

South Downs Local Plan Review

Community Involvement Plan: First Consultation Document (Regulation 18)

1. Background

- 1.1 The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is reviewing the 2019 South Downs Local Plan to guide development and the provision of infrastructure over the period to 2040. The Local Plan Review (LPR) will provide a vision for how the South Downs National Park will evolve over this time and a delivery strategy for how this will be achieved.
- 1.2 Community involvement plays a vital role in the preparation of Local Plans. Existing requirements are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, there are two formal consultation periods for Local Plans:
- Regulation 18: Preparation of a Local Plan
 - Regulation 19: Publication of a Local Plan (Pre-Submission)
- 1.3 This Community Involvement Plan (CIP) relates to the Regulation 18 consultation.

2. Role and Purpose of the Community Involvement Plan

- 2.1 The SDNPA first adopted its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in 2012, which sets out how the Authority will consult with all stakeholders, including local communities, businesses and public bodies, on planning matters. There have been several subsequent revisions to the SCI to take account of changes to the planning system. Version 6 of the SCI introduced the requirement that a bespoke Community Involvement Plan (CIP) be prepared for individual engagement or consultation exercises, which use the strategic principles of the SCI and further the aim to engage underrepresented groups.
- 2.2 The SCI contains 4 key principles for all planning policy consultations:
- a) Timely engagement and consultation
 - b) Inclusive engagement and consultation
 - c) Effective and efficient engagement and consultation
 - d) Provision of clear results and accountability on all engagement and consultation exercises
- 2.3 This CIP follows the template set out in the SCI. It sets out:
- Why people are being involved?
 - Who is to be involved?
 - When will people be able to get involved?

- How people will be involved
- How the results of community involvement will be used.

3.2 The draft Local Plan is accompanied by a Integrated Impact Assessment (incorporating Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Equalities Impacts Assessment) which is also subject to consultation at Regulation 18 stage and therefore the same consultation arrangements set out in this CIP.

3. Why are people being involved?

3.1 We are asking people's views on the revised South Downs Local Plan (SDLP) through a formal consultation period. It is important to seek input from the wider public, as the SDLP sets the strategy and allocates sites for development in the National Park and includes policies that will have an impact on development across the National Park.

3.2 The SDLP was first adopted in July 2019. Local Plans are required to be reviewed every five years, and the review of the SDLP commenced in May 2022. The review seeks to update and evolve the existing SDLP while retaining its award-winning and innovative approach to planning in a National Park. The elements that remain unchanged are:

- The **landscape-led approach** which requires development to reflect a thorough understanding of its context and sense of place;
- The **ecosystems services approach** which requires development to support the services that the natural environment provides us such as clean air and water and healthy soils; and
- A development strategy of **medium dispersed growth**.
- Much of the **supporting text** in the existing Local Plan will also be retained or updated, including the Spatial Portrait in Chapter 3 and the explanatory text adjacent to each policy and allocation. This is not included in this consultation but will be updated before the plan is finalised later in 2025.

3.3. People are being invited to comment on the First Consultation Document which includes the following:

- The **vision and objectives** of the Local Plan Review, identifying where these are different to the existing Local Plan;
- **Policies** – with proposed amendments to existing Local Plan policies and some suggested additional policies;
- **Existing site allocations** in the Local Plan which have yet to be implemented, and are proposed to be carried over into the Local Plan Review, including some amendments to these allocations; and
- **Proposed new site allocations**. These are sites proposed for housing, employment or other development.

3.4 The results of the consultation will form part of the information used to finalise the Local Plan Review.

4. Who is to be involved?

4.1 In the SCI, the Authority commits to **inclusive engagement and consultation**, which is accessible to all those who want to take part.

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

- All individuals and organisations registered on the Local Plan consultee database
- 'Specific consultation bodies / general consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) as set out in legislation. These include:
 - Town and Parish Councils – both within and adjoining the SDNP
 - County Councils, District Councils and Brighton & Hove Unitary Authority (within and neighbouring the SDNP)
 - Government agencies such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England, Highways Agency
 - Relevant utility service providers including water, gas and electricity
- Where not already covered above, other organisations, groups or individuals whose activities benefit any part of the SDNP area and that may have an interest in the Local Plan Review. These include (but are not limited to): access forums, housing associations, environmental, countryside and conservation groups and youth and elderly persons' groups and the development industry

4.3 Alerts will be sent to the above in advance of the consultation period starting and updates included in the regular South Downs Planning Newsletter.

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

- Publicity on SDNPA website and social media
- Press releases
- Radio and local TV coverage where possible
- Publicity through regular SDNPA newsletters such as South Downs News, South Downs Planning News and other SDNPA regular Newsletters
- To reach as wide an audience as possible, including those with no or limited access to the internet, we will encourage Parish and Town Councils to promote the consultation in their regular communications with residents. We will provide posters and leaflets for Parish / Town Councils to display at local venues. We will also publicise the consultation in local free magazines (where available) during the consultation period.

4.4. In line with the strategic principles of the SCI, additional outreach measures will be used to reach groups who are frequently underrepresented in Local Plan consultations. These may include (but are not limited to the following): bespoke consultation materials and /or events for young people, inviting feedback from relevant Youth Councils, holding public events out of working hours and providing paper copies of documents and response forms for those without access to the internet, at deposit venues and via post on request.

5. When will people be able to get involved?

5.1 The consultation materials will be made available and engagement activities will run from January to March 2025 for a minimum of **8 weeks**. This exceeds the minimum requirements of the SCI. Consultation documents will be made available online during this period with printed copies available at the venues outlined in Section 6.

- 5.2 Following this consultation all the responses received will be collated, analysed and considered alongside the evidence base and other considerations, such as national policy and guidance, to produce the Second Public Consultation Document (Regulation 19). This will be a full version of the Local Plan Review as the National Park Authority intends to submit for examination. The Second Public Consultation Document is currently programmed for early 2026 followed by the submission of the Local Plan Review to the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State), which will appoint an Inspector to carry out an examination of the plan, which will include consideration of representations submitted in the second public consultation.

6. How will people be involved?

6.1 The consultation will be open to all and will seek to inform and receive comments from the widest possible range of people. In addition to the publicity set out in section 4 above, we will:

- Use an online consultation platform to display and provide opportunity to comment on the First 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.

Availability of documents

6.2 Regulation 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the requirements for documents to be made available for inspection:

35.—(1) A document is to be taken to be made available by a local planning authority when—

(a) made available for inspection, at their principal office and at such other places within their area as the local planning authority consider appropriate, during normal office hours, and

(b) published on the local planning authority's website,

6.3 In terms of criterion (a), the consultation documents will be available to view at the South Downs Centre (North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH) during normal office hours. In terms of "other such places" set out in criterion (a), the Authority will send hard copies of the consultation document to libraries within the National Park and provide instructions for accessing the documentation on the Authority website (which could be accessed using library PCs for example). We will provide hard copies to Town and Parish Councils who are willing and able to make the consultation documents available for the public to view at their venues.

6.4 The First Draft Consultation document, supporting documentation and evidence base will be available to view on the Authority's website at:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/south-downs-local-plan-review/>

Submitting Responses

- 6.5 Comments must be submitted in writing (physical or digital) and cannot be accepted as anonymous. All information received is public information, subject to relevant data protection legislation.
- 6.6 Comments can be submitted via the interactive consultation portal, by email or by post. We will encourage electronic submissions to facilitate ease of processing.
- 6.7 Where hard copy responses must be submitted these can be sent to:
Planning Policy, South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH
Email to: planningpolicy@southdowns.gov.uk

7. How the results of the consultation will be used

- 7.1 Results of the participation activities will be used in the following ways:
- Feedback received will be used to inform the development of the LPR
 - A consultation report will be prepared and published setting out who was invited to comment on the First Consultation Document, how this was done, a summary of the main issues raised and how they were taken into account
 - The consultation report will be considered by Planning Committee at the appropriate stage when making subsequent decisions on the LPR.
 - Feedback and response levels from different audiences will be used to inform future consultation activity on the LPR

