

Report to	South Downs National Park Authority
Date	19 February 2013
By	Director of Planning
Title of Report	South Downs National Park Local Plan
Purpose of Report	To gain approval from the South Downs National Park Authority for the proposed strategy and timescale for producing a South Downs National Park Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Charging Schedule for the National Park.

Recommendation: That the South Downs National Park Authority approves:

- 1) the proposed strategy and timetable for producing a South Downs National Park Local Plan**
 - 2) the proposed strategy and timetable for producing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule for the National Park.**
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I. Introduction and Summary

- I.1 The South Downs National Park (SDNP) Local Plan will set out the development strategy and principles for the National Park for the period up to 2035. As a newly-designated National Park the emerging Local Plan provides a unique opportunity for the area to be planned in a cohesive and coherent way for the first time. It will supersede all the local plans that were inherited by the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) when it became local planning authority in April 2011, and also all the joint Core Strategies.
- I.2 It will allow the Authority, together with its partners, to set the local agenda and aspirations for the SDNP using the emerging National Park Management Plan, the SDNP's long term Vision, the State of the Park Report and the Special Qualities as the 'golden thread' leading to the planning policies that will assist in ensuring that the change arising from development in the SDNP over the next 20 years is beneficial and enhances its special qualities rather than depreciating them. **Appendix I** shows how the proposed project timeline for the Local Plan and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule relates to that of the National Park Management Plan.
- I.3 The SDNP's Local Plan will need to conform to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and, until it is revoked, be in general conformity with the South East Plan. It will also need to be based on robust and up to date evidence. In producing the Local Plan the Authority will need to work closely with other, particularly neighbouring, local planning authorities through the 'duty to co-operate' to ensure that there is a coherent strategy across the whole area.
- I.4 In September 2011 the Authority adopted a project plan, including a timetable, for its Development Plans. Under the original project plan the SDNP's then Local Development Framework (LDF) consisted of two separate Development Plan Documents (DPDs) – a Core Strategy and subsequent Sites and Designations DPD.
- I.5 Shortly after this, the Localism Act 2011 was enacted (November 2011). In addition, the NPPF, Local Planning Regulations 2012 and Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 were all published, and in light of the NPPF, the Authority's Planning Committee agreed in August

2012 that the Core Strategy and Sites and Designations DPD be brought together as a single Local Plan. The NPPF specifically promotes this approach, unless there is good reason not to.

- 1.6 It is proposed in this report that the timetable for the Local Plan, and the CIL Charging Schedule are updated to align more appropriately with the SDNP Management Plan's timetable, the internal officer resources available to do the work, the commitments of the planning policy team on joint core strategies and recent advice from the Planning Inspectorate and the Department for Communities and Local Government. The comments of the Peer Review are acknowledged with regards to the need for a Local Plan Park-wide quickly. The new timeline, which has been discussed with the Peer Review Team, reflects these discussions and an understanding of what is involved in producing a sound Plan across such a large and complex area.

2. Background

- 2.1 The NPPF shifted focus for those authorities at the start of plan development (such as the Authority) towards producing a single Local Plan in which all the relevant planning policies are within a single document. This has the advantage of reducing the number of consultations and examinations, as well as enabling people to see the proposed planning policy strategy in its totality.
- 2.3 The Authority will continue to work jointly with five neighbouring local planning authorities on joint Core Strategies, namely:
- Wealden Joint Core Strategy (proposed for adoption by Authority on 19 February 2013)
 - East Hampshire Joint Core Strategy (submitted May 2012, examination hearings held October / November 2012, examination now suspended, draft inspector's report February 2013)
 - Lewes Joint Core Strategy (pre-submission publication January 2013, submission May 2013, Examination in Public September 2013) and
 - Mid Sussex District Plan (pre-submission publication May 2013, subject to South East Plan revocation).
 - Winchester Joint Core Strategy (Submitted June 2012, examination held October/November 2012, Inspector's draft report February 2013)
- 2.4 This Joint Core Strategy (JCS) work, in particular on the East Hampshire JCS and Lewes JCS, will require significant officer and Member input over the next 12 months. There are also several local plans in neighbouring authorities that will be developing over the next 12 months and will require an Authority input.
- 2.5 The Authority will also continue to work jointly with County Councils, Unitary Authorities and New Forest National Park Authority on joint Minerals and Waste Plans. The detailed timetables for the production of joint minerals and waste plans are set out in the host authority's Minerals and Waste Development Schemes.
- 2.6 The Authority also intends to work towards producing a CIL charging schedule for the SDNP. The CIL will be the main source of infrastructure funding to support new development following the scaling-back of the Section 106 regime, currently scheduled to take place in April 2014, as required by the CIL Regulations.
- 2.7 The CIL and local plan work will be complementary. Originally the intention had been to twin-track the CIL and Local Plan timetables, as recommended in the NPPF. However, recent advice received by the Authority's CIL Project Manager from the Planning Inspectorate and the Department for Communities and Local Government indicates that the CIL Charging Schedule can be pursued ahead of the local plan provided the Authority is clear as to the development strategy to be adopted.

- 2.8 The Authority's Strategic Management Team (SMT) has considered this, and alternative, approaches (and the risks associated with each). The SMT has endorsed that sufficient clarity regarding the development strategy for the SDNP will be in place by the 'preferred options' stage of the Local Plan, and consequently by this stage a draft CIL Charging Schedule can be consulted upon. This will allow the Authority to collect developer contributions for infrastructure as soon as possible after the section 106 regime is scaled-back by the Government and before the Local Plan is adopted.

3 Local Plan Way Forward

- 3.1 The proposed revised project plan (**Appendix I**) sets out the project timeline and key milestones for the SDNP's Local Plan and the resourcing implications. The revised project plan provides the opportunity to consult on:
- the key 'Issues and Options' for the Local Plan in January/February 2014, following on from the adoption of the National Park Management Plan in late 2013
 - a 'preferred options' consultation (including any proposed site allocations) in January/February 2015
 - pre-submission publication in October 2015 and
 - formal submission in June 2016
 - allowing 12 months for the Local Plan examination (and any proposed modifications consultation), and given the plan is found 'sound' by the Planning Inspector, then the Authority will be able to adopt the Local Plan by June 2017.
- 3.2 A project timeframe of about four years is considered to be a realistic assessment of the time required to put all the building blocks in place, given the resource constraints, for the SDNP's first Local Plan. This timeframe allows for 12 months from the point of submission to adoption. While the overall timescale of producing an adopted a local plan this is quicker than many of the Authority's neighbouring authorities have achieved with their core strategies and local plans.
- 3.3 It is proposed to have a 'light touch' consultation with stakeholders in summer 2013, focusing around:
- the 'local plan' (spatial) vision – which will set out how the SDNP vision will be translated onto the ground through the local plan policies
 - the 'local plan' (spatial) objectives – the key overall objectives or principles that the local plan will look to achieve
 - the 'local plan' (spatial) portrait – highlights the overall key issues and trends that influence the SDNP and the area that it lies within.

It is proposed to consult Authority Members on emerging ideas for each of these elements in March 2013 through a 'survey monkey' questionnaire before presenting to the South Downs Partnership / Authority workshop on 16 April 2013. The final make-up of the consultation will need to be approved by the Authority before going out to consultation in parallel with the draft Management Plan.

4 CIL Way Forward

- 4.1 The CIL work will involve developing an evidence base consisting of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and viability assessment. These elements will be completed during 2013/14 with consultation on a draft CIL charging schedule in early 2015 following the preferred options consultation stage of the Local Plan. As the CIL examinations are not as complex or lengthy as local plan examinations the CIL charging schedule should be able to be adopted by about September 2015.
- 4.2 The benefit of adopting the CIL charging schedule ahead of the Local Plan timetable (as set out in paragraphs 2.7 and 3.1) is that the Authority will be able to continue collecting developer contributions for infrastructure after the current section 106 regime is scaled-back in April 2014, as required by the CIL Regulations.

5 Local Plan Members' Working Group

- 5.1 At the July 2012 meeting of the Authority it was agreed to set up a Local Plan Members Working Group. Seven Members of the Authority have been appointed to the working group with the Authority Chair acting as chairperson of the group. The first meeting was held in November 2012 and two subsequent meetings have been held. It is proposed to hold regular monthly meetings until October 2013, and to then restart the monthly meetings in early 2014 once the Issues and Options consultation has been completed.
- 5.2 The terms of reference for the group have been finalised (**Appendix 2**). To be able to act as a 'working group' there are no formal recommendations from the group but there is the opportunity for a full and open discussion and debate over the emerging issues that will be tackled by the local plan. In addition, action points from each meeting are noted and will be reported to Authority meetings (**Appendix 3**). The considerations of the group will be key in helping set a direction and helping inform the development of policy, and these considerations will be fed into the wider discussions with all Authority Members.

6 Resources

- 6.1 Significant officer and Member resources will need to be devoted to progressing the SDNP Local Plan and CIL Charging Schedule. Resourcing for the local plan work was highlighted in the Peer Review report. Additional staff resources have already been made available through the recent appointment of a Local Plan Lead officer, and the recruitment of a CIL Project Manager and Landscape Planning Officer.
- 6.2 The planning policy team are working with the communications team to produce a communications and engagement strategy for the local plan to ensure that the resource requirements for consulting and engaging on the local plan with key stakeholders, including parish and town councils, and local residents, businesses and visitors are fully appraised. Winchester City Council's innovative and successful 'blueprint' consultation with its local communities is being assessed to ascertain whether elements of it could be used by the Authority.

7 Risk management

- 7.1 Risk - without comprehensive, sound and up-to-date planning policy and CIL charging schedule for the SDNP, underpinned by a robust evidence base, the Authority risks losing:
- (i) opportunities to guide and facilitate appropriate new development and highlight the quality of development that is being sought for the SDNP will be lost
 - (ii) control of being able to determine what is inappropriate new development, through losing planning appeals
 - (iii) community belief in our engagement process and our ability to plan will be eroded, and
 - (iv) the loss of CIL income from developer contributions without an adopted CIL charging schedule in place.

Mitigation - the risks will be significantly reduced by the timely preparation of a SDNP Local Plan and CIL Charging Schedule.

8 Crime and Disorder Implication

8.1 It is considered that the proposal does not raise any crime and disorder implications.

9 Human Rights Implications

9.1 There are not considered to be any implications arising from this report on human rights, equalities or health and safety grounds.

10 Equalities Act 2010

10.1 Due regard, where relevant, has been taken to the Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equalities Act 2010.

11 External Consultees

11.1 None

TIM SLANEY

Director of Planning

Contact Officer: Tim Richings, Planning Policy Manager

Tel: 01730 811752

email: tim.richings@southdowns.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1: High Level Timetable

Appendix 2: Local Plan Members Working Group Terms of Reference

Appendix 3: Action Points arising from November and December 2012 and January 2013 Local Plan Member Working Group meetings

SDNPA Consultees

Chief Executive Officer, Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Head of Operations, Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Monitoring Officer & Senior Solicitor.

Background Documents

1. Planning Committee Report (Report PC 52/12) 9 August 2012

http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/260929/Agenda-Item-8.pdf