

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Planning Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>13 November 2025</b>
<b>By</b>	<b>Director of Planning</b>
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Community Planning Update</b>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Update Members on the progress of Neighbourhood Development Plan, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements across the South Downs National Park.</b>

**Note**

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**Recommendation:**

**The Planning Committee is asked to note the progress to date on the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements across the South Downs National Park.**

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**Executive Summary**

The South Downs National Park Authority has set out a commitment in its Partnership Management Plan to support the development of community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the South Downs National Park. This means that support for community-led plans, and the volunteers who prepare them, can contribute to the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan. For the avoidance of doubt, community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements.

This report provides a biannual update to the South Downs Planning Committee about community-led planning across the South Downs National Park. This update is required as the main preparation of community-led plans is normally undertaken and considered by Authority Officers under delegated powers. This report enables Members to note the breadth of community-led planning across the South Downs National Park, and the work currently being undertaken by Authority Officers and volunteers in the preparation of both new and updated community-led plans. This report will also be used to inform the Authority Monitoring Report later this year. In summary:

- There are 63 designated neighbourhood areas in the South Downs National Park, of which 46 have “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans and the remainder are either preparing, or have ceased to prepare, a Neighbourhood Development Plan; and
- The Authority has adopted 11 Parish and Village Design Statements, and a further two are potentially under preparation; and
- The Authority is encouraging town and parish councils to engage proactively in the South Downs Local Plan Review through the preparation of Parish Priorities Statements.

## **I. Introduction**

- 1.1 The South Downs National Park Authority (“the Authority”) has set out a commitment in its Partnership Management Plan to support the development of community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the South Downs National Park - see Outcome 9.2 and Policy 34. This means that support for community-led plans, and the volunteers who prepare them, can contribute to the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan. For the avoidance of doubt, community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements.
- 1.2 The Authority offers support to community groups at the statutory stages of plan-making as required by legislation and the Planning Practice Guidance. Moreover, the Authority:
- Responds to all Regulation 14 and 16 public consultations where a Neighbourhood Development Plan may have a potential effect on the National Park and/or its setting.
  - Supports all Authority-Led Neighbourhood Development Plans, especially when they require Examination and Referendum.
  - Supports and undertakes the administrative process for adopting Parish and Village Design Statements as Supplementary Planning Documents.
  - Publishes and has regard to all Parish Priorities Statements in the preparation of the South Downs Local Plan Review.

## **2. Neighbourhood Development Plans**

- 2.1 A Neighbourhood Development Plan is prepared by a qualifying body (usually a town or parish council) as per the process and requirements set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). In general, a Neighbourhood Development Plan can set out a vision for the community and include non-strategic planning policies which must be in conformity with the Adopted Local Plan. Once a Neighbourhood Development Plan has passed a successful referendum and has been “made” by the local planning authority, it becomes part of the Development Plan for the respective designated neighbourhood area.
- 2.2 There are 63 designated neighbourhood areas in the National Park. A high-level summary of the number of Neighbourhood Development Plans which have been “made” part of the Development Plan (alongside the South Downs Local Plan and the Minerals and Waste Plans), and the number which are currently being prepared, is set out in **Table I** (below) and **Appendices I and 2**. Please note, if a designated neighbourhood area includes land both inside and outside of the National Park, then the Authority agrees with the other local planning authority about who will be the Lead Authority. This is normally based on whether most of the parish population lives inside or outside of the National Park.
- 2.3 The Authority’s Planning Committee was provided with a community planning update on 10 April 2025. Since then, the following has, or is anticipated to, take place:
- The **Peacehaven and Telscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan** is still currently at Examination. Following the Examiner’s initial comments a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was prepared. SDNPA were included in the consultation on the HRA with statutory bodies in May 2025.
  - The **Pulborough Neighbourhood Development Plan** was subject to a referendum in September 2025. Following a successful “yes” vote the Plan was made by the SDNPA Planning Committee on 9 October 2025.
  - The **East Dean and Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan** was subject to a Regulation 16 public consultation between May and June 2025. Subsequently the SDNPA appointed an Examiner, and their report was received at the beginning of October. The Examiner’s report recommends the Plan proceed to referendum subject to modifications. A Decision Statement has been prepared, and a report will go to

November Planning Committee for members to decide on the modifications and whether the Plan can proceed to referendum.

- The **West Chilmington Neighbourhood Development Plan** is currently at Examination, and the final report is awaited.
- The **Modified Boxgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan** has been through the Regulation 14 consultation, and submission to Chichester District Council is anticipated before the end of the year.
- The **West Saltdean Neighbourhood Development Plan** has been through Examination and on 13 October Brighton & Hove City Council accepted the Examiner’s recommendations and agreed the Plan could proceed to referendum. It is anticipated that the referendum will take place in early December. In the event of a successful referendum the SDNPA anticipates making the Plan under delegated powers.
- The **Coldean Neighbourhood Development Plan** has been submitted to Brighton & Hove City Council with the Regulation 16 consultation from 23 October to 4 December 2025.

Stage	Total	Authority Led	Not Authority Led
<b>Made</b>	<b>46</b>	18	28
<b>Referendum</b>	<b>1</b>	0	1
<b>Examination</b>	<b>3</b>	1	2
<b>Reg16 Submission</b>	<b>1</b>	0	1
<b>Reg14 Pre-Submission</b>	<b>1</b>	0	1
<b>Plans In Preparation</b>	<b>9</b>	5	4
<b>Plans Not Proceeded</b>	<b>3</b>	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	25	38

**Table 1:** Status of Neighbourhood Development Plans as of November 2025

- 2.4 **Plans Not Proceeded.** The three neighbourhood areas that have chosen not to proceed with the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan are Sheet, Sompting, and the parish cluster of Steyning, Wiston, Ashurst and Bramber. The latter cluster agreed to disband and withdraw from their designated neighbourhood area. Since then, the Bramber and Steyning Neighbourhood Development Plans have both been “made” by the Authority.
- 2.5 **Plans In Preparation.** It is believed that there are nine Neighbourhood Development Plans currently in preparation but have not yet reached the first formal stage of consultation – i.e., Regulation 14. In terms of the four plans being led on by other local planning authorities, these are the Wickham & Knowle, Lynchmere, Westhampnett, and Plaistow and Ifold Neighbourhood Development Plans. The Wickham & Knowle Neighbourhood Development Plan for the area inside the National Park was designated by the SDNPA on 25 June 2025. The Lead Authority is Winchester City Council. For the other three Plans the Authority’s Officers continue to liaise with the Lead Authorities to offer advice and input where this is necessary to deliver the purposes and duty of the National Park. As for the five plans that the Authority is leading on, these are the Alfriston, Easebourne, Funtington, Greatham, and Singleton Neighbourhood Development Plans. There has been no recorded preparation for Easebourne and Singleton, and the most recent correspondence for Alfriston, Funtington, and Greatham was received in 2022/23.

- 2.6 **Reg 14 Pre-Submission.** It is anticipated that the Boxgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan will be submitted to Chichester District Council before the end of the year. Note Boxgrove is an updated Plan with proposed modifications.
- 2.7 **Reg 16 Submission.** The Coldean Neighbourhood Development Plan has been submitted and is currently at consultation stage which ends on the 4 December 2025.
- 2.8 **Examination.** The Peacehaven and Telscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan is being led on by Lewes District Council and the Examiner’s final report is awaited. The West Chilington Neighbourhood Development Plan reached this stage in summer 2025 and the examination is currently awaiting clarification on the Horsham Local Plan. The East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan has been examined, and a Decision Statement has been prepared with recommendations to proceed to referendum subject to the decision of the SDNPA Planning Committee.
- 2.9 **Referendum.** The West Saltdean Neighbourhood Development Plan is scheduled to be subject to a referendum in early December 2025.
- 2.10 **Plans Made.** The 46 “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans are listed in **Appendix 1** and shown in **Appendix 2**. The Pulborough Neighbourhood Development Plan was made on 9 October 2025 and has been added to the list of made Plans.

### **3. Parish and Village Design Statements**

- 3.1 A Parish or Village Design Statement is used to identify, describe, and/or outline the distinctive and local landscape character, design and special qualities of a parish or village. It should use the above to prepare design guidelines to guide future development in conserving or enhancing the identified character, design, and special qualities of that parish or village.
- 3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework [December 2024] emphasises the importance of achieving well-designed places as a key aspect of sustainable development – see Chapter 12. The Framework broadly explains that development should take account of local design guidance and that, to carry weight in decision-making, such guidance should be produced as part of the Development Plan or as a Supplementary Planning Document. The Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets requirements for the preparation and adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document, with further public consultation requirements set in the South Downs Statement of Community Involvement.
- 3.3 A Supplementary Planning Document adds further detail to existing planning policies in an Adopted Local Plan. As the name suggests, it is intended to supplement, rather than replace, existing planning policies. This means that although it is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals, it does not, itself, form part of the Development Plan. Moreover, if adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, a Parish or Village Design Statement would supplement and provide further detail to the interpretation and implementation of South Downs Local Plan Policies SD4 (Landscape Character) and SD5 (Design), and the South Downs Design Guide, when determining planning applications and appeals in a specific local area.
- 3.4 The Authority has adopted 11 parish and village design statements as Supplementary Planning Documents, of which four have been adopted in areas where a Neighbourhood Development Plan has either been “made” or is in preparation – see **Table 2** below and **Appendix 2**. The Authority’s Planning Committee was provided with a community planning update on 10 October 2024. Since this time, the following has taken place:
- Soberton Parish Council is working on a parish design statement for consultation with SDNPA officers providing guidance on a draft version.
  - West Meon Parish Council is to decide whether it wishes to proceed with the design statement which was previously consulted on in Summer 2023.

<b>Parish / Village Design Statement (P/VDS)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Buriton</b> Village Design Statement	Adopted	10/08/2017
<b>Clapham</b> Parish Design Statement *	Adopted	10/11/2022
<b>Easebourne</b> Parish Design Statement *	Adopted	09/02/2023
<b>East Dean and Friston</b> Village Design Statement *	Adopted	14/04/2016
<b>Hambledon</b> Village Design Statement	Adopted	09/09/2021
<b>Liss</b> Village Design Statement *	Adopted	10/07/2014
<b>Lodsworth</b> Parish Design Statement	Adopted	13/10/2016
<b>Selborne</b> Village Design Statement	Adopted	11/04/2024
<b>Swanmore</b> Village Design Statement ^	Adopted	12/09/2019
<b>Upham</b> Village Design Statement ^	Adopted	13/03/2025
<b>Worldham</b> Village Design Statement ^	Adopted	10/09/2015
<b>Soberton</b> Parish Design Statement ^	Preparation	Unknown
<b>West Meon</b> Parish or Village Design Statement	Preparation	Unknown

**Table 2:** Status of Parish and Village Design Statements as of November 2025

\* There is a Neighbourhood Development Plan either “made” or in preparation in this area.

^ The Parish or Village Design Statement includes areas outside of the National Park.

#### **4. Parish Priorities Statements.**

- 4.1 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has introduced Neighbourhood Priorities Statements as an optional, “light touch” alternative to Neighbourhood Development Plans. The Statements provide local communities with the opportunity to set out their aspirations for the future, whilst identifying any local issues in relation to planning matters. Although the Statements do not form part of the Development Plan (and, therefore, do not carry the same weight as Neighbourhood Development Plans), the legislation requires local planning authorities to “have regard” to the Statements in the preparation of local plans, so far as possible depending on the stage of local plan preparation.
- 4.2 The Authority is an early adopter of these Statements. In February 2023, as an informal pilot, the Authority invited all town and parish councils to prepare “Parish Priorities Statements” to inform the preparation of the South Downs Local Plan Review. At this time, a template was provided which followed the limited guidance set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The use of this template is intended to allow a Parish Priorities Statement to later be easily converted into a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement when further legislation and guidance is published.
- 4.3 The Authority has received 44 Parish Priorities Statements as of November 2025, the equivalent of around one quarter of all town and parish councils in the National Park. Of these:
- Nine Statements are for areas which have a “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan.
  - Six Statements are for areas which have an adopted Parish or Village Design Statement.

- Two Statements are for areas which have both a “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan and an adopted Parish or Village Design Statement.
- 27 Statements are for areas which do not have either a “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan nor an adopted Parish or Village Design Statement.

**5. Resource Implications**

- 5.1 Funding for new neighbourhood plan grants and technical support for the qualifying bodies (town and parish councils, neighbourhood forums) has been discontinued by the Government for 2025 onwards. Locality, the organisation that previously administered the funding is no longer accepting new applications for grants or technical assistance. Technical support packages in place by March 2025 will finish by the end of March 2026. Officers will continue to monitor the situation and assess the impact on the neighbourhood planning process.
- 5.2 The Authority will continue to receive funding through the New Burdens Grant (“the grant”) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans. The costs to the Authority (excluding staff costs) are normally covered by the grant and it is considered to be unlikely that the costs associated with the Examination and Referendum of any Neighbourhood Development Plans currently in preparation will exceed the grant. If a town or parish council decide to review their “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan, then the Authority can use the grant to cover the associated review cost, as proportionate to the scope of the review.
- 5.3 In terms of Parish and Village Design Statements and Parish Priorities Statements, there are no associated costs to the Authority other than staff costs / officer time.

**6. Other Implications & Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

- 6.1 There are not considered to be any risks associated with this report. In terms of any other implications (beyond resource implications), see **Table 3** below.

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No. All is within budget and/or grants received.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The Authority seeks to achieve best value in all the work it undertakes on community planning across the South Downs National Park. Working in partnership with town and parish councils – and neighbouring local planning authorities for areas partially within the National Park - is an effective way to share costs and reduce the burden of community planning. The Authority also encourages town and parish councils to consider preparing Parish Priorities Statements as these offer an alternative and efficient way to influence plan-making.
Does the proposal seek to further National Park Purposes as required under Section 11A(2) duty of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as amended by Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023?	Yes, Community Planning is a mechanism for furthering the National Park Purposes. Neighbourhood Development Plans must demonstrate their general conformity with the strategic policies in the South Downs Local Plan.

Implication	Yes*/No
Which PMP Outcomes / Corporate Plan Objectives does this deliver against?	PMP Outcome 9.2 and Policy 34. Community planning also has the potential to contribute to the three corporate plan objectives in relation to climate change, nature recovery, and a National Park for all.
Links to other projects or partner organisations?	The Development Plan for the South Downs National Park, and the Development Plans for neighbouring local planning authorities for areas partially within the National Park.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	Community planning provides an opportunity to prepare a more localised approach to climate change.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	The requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 is considered for appropriate expenditure and programmes undertaken by the Authority.
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Due regard has been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equalities Act 2010. In terms of <b>parish and village design statements</b> , the Authority prepares a Consultation Statement as per Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). This sets out the details of public consultations, including how, when, and with whom the consultations took place, and how representations have informed the final parish or village design statement. As for <b>neighbourhood development plans</b> , the qualifying body must prepare a Consultation Statement demonstrating how they have consulted the local community and statutory consultees. The Examiner who assesses the neighbourhood development plan will then consider whether the Consultation Statement meets the regulatory requirements.
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?	No.

**Table 3:** Other implications for community planning in the South Downs National Park.

**TIM SLANEY**

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Appendices: 1: A Table of “Made” Neighbourhood Development Plans across the South Downs National Park.  
2: A Map of Community Planning across the South Downs National Park.  
SDNPA Consultees: Legal Services; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; and Director of Planning.  
External Consultees: None  
Background Documents: None