



South Downs

National Park Authority

Agenda Item 10

Report PP05/17

Report to	Policy and Programme Committee
Date	28 February 2017
By	Director of Planning
Title of Report	Housing White Paper Update

Recommendation: That the Committee:

- 1. Consider the impacts of the Housing White Paper for the South Downs National Park; and**
 - 2. Provide a steer on the response to be submitted to the Government consultation**
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1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The White Paper “Fixing our broken housing market” sets out a broad range of reforms that government plans to introduce to help reform the housing market and increase the supply of new homes.
- 1.2 Following the publication of the White Paper Officers have conducted an initial review of the text and produced a summary briefing paper of key issues from the SDNPA perspective. This has been shared with staff and Members. The key issues are set out below
- 1.3 Whilst there is more work required to understand the detailed implications of the Governments proposals on the National Park, Members are asked to consider the themes and issues emerging from the white paper to help shape the Authority’s response, in particular in relation the Authority’s ongoing work in relation to affordable housing and as the planning authority.

2. White Paper – Key themes

- 2.1 The White Paper groups its proposals into four main areas:
 - Right homes in right place: More land for homes where people want to live – all areas will be required to have up-to-date plans and to ensure communities are happy with how homes look.
 - Building homes faster: Ensure that homes are built quickly once planning permissions are granted. Invest in making the planning system more open and accessible
 - Diversify the housing market – opening it up to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient methods.
 - Because building the homes we need will take time, the Government ‘will also take more steps to continue helping people now’.
- 2.2 The main areas of potential impact on the National Park include:
- 2.3 Plan Making
The Government proposes to:
 - Clarify which national policies it regards as providing a strong reason to restrict development when preparing plans, or which indicate that development should be restricted when making decisions on planning applications. These will no longer be examples but a “clear list”, meaning that policy is strengthened. It is proposed that the

list be limited to the policies listed at footnote 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (which include National Park designation), with the addition of Ancient Woodland and aged or veteran trees.

- Consult on a new standard methodology for calculating ‘objectively assessed need’, and encourage local authorities to plan on this basis. As part of its evidence base of the Local Plan, the SDNPA has already juggled with four different Housing Market Areas (HMA’s) overlapped by the NP boundary, so in principle this is a good thing. However there needs to be recognition that working across HMA’s, whether standardised in methodology or not, is a difficult task as one cannot just allocate numbers ‘proportionately’ according to land mass when the land in question is subject to all sorts of restrictions (see above). The idea of a policy blind HMA may not be appropriate in such areas.
- Require that plans are reviewed every five years. This will obviously apply to the Local Plan once adopted and has resource implications as well as requiring up-to-date evidence base.
- Introduce a ‘housing delivery test’ where penalties (in the form of an increasing chance of losing appeals) are ramped up year on year in the event of housing under supply. The implications of this for National Parks are unclear as they are not automatically required to meet objectively assessed need.

2.4 Planning Authorities

- Increase nationally set planning fees as long as they are spent on the planning department, with a possible extra amount if authorities are delivering sufficient homes. This is considered long overdue and reflects a growing recognition that the planning system needs support.
- Make available new capacity funding to develop planning departments.
- Consult on charging fees for planning appeals.
- Make it easier for local authorities to take action against those who do not build out once permissions have been granted.
- These are helpful provisions which provide the opportunity – should we wish to take it - to strengthen the delivery of our planning function without making further demands on core Defra grant. It is interesting to note that the idea that the record of a company / builder actually building out is being mooted, planning straying into the character / record of an individual / company.

2.5 Affordable Housing

- Open up the housing market up to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient methods, and make it easier for people to build their own homes.
- Bring affordable private rental and Starter Homes into the definition of affordable housing.
- Replace the requirement for 20% starter homes by a clear policy expectation that housing sites of more than 10 units or 0.5 hectares should deliver a minimum of 10% affordable homes
- Re-launch the Homes and Communities Agency as “Homes England” with the purpose: ‘To make a home within reach for everyone’.
- Further analysis will be needed to reveal the extent to which these measures will help the very particular circumstances we have inside the National Park – an undersupply of small scale, rural, affordable housing in an area with exceptionally high property prices. That said it is welcome that the importance of supply from small sites in rural areas is recognised so explicitly for the first time.

2.6 Rural Policy

- Maintain existing strong protections for the Green Belt, and clarify that Green Belt boundaries should be amended only in exceptional circumstances when local authorities can demonstrate that they have fully examined all other reasonable options for meeting their identified housing requirements.

- There are no immediately obvious implications here as there is no officially designated Green Belt in the areas around the national park boundary.

2.7 Community led planning

- Give communities a stronger voice in the design of new housing to drive up the quality and character of new development, building on the success of neighbourhood planning.
- Amend national policy to expect local planning authorities to have policies that support the development of small 'windfall' sites and indicate that great weight should be given to using small undeveloped sites within settlements for homes.
- Give much stronger support for sites that provide affordable homes for local people.
- Highlight the opportunities that neighbourhood plans present for identifying and allocating sites that are suitable for housing, drawing on the knowledge of local communities.
- At first reading these measures appear welcome as they reinforce the importance of Neighbourhood Planning, in which the SDNPA has invested significant resources, and our affordable housing objectives. The increasing importance given to local connection rather than affordability per se is an interesting evolution.

2.8 The review of the Community Infrastructure Levy, originally expected to be realised alongside the Housing White Paper, is now expected in the autumn budget review statement.

2.9 Again, the implications of this are unclear but any major change in policy will have an impact on our ongoing workload since we are just putting a CIL charging regime and Infrastructure Development in place and are about to go live. The reference back to the role of s106 suggests any changes in due course will be variations upon a theme established already.

3. **Other Implications**

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	None directly arising from this report
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Not applicable
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	Not applicable
Has due regard been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	There are no equalities implications arising from this report
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy 1.	This report contributes to sustainability principles 2 – building a strong, healthy and just society and 4 – promoting good governance

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Appendices	None
SDNPA Consultees	Director of Countryside Policy and Management;
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	The white paper "Fixing our broken housing market"