

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	9 April 2026
By	Director of Planning
Title of Report	Community Planning Update
Purpose of Report	Update Members on the progress of Neighbourhood Development Plan, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements across the South Downs National Park.

Note

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.

Executive Summary

This report provides a biannual update to the South Downs Planning Committee about community-led planning across the South Downs National Park. For the avoidance of doubt, community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements. 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 48 have “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans and the remainder are either preparing, or have ceased to prepare, a Neighbourhood Development Plan;
- The Authority has adopted 11 Parish and Village Design Statements, and a further 2 are potentially under preparation; and
- 44 Parish Priority Statements have been submitted to the Authority and are published on its website.

I. Introduction

- I.1 The South Downs National Park Authority (“the Authority”) has set out principles for delivery in its Partnership Management Plan that include planning principles to inform plan-making and decisions. These should guide and support the development of community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the South Downs National Park so that they 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 has previously undertaken the administrative process for adopting Parish and Village Design Statements as Supplementary Planning Documents; and
 - Publishes and has had regard to all Parish Priorities Statements in the preparation of the new South Downs Local Plan.

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. 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 As part of the recent planning reforms there have been some changes in respect of the requirements for neighbourhood plans. In summary, these are as follows:
- So far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, the plan must be designed to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change;
 - So far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, the plan must be designed to take account of any local nature recovery strategy under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021 that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood plan area; and
 - There is a new Basic Condition requirement that the making of the neighbourhood development plan would not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the neighbourhood development plan were not to be made. Note: this replaces the former Basic Condition that the neighbourhood plan be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 The Authority’s Planning Committee was provided with a community planning update on 13 November 2025. Since then, the following has happened, or is anticipated to take place:
- The **Peacehaven and Telscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan** is scheduled for a referendum on 7 May 2026. The Examiner published their report in November 2025 recommending the Plan could go forward to referendum subject to modifications being made. Lewes District Council and the SDNPA agreed under

delegated authority a Decision Statement on 13 February 2026 accepting the Examiner’s recommendations.

- The **East Dean and Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan** was made by Planning Committee on 12 March 2026. This followed a successful referendum on 12 February 2026 with 95% voting Yes from a turnout of 42% of the electorate. Previously members had agreed the Decision Statement at Planning Committee on 13 November 2025 accepting the Examiner’s recommended modifications to the Plan and to proceed to referendum.
- The **West Chiltington Neighbourhood Development Plan** has been through the Examination with Horsham District Council as the lead authority receiving the Examiner’s report on 11 February 2026. The Examiner recommended the Plan proceed to referendum subject to modifications. A Decision Statement has been agreed by Horsham District Council, and a referendum is provisionally planned for June 2026.
- The **Modified Boxgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan** has been submitted to Chichester District Council, and a Regulation 16 consultation is anticipated.
- The **Plaistow and Ifold Neighbourhood Development Plan** has reached the Regulation 14 stage. The parish council as the qualifying body carried out a Regulation 14 public consultation from 2 February to 31 March 2026. SDNPA officers made a response under delegated authority.
- The **West Saltdean Neighbourhood Development Plan** was made on 21 January 2026 by SDNPA under delegated authority. This followed a successful referendum on 4 December 2025.
- The **Coldean Neighbourhood Development Plan** is currently at Examination following the completion of the Regulation 16 consultation on 4 December 2025. The Examiner was appointed by Brighton & Hove City Council as the lead authority for the Plan.

Stage	Total	Authority Led	Not Authority Led
Made	48	19	29
Referendum	1	0	1
Examination	2	0	2
Reg 16 Submission	0	0	0
Reg 14 Pre-Submission	2	0	2
Plans In Preparation	8	5	3
Plans Not Proceeded	3	1	2
TOTAL	63	25	39

Table 1: Status of Neighbourhood Development Plans as of April 2026.

- 2.5 **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.
- 2.6 **Plans In Preparation.** It is believed that there are eight 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 three plans being led on by other local planning

authorities, these are the Wickham & Knowle, Lynchmere, and Westhampnett Neighbourhood Development 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.

- 2.7 **Reg 14 Pre-Submission.** The Boxgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan has been submitted to Chichester District Council as the lead authority. Note Boxgrove is an updated Plan with proposed modifications. The Plaistow and Ifold Neighbourhood Development Plan completed a Regulation 14 consultation on 31 March 2026. This is a new Plan following the withdrawal of the previous in February 2022.
- 2.8 **Reg 16 Submission.** There are no Plans currently at this stage although a Regulation 16 consultation is anticipated for the Boxgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 2.9 **Examination.** The Coldean Neighbourhood Development Plan is currently at Examination. The Examiner has published letters in relation to the Examination process, and a report is anticipated later in the year. One of the letters received relates to changes to the basic conditions and is included in Appendix 3 due to the relevance to other Plans in preparation.
- 2.10 **Referendum.** The Peacehaven & Telscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan is scheduled for a referendum on 7 May 2026. The West Chiltington Neighbourhood Development Plan is provisionally planned to have a referendum in June 2026.
- 2.11 **Plans Made.** The 48 “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans are listed in **Appendix 1** and shown in **Appendix 2**. The West Saltdean and East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Development Plans were made on 21 January 2026 and 12 March 2026 respectively and these have 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.
- 3.3 The Authority has adopted 11 parish and village design statements as Supplementary Planning Documents, of which 4 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 13 November 2025. Since this time, the situation remains the same as the previous update:
 - Soberton Parish Council is working on a parish design statement for consultation with SDNPA officers providing guidance on a draft version; and
 - West Meon Parish Council is to decide whether it wishes to proceed with the design statement which was previously consulted on in Summer 2023.
- 3.4 Due to changes to the planning system by the Government now enacted through commencement legislation under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 as of June 2026 new Supplementary Planning Documents can no longer be adopted by a local planning authority. This means SDNPA will no longer be able to adopt new Parish/Village Design Statements as a Supplementary Planning Document after June 2026.

- 3.5 Any new enquiries from Parish Councils have been advised about the change effecting Parish/Village Design Statements. A Parish/Village Design Statement could still be prepared and would still be a material consideration. However, it would have less weight in decision making as it would no longer formally be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Alternatively, these design statements could be progressed as part of a Neighbourhood Development Plan which would give them full Development Plan weight.
- 3.6 The 11 Parish/Village Design Statements previously adopted will continue to retain their status as they are linked to Policy SD5 Design in the South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033. It is anticipated the 11 Parish/Village Design Statements will have less weight in decision making when the South Downs Local Plan 2024-2042 is adopted (timetabled for October-December 2027) and replaces the current Local Plan.

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

Table 2: Status of Parish and Village Design Statements as of April 2026.

* 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 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, once commenced, 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. It should be noted that this element of the Act has not been progressed by the Government in its recent planning reforms.

- 4.2 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 if this part of the Act is commenced and secondary legislation and guidance is published.
- 4.3 The Authority has received 44 Parish Priorities Statements as of April 2026, the equivalent of around one quarter of all town and parish councils in the National Park. Of these:
- 9 Statements are for areas which have a “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan.
 - 6 Statements are for areas which have an adopted Parish or Village Design Statement.
 - 2 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.
- 4.4 These Parish Priorities Statements have been an important part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan and will continue to have relevance in guiding decisions, particularly around infrastructure requirements and spending priorities. They are a useful tool for Parish Councils to engage with their communities on the priorities for their area and where resources should be directed.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 Funding for communities to prepare new neighbourhood plan was discontinued by the Government in 2025 and technical support packages already in place by March 2025 finished 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 funding for local planning authorities to carry out the statutory stages (examination and referendum) has continued through the New Burdens Grant (“the grant”) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The costs to the Authority (excluding staff costs) are normally covered by the grant and it is unlikely that the costs associated with the examination and referendum of any Neighbourhood Development Plans currently in preparation will exceed the grant.
- 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.

Implication	Yes*/No
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.
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.
Which PMP Outcomes / Corporate Plan Objectives does this deliver against?	PMP Planning Principles 1-16. 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 parish and village design statements , 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 neighbourhood development plans , 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.

Implication	Yes*/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.

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 Appendices: Appendix 1 - A Table of “Made” Neighbourhood Development Plans across the South Downs National Park.
 Appendix 2 - A Map of Community Planning across the South Downs National Park.
 Appendix 3 - Legal Changes to Neighbourhood Planning
 SDNPA Consultees: Legal Services; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; and Director of Placemaking.
 External Consultees: None
 Background Documents: None