and SAC Sites) to clarify the mitigation requirements for net new residential development within 400m to 5km core catchment

area surrounding the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA, Woolmer Forest SAC and Shortheath Common SAC; and

- Check with Natural England whether the reference in SD10 to a 5km zone around Arun Valley SPA/Ramsar should be amended to 6.5km in line with the Horsham Local Plan currently at examination.

5.13 The outcomes will be considered alongside the response to the Regulation 18 consultation to inform the Regulation 19 version. Further iterations of the HRA will assess any changes to the Local Plan Review and will be published alongside the Regulation 19 Local Plan and submitted with it for examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

6.0 Evidence Base (complete or in progress)

6.1 The policies and proposed allocations in the Regulation 18 consultation have been informed by the following evidence base studies. Unless otherwise stated, the studies will be published alongside the Regulation 18 consultation, and in some cases will be updated before Regulation 19 stage. Published studies can be found on the SDNPA website at [South Downs Local Plan Review](#)

- **Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HEDNA)** – this study establishes the housing needs of the National Park and its economic needs for office, industrial and warehousing floorspace. The HEDNA was published in November 2023 and the housing needs figure may need to be reviewed in the light of the proposed changes to the standard method and NPPF. Further work may also be required to respond to the proposals in the draft NPPF to require planning policies to identify sites for laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics.
- **Employment Land Review (ELR)** – this study looks at the supply of employment land to assess whether the needs identified in the HEDNA are being met, or if policy interventions or additional allocations are needed. Like the HEDNA the ELR only covers office, industrial and warehousing uses, and does not assess other sources of employment such as retail, hospitality or tourism. Provisional Findings of the ELR show that current overall supply does meet the needs identified in the HEDNA, but the balance between uses needs correcting as there is a surplus of industrial land and a shortage of office land. Changes are therefore proposed to SD35 to facilitate changes of use between industrial buildings and offices.
- **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)** – this study assesses the needs for gypsy and traveller pitches and travelling showmen plots across the National Park. It pulls together the outcomes of individual existing GTAAs for parts of the National Park and updates them to 2042 and carries out a more detailed refresh for the areas of Brighton & Hove, Adur and Worthing Councils. This South Downs National Park Authority, Adur and Worthing Councils, and Brighton & Hove City Council GTAA will be published alongside a recent update of the East Hampshire GTAA. It provides the evidence base for SD33, and further work will be undertaken before Regulation 19 to try and identify additional sites to meet these needs.
- **Land Availability Assessment (LAA)** – this study assesses all known potential development sites for their suitability, availability and achievability, and informs the allocation of sites in the Local Plan review. The LAA will be updated with any additional information provided about existing sites and assessments of any further sites submitted and a final version published alongside the Regulation 19 consultation.
- **Site Selection Paper (SSP)** – this paper explains the rationale for why the 48 proposed new site allocations were selected from the palette of ‘has potential’ sites in the LAA, and why other sites in this category are not proposed for allocation. It also includes an assessment of the three strategic sites in terms of whether they would comprise ‘major development’ under paragraph 183 of the NPPF, and if so whether they would meet the tests in that paragraph.
- **Local Green Space Assessment (LGS)** – this study assesses submitted sites against the criteria for Local Green Spaces identified in NPPF paragraph 106: that the site is a) in

reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. The sites which meet these criteria are put forward for designation in policy SD47. The LGS study will be updated with any additional information provided about existing sites and assessments of any further sites submitted and a final version published alongside the Regulation 19 consultation.

- **Renewable Energy Study (RES)** – this study assesses submitted potential sites for renewable energy, reports on engagement with stakeholders and reviews potential Local Plan policy approaches to support appropriate community and small-scale energy proposals within the South Downs National Park. It has informed the proposed wording of policy SD51, and the four best performing sites are identified in this policy as having potential for allocation, subject to further work on their landscape and heritage impacts.
- **Transport Assessment (TA)** – this study considers the potential transport impacts of the Local Plan Review’s development strategy and will identify the package of measures required to achieve the most sustainable outcomes. A Stage 1 Scoping Report has been produced which sets out a high-level assessment of existing travel and transport in the National Park including a connectivity analysis. Based on this review, this includes a transport vision and set of objectives and a proposed methodology for the Stage 2 Assessment, which has been shared with the Local Highway Authorities, National Highways and Active Travel England. A draft Stage 2 Assessment has been prepared and shared with these stakeholders. Further iterations of this Stage 2 Assessment will be required if there are significant changes to the development strategy, and more detailed transport modelling may be required for the strategic sites.
- **Water Cycle Study (WCS)** – this study provides an assessment of the impact of the Local Plan Review development strategy on water infrastructure and the water environment. A Stage 1 Report has been prepared which looks at water supply and identifies significant water stress in the area, noting that current Water Resource Management Plans are based on lower growth predictions than are coming forward in new and emerging Local Plans. In terms of wastewater the report notes that 13 of the 45 waste water treatment works are likely to be close to capacity during the plan period due to already committed development, excluding growth from future allocations and any planned upgrades. Policy recommendations are included which will be taken into account along with other representations made during the Regulation 18 consultation. A Stage 2 Report will carry out a more detailed analysis of water supply and wastewater provision.
- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)** – this will identify the areas within the National Park at risk of flooding from all sources and will assess the proposed allocations against this information. This will be carried out alongside the Regulation 18 consultation and will inform and be published with the Regulation 19 Local Plan.
- **Settlement Study (SS)** – this study compiles evidence about the facilities within each settlement based on officer research and input from Town and Parish Councils. This information will be used to inform the development strategy and allocations, including requirements for new facilities to be provided with new development. In the longer term it is intended to include this information on a ‘Settlements Hub’ which will be a web based ‘one stop shop’ for all information about parishes, including the Census 2021 demographics, the data on settlement facilities and open space gathered from parish councils, and links to locally prepared planning documents such as neighbourhood plans, parish priorities statements and village design statements. The Settlements Hub will also be a resource for residents to learn about their places and applicants to research the background information about places where they wish to submit planning applications.

- **Parish Priorities Statements (PPS)** – 40 PPS have been prepared by Parish Councils and submitted to the National Park Authority. These summarise the ‘principal needs and prevailing views’ for their local area and are an informal pilot of the Neighbourhood Priorities Statements proposed in the LURA which are intended to provide a lighter touch alternative to Neighbourhood Plans. The PPS included consultation with the community on their priorities for their places and include key information about what facilities and amenities need to accompany any development which have been taken into account when identifying the issues to be addressed by the proposed site allocations. Planning Committee resolved in March 2024 have regard to the contents of Parish Priorities Statements in preparing the Local Plan Review. The submitted PPS are available on the SDNPA website at [Parish Priorities Statements](#).

7.0 Further Evidence in 2025

7.1 The following additional evidence studies will be commissioned or undertaken by officers during 2025 ahead of finalising the Regulation 19 Local Plan.

- **Infrastructure Delivery Plan** – pulling together all the infrastructure requirements necessary to support the development strategy as identified in the technical studies and the Parish Priorities Statements.
- **Landscape Assessment of allocated sites** – whilst all potential sites have had a high-level landscape assessment as part of the LAA, those included for allocation require more detailed work to establish realistic capacities using the landscape-led approach.
- **Open Space Study** – a quantitative and qualitative survey of existing open space based on officer research and submissions by Town and Parish Councils. Outputs will inform SD46 and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- **Tourism Study** – to update information on the demand and supply for tourist accommodation to inform SD23 and future planning applications.
- **Town & Village Centre Health Check** – to update information about the health and vitality of the main town and village centres, (Lewes, Petersfield, Midhurst, Petworth and Liss) including vacancy rates, to inform policies SD36 and SD37.
- **Settlement Boundary Review** – to correct any anomalies in the existing settlement boundaries (Policies Map to receive a complete update with new allocations and designations at Regulation 19 stage).
- **Viability Report** – to assess the financial implications of the infrastructure and policy requirements (particularly affordable housing, biodiversity net gain and sustainable construction standards) on the viability of the development strategy and types of sites to ensure that the Local Plan is deliverable.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 The Regulation 18 consultation document in **Appendix 2** is the result of significant early engagement, evidence gathering and assessment undertaken over the last two years, and provides a proposed update of policies and allocations for the Local Plan Review so that statutory consultees, the community and the development sector can see the direction of travel and contribute to the further refinement of the Local Plan during 2025.

8.2 The results of the Regulation 18 consultation will help to inform the next stage of the Local Plan Review, but this will also need to take account of the additional evidence identified above and the significant legislative and policy changes at the national level. The South Downs Local Plan Review is not being undertaken in a vacuum, all of our neighbouring Local Planning Authorities are at various stages of plan-making and will be grappling with the national changes as well, particularly in respect of housing numbers. It is vital that the SDNPA works collaboratively and positively with our neighbours and other affected LPAs and organisations under the ‘duty to cooperate’ and seeks to meet our development needs and support local communities so far as is compatible with our statutory purposes as a National Park.

8.3 The Government has stated its intention to reintroduce strategic planning through new primary legislation, and we are aware that a number of groupings are starting to emerge of County, Unitary and District/Borough Councils interested in working together on devolution proposals, including potentially strategic planning. It will be important for the SDNPA to be involved in these discussions as the National Park provides a key natural capital asset for the area as well as the Authority being responsible for all planning matters within its boundaries. These strategic and duty to cooperate discussions will be an important feature of the work programme for 2025 and officers will be seeking to sign Statements of Common Ground with all key stakeholders to support the submission of the Local Plan Review.

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Yes, the Regulation 18 Consultation will need to be ratified by the National Park Authority in December 2024
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No, budget is as agreed
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The proposal presents value for money by progressing the project in a timely way taking account of the changing national context.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	All corporate priorities and PMP outcomes as relevant to the planning system.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	Review of the Partnership Management Plan.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority’s climate change objectives	The Local Plan Review will include policies and potentially allocations which will support the Authority’s climate change objectives.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	N/A
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority’s equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes. The Community Involvement Plan in Appendix I sets out how we will make the consultation as inclusive as possible and the contents of the Local Plan Review will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No

Implication	Yes*/No
Are there any Data Protection implications?	No

9. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
If members do not agree with the recommendations - delay to Local Plan Review	Possible 3	Major	Member approval of the documents as set out in this report and its appendices

MIKE HUGHES

Director of Planning (Interim)

South Downs National Park Authority

Contact Officer: Claire Tester, Planning Policy Manager

Tel: 07387 107720

Email: Claire.Tester@southdowns.gov.uk

Appendices
 1. Community Involvement Plan for the Regulation 18
 2. The Regulation 18 consultation for the Local Plan Review

Background Papers (links): Regulatory Assessments and other Evidence Base Studies are available as published at [South Downs Local Plan Review](#)

SDNPA Consultees Director of Planning (Interim); Legal Services.

External Consultees None

Background Documents None