

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	12 March 2026
By	Director of Placemaking
Title of Report	Making of the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan
Purpose of Report	To make the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan part of the South Downs National Park Authority's (SDNPA) statutory Development Plan

Decision

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the outcome of the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Referendum.**
 - 2. Agree to make the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan part of the SDNPA's Development Plan for the Parish of East Dean & Friston.**
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Executive Summary

- This report presents the result for the recent East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan community referendum and sets out the decision to make it part of the SDNPA Development Plan for the parish of East Dean & Friston
- The parish of East Dean & Friston was designated as a Neighbourhood Area in April 2019.
- The Neighbourhood Plan received overwhelming support at the community referendum with 95% of the total votes supporting it.
- The Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the Development Plan following a successful referendum. However, the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to 'make' a neighbourhood plan within eight weeks of a referendum.

I. Introduction

- I.1** East Dean & Friston Parish Council is the 'qualifying body' with the responsibility for preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.
- I.2** The East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Area was designated by the South Downs National Park Authority on 10 April 2019. The neighbourhood area is wholly within the National Park, and the National Park Authority is the lead Local Planning Authority for the neighbourhood plan. A map of the designated area is attached at **Appendix I** to this report.

- 1.3 Following Independent Examination and subsequent modifications the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to community Referendum on 12 February 2026. In this referendum of those voting, 95% voted yes.
- 1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan is now part of the Development Plan and the National Park Authority is required to take a decision to formally 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan within eight weeks of a successful Referendum, unless to do so would breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with any European Union (EU) obligation or any of the Convention Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998).

2. East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2042

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan covers the parish of East Dean & Friston. The parish is located at the eastern end of the National Park to the east of Seaford and west of Eastbourne. The parish straddles the A259 coastal route, covers approximately 900 hectares, has 3km of coastline and contains the settlements of East Dean and Friston along with the hamlets of Birling Gap, Crowlink, Friston Place and Gayles Farm. At the 2021 Census the parish had approximately 1,600 inhabitants. The Parish is within the 'Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs' landscape character area.
- 2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies on housing, design, heritage, the environment and community facilities amongst other matters. The Plan designates two Local Green Spaces. There are no allocations for development. Detailed comments have been made by National Park Authority officers at the appropriate stages throughout the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. These comments have been supportive of the approach taken by the qualifying body to prepare locally distinctive policies. The Neighbourhood Plan has previously been presented to Planning Committee at the appropriate stages, further details are shown in the table below.

Stage	Detail
Designated a Neighbourhood Area	10 April 2019.
Pre-submission consultation on the plan (Reg 14)	This consultation was carried out by the Parish Council between 2 September and 27 October 2024. The consultation was referred to in the Community Planning update at Planning Committee on 10 October 2024 , see item 7.
Submitted to SDNPA and published for consultation (Reg 16)	This consultation was carried out by the SDNPA between 19 May and 30 June 2025. The consultation was referred to in the Community Planning update at Planning Committee on 10 April 2025 , see item 11.
Independent Examination	Undertaken by Mr John Slater in September 2025. The examiner's report is on the East Dean & Friston NDP webpage on the SDNPA website.
Decision Statement	The ED&FNDP Decision Statement (Agenda item 9) was agreed by Planning Committee on 13 November 2025.

2.3 A Referendum took place on Thursday 12 February 2026 with the following results:

- Turnout: 587 (42%)
- Yes: 557 (95%)
- No: 30 (5%)

2.4 The Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are congratulated on developing a Plan that has received overwhelming support from the local community and securing an excellent turnout on the day of the referendum. This is the first Plan wholly within the South Downs National Park to reach this stage since the Twyford Neighbourhood Plan was made in February 2022.

3. Making of the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan

3.1 The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 requires that a Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the Development Plan following a successful referendum. However, the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to ‘make’ a neighbourhood plan within eight weeks of a referendum if more than half of those voting have voted in favour of the Plan. The Authority is not subject to this duty if (and only if) the making of the Plan would breach or would otherwise be incompatible with any EU obligation or any of the Convention Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998).

3.2 The Examiner concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan with modifications met these legislative obligations/rights. No information has subsequently arisen to suggest the making of the Neighbourhood Plan would be in breach with or incompatible with the legislation.

3.3 The Neighbourhood Plan is now part of the Development Plan for the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Area along with the South Downs Local Plan and relevant minerals and waste plans.

4. Next Steps

4.1 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) require Local Planning Authorities to publish a statement setting out their decision to make a Neighbourhood Plan and reasons for making that decision. This statement should be published as soon as practical after the decision is taken. This report forms the National Park Authority’s statement under Regulation 19 for this Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2 Following this decision a copy of the Neighbourhood Plan will be made available to the Development Management team at the South Downs National Park Authority. The policies maps will also be entered onto the relevant electronic mapping systems. A copy of the ‘made’ Neighbourhood Plan will be made available on the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Plan webpage on the Authority’s website.

5. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	To date, the Authority has spent £6,687.68 on the Examination. The Referendum costs have yet to be received from Wealden District Council although they are estimated to be approximately £4,500-£5,000. This expenditure will be met by a grant from the MHCLG.

Implication	Yes*/No
	Once a Neighbourhood Plan is made, a parish council is entitled to 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy collected from development within the neighbourhood area, as opposed to the capped 15% share where there is no Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council can choose how it wishes to spend these funds on a wide range of matters, which support the development of the area.
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 the parish council is an effective way to share costs and reduce the burden of community planning.
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, the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan has demonstrated general conformity with the strategic policies in the South Downs Local Plan which seeks to further National Park purposes.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	<p>AIM 1: The South Downs National Park is a nature-rich, resilient working landscape where wildlife flourishes.</p> <p>AIM 2: The South Downs National Park is on track to become net zero by 2040 by mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>AIM 6: Cultural Heritage is conserved, understood, valued, created and passed on for future generations.</p> <p>AIM 7: A thriving rural economy and local communities sit at the heart of South Downs National Park.</p>
Links to other projects or partner organisations	The Development Plan for the South Downs National Park.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	Policy EDF3 Energy Efficiency and Design supports proposals: that adapt to and mitigate the harmful impacts of climate change; for the retrofitting of existing buildings to reduce energy demand and generate renewable energy; for community scale energy schemes within the neighbourhood area.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	The requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 are 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	Due regard has been taken of the SDNPA's equality duty as contained within the Equalities Act 2010. East Dean & Friston Parish Council who have the responsibility for preparing the neighbourhood plan have also prepared a Consultation

Implication	Yes*/No
Act 2010?	Statement demonstrating how they have consulted the local community and statutory consultees. The Examiner was satisfied that the consultation and publicity undertaken meets 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.

6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
A legal challenge to a Neighbourhood Plan can be launched by way of judicial review within six weeks of the Authority publishing a decision to make the Neighbourhood Plan.	Low	Medium	Officers at SDNPA are satisfied the East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Plan meets the legal requirements. Given that they have been through the correct statutory process, including Examination and Referendum, the Authority is obliged to “make” the plan unless making the plan would breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with, any EU obligation or any of the Convention Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998).

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Appendices: I. East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Area

SDNPA Consultees: Director of Placemaking; Chief Finance Officer; Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer; Legal Services.

External Consultees: None

Background Documents: [East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Plan \(Referendum Version\)](#)
[East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Plan Decision Statement](#)