

South Downs revised Local Plan

Community Involvement Plan: Submission (Regulation 19) Consultation

- 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 2042. The revised Local Plan 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 19 consultation.

Role and Purpose of the Community Involvement Plan

- 2.1.1 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: Timely engagement and consultation, Inclusive engagement and consultation, Effective and efficient engagement and consultation, Provision of clear results and accountability on all engagement and consultation exercises. This CIP follows the template set out in the SCI.

Why are people being involved?

- 3.1 We are publishing the revised Local Plan and supporting documents intended for submission and independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The purpose of this consultation is to publish the revised Local Plan and invite the submission of (Regulation 20) representations to be considered by the Inspector as part of the independent examination.
- 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. All parts of the revised Local Plan are open to comment, the revised Local Plan includes the following:

- The **vision and objectives** of the revised Local Plan,
- **Policies** – revised and new policies,
- **Site** allocations – including existing allocations 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.
- Policies **map**

3.4 The revised Local Plan is accompanied by an Integrated Impact Assessment (incorporating Sustainability Appraisal, Health Impact Assessment and Equalities Impacts Assessment) and Habitats Regulations Assessment which are also subject to consultation at Regulation 19 stage and therefore the same consultation arrangements set out in this CIP.

3.5 All comments received during the Reg 19 consultation will be processed and submitted to the Secretary of State for independent Examination, expected to take place during 2027. This will involve the appointment of an independent Planning Inspector, who will examine the revised Local Plan in detail on issues of legal compliance and soundness. This normally involves public hearing sessions, the specific timing of these will be announced by the appointed inspector.

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 who responded to the Regulation 18 consultation and all those 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 revised Local Plan. 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 Further publicity measures will be taken to reach a wide audience, such as:

- I. Publicity on SDNPA website and social media
 - II. Press releases
 - III. Radio and local TV coverage where possible
 - IV. Publicity through regular SDNPA newsletters such as South Downs News, South Downs Planning News and other SDNPA regular Newsletters
 - V. 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.
 - VI. We will provide digital versions of the poster that can easily be shared via email or WhatsApp groups.
- 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. This will include holding 'drop-in' sessions in-person and virtually to provide guidance on responding to the consultation. Paper copies of documents and response forms will be made available for those without access to the internet, at deposit venues and via post on request.

When will people be able to get involved?

- 5.1 The consultation materials will be available from May to June 2026 for a minimum period of six weeks. This meets the statutory requirements set out in the SCI and aligns with the tight timetable for submitting the Plan by the end of the year.

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 Consultation documents in an accessible and engaging format, with use of maps.
 - Provide guidance explaining how to respond;
 - Provide drop-in sessions during the consultation, in-person and online, outside of school and working hours.

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.

- 6.4 In terms of “other such places” set out in criterion (a), the Authority will send hard copies of the consultation document to relevant libraries within or near to the National Park, which are willing to make the documents available to view. We will also provide instructions for accessing the documentation on the Authority website (which could be accessed using library PCs for example).
- 6.4 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 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 Representations 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 Representations 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

How the results of the consultation will be used

- 7.1 All comments received during the Regulation 19 consultation will be treated as formal representations on the “soundness” and “legal compliance” of the Local Plan. Each representation will be recorded and reviewed to identify key issues, matters of concern and areas where clarification may be required.
- 7.2 The full set of representations will be submitted unaltered to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the Authority’s Submission package. A summary of the main issues raised, together with the Authority’s response to those issues, will be published in a Regulation 22 Consultation Statement.
- 7.3 The Examination Inspector will consider all representations when determining the matters to be explored at the Local Plan hearing sessions. Any modifications to the Plan at this stage can only be made through the Inspector-led Main Modifications process, which would be subject to further public consultation if required.