

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>10 October 2011</b>
By	<b>Head of Planning</b>
Title of Report	<b>South Downs National Park Draft Statement of Community Involvement</b>
Purpose of Report	<b>To receive endorsement from Members with regard to the draft Statement of Community Involvement for the South Downs National Park Local Development Framework.</b>

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**Recommendation: That the National Park Authority Planning Committee agree for the proposed draft Statement of Community Involvement to be published for a public consultation period of eight weeks.**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The draft Statement of Community Involvement (**Appendix 1**) sets out the procedures and methods of consultation and community engagement that the Authority will undertake during the development of all planning policy and the process of determination of planning applications being carried out by local planning authorities. It is a requirement under the *Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as amended* for local planning authorities to produce such a Statement of Community Involvement.
- 1.2 This report sets out what is required to be included in a Statement of Community Involvement and the basis on which the South Downs National Park Authority's draft Statement of Community Involvement has been drawn up.

## **2 What is a Statement of Community Involvement**

- 2.1 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12 *Local Spatial Planning* sets out what is expected from a Statement of Community Involvement. It states that an SCI should:
- Explain clearly the process and methods for community involvement for different types of local development documents and for the different stages of plan preparation. This needs to include details of how the diverse sections of the community are engaged, in particular those groups which have been underrepresented in previous consultation exercises.
  - Identify which umbrella organisations and community groups need be involved at different stages of the planning process, with special consideration given to those groups not normally involved.
  - Explain the process and appropriate methods for effective community involvement in the determination of planning applications and where appropriate refer to Planning Performance Agreements.
  - Include details of the LPAs approach to pre-application discussions.
  - Include the LPAs approach to community involvement in planning obligations (S106 agreements).
  - Include information on how the SCI will be monitored, evaluated and scrutinised at the local level.
  - Include details of where community groups can get more information on the planning process, for example, from Planning Aid and other voluntary organisations.

### **3 The draft South Downs National Park Statement of Community Involvement**

- 3.1 The South Downs National Park Authority became the local planning authority for the South Downs National Park on 1 April 2011. As such it is responsible for producing a Local Development Framework for the National Park, and therefore also a Statement of Community Involvement for an LDF.
- 3.2 As the NPA inherited the Development Plans for the 15 local planning authority areas covering the National Park, there are also the 15 existing Statements of Community Involvement which set out the proposed consultation methods for the respective LDFs.
- 3.3 The proposed SDNPA SCI sets out the NPA's approach to consultation, based on the existing national planning guidance in PPS12 and the *Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 as amended*, whilst recognising that the process governing the planning system is being heavily scrutinised and likely to undergo significant changes in the near future through the Localism Bill and National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3.4 The Regulations (as amended) require the LPA to notify stakeholders of their intention to produce an SCI, and for the LPA to ask for and comments. This was carried out between June and August. A questionnaire was sent out, communicating our intention to draft an SCI, asking specific questions about timings, methods of both consultation and notification as well as asking general questions about previous experiences of involvement with the planning system. This consultation period closed on 15 August 2011 and the responses were collated and analysed (**Appendix 2** Summary of Questionnaire Responses). This draft SCI document has been written taking into account the responses received and comments made during the notification period. Once approved, the draft document will be subject to further consultation for a period of eight weeks (in line with comments made and the consultation period proposed in the document) after which time comments will be analysed and any changes made before the final document comes back to gain approval by this committee.

### **4 Conclusion**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Planning Committee approves the Statement of Community Involvement for a public consultation period of eight weeks.

### **5 Resource Implications**

- 5.1 The production, consultation and analysis of consultation responses will require officer time. It is a requirement under the planning system and as part of the Local Development Framework.

### **6 Risk Management**

- 6.1 Without a comprehensive, sound and robust planning policy framework for the National Park underpinned by up-to-date evidence the Authority risks losing control over inappropriate new development, which may be allowed on appeal, and losing opportunities to guide and facilitate appropriate new development.
- 6.2 These risks are significantly reduced by the timely preparation of a sound Core Strategy or joint Core Strategies and associated Development Plan Documents for the South Downs National Park. In order for joint adoption to be successful, there has to be a clear understanding of and commitment to pursuing a joint approach by equal partners.

### **7 Human rights, equalities, health and safety**

- 7.1 There are not considered to be any human rights, equalities, or health and safety issues arising from this report.

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Appendices: Draft Statement of Community Involvement; Summary of Questionnaire Responses  
Background Documents: Statement of Community Involvement Questionnaire  
SDNPA Consultees: Head of Planning, Local Development Framework Lead, Major Applications and Enforcement Lead, Minerals and Waste Lead, Monitoring Officer, Deputy CFO, Senior Solicitor,