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| Report to | South Downs National Park Authority Policy & Resource Committee |
| Date | 19 September 2017 |
| By | Director of Countryside and Policy |
| Title of Report | Newton Valence Whole Estate Plan |

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to endorse the Newton Valence Whole Estate Plan.

I. Summary and Background

- I.1 In 2015 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) introduced the idea of Whole Estate Plans, meeting with numerous Estates with significant land holdings within the National Park area (to date around 28 holdings have been engaged). A Whole Estate Plan (WEP) aims to enable collaboration between individual estates and the National Park Authority to achieve the ambitions of the Estate / Farm / School and the purposes of the National Park, and deliver the Partnership Management Plan. A WEP is a non-statutory plan which demonstrates the overall position and aspirations an organisation has as an estate and plans do not have to cover a specific time period, and may be updated to reflect changes in circumstance or withdrawn if appropriate.
- I.2 A WEP is designed to support an organisation which is generally a large landholding which includes complex commercial, social and environmental activities. It is expected that WEPs would generally be land holdings in excess of 400 acres, with multiple diverse activities, and employing or having residents in excess of 30 people, although this is not mandatory.
- I.3 WEPs are a progressive and almost unique approach by a planning authority or National Park Authority in the UK as they look to foster good working relationships with key stakeholders and facilitate better understanding of the issues surrounding sustainable rural estate communities – of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They are not focused on or to be limited to planning matters but rather the whole husbandry of the Estate – farming, woodland management, conservation, access provision etc.
- I.4 An endorsed Whole Estate Plan (WEP) will be a material consideration in determining planning applications and will provide a solidly understood contextual background to any development proposals. The inclusion of a development proposal within a WEP however does not guarantee that planning permission will be granted and any proposal will still need to be comply with relevant development plan policies. A WEP can also be used to help guide and support funding bids, future neighbourhood plan production, agri-environment and forestry schemes and with other Natural Capital projects. Beyond the finished product, the WEP process also provides value in terms of relationship building; between the Estate and the SDNPA, as well as the local community.
- I.5 A WEP is comprised of 4 elements: a Vision, an Asset Audit, Ecosystem Services Analysis, and an Action Plan. Officers look at how all these elements relate to each other, i.e. is the Vision a genuine representation of the actions proposed, and are the actions evidenced by the Asset Audit and Ecosystem Services Analysis? Estates should also be able to demonstrate that they have engaged with the local community during the process of producing the WEP.

2. Newton Valence Whole Estate Plan

- 2.1 Newton Valence Estate (NVE) has been engaged in the WEP process from a very early stage of the inception of WEPs in the SDNPA. The final version of the WEP for the NVE was submitted for endorsement in July 2017 (**Appendix I**). This was accompanied by a suite of supporting information, which is set out in the exempt Part B of the WEP (this information has been submitted to provide support and evidence for the WEP only). The WEP has been considered by officers from the Countryside & Policy and the Planning Directorates (summarised in **Appendix 2**) and follows meetings between officers and representatives of the Estate. Some of the comments captured in the Appendix refer to the next steps the Estate and SDNPA could take forward together, based on the WEP. Advice has been given by the SDNPA on how to better express the Estate's intentions and justification for the WEP, and suggestions for how to demonstrate commitment to fulfilling the National Park Purposes.
- 2.2 Officers, together with the NVE and their agents, have spent substantial time and resources in the production of the WEP to ensure it meets the vision of both the Estate and the SDNPA. Overall, it is considered that the Estate has responded positively to the suggestions made by officers during the formation of the WEP.
- 2.3 It is considered that the WEP, as presented in Appendix I, is a successful example of joint working, which clearly demonstrates the Estate's aspirations and strategy for fulfilling the aims and objectives of their WEP, in the context of the National Park setting.
- 2.4 The following provides a summary assessment of each of the 4 elements that make up the WEP and the evidence of community engagement.

Vision

- 2.5 The Newton Valence WEP Vision is simple, but reflective of the aims and aspirations which run through the Plan, which is a primary farming operation, supported by a range of core, established diversification projects. The Vision is also considered to successfully capture the desire to expand measures to conserve and enhance natural features on the Estate. This is further supported by a foreword provided by the current Estate Manager, which makes clear how important maintaining the integrity of NVE is and that succession planning is fundamental to the health of the Estate.

Asset Audit

- 2.6 The Asset Audit provides the geographical and historical context for the Estate, which is supplemented by maps within the main body of the WEP as well as in the appendices. The Audit has been structured using the main activities currently operating across the Estate (i.e. farming operations, shoot, equestrian, tourism and residential). There is a further section that addresses the environmental and historic assets at NVE.
- 2.7 The Audit identifies areas where steps have already been taken to improve the overall operation of the Estate, for example the Joint Farming Venture NVE has entered into, which has already begun to improve the efficiency of the farm management aspect of the Estate.
- 2.8 It is acknowledged that an initial review of the condition of buildings Upper and Bottom Yard has been undertaken by the Estate. The Estate is aware that this will need to be supplemented by full surveys undertaken by an appropriately qualified person as part of ongoing investigations as to their retention/re-use/replacement. This does not need to be completed for the purpose of endorsing the WEP.
- 2.9 Overall, the Asset Audit represents a thorough review of the assets within the Estate.

Ecosystem Services Analysis

- 2.10 NVE has followed the current SDNPA recommended format for producing the Ecosystem Services Analysis. It is considered this represents a comprehensive analysis of the ecosystem services the Estate benefits from. To enable quicker and easier identification of the links this makes to the Asset Audit and through the Action Plan, key opportunities have been highlighted in bold.

Action Plan

- 2.11 The Action Plan comprises 5 broad action areas; farm consolidation, farm diversification, community engagement, conservation management and affordable housing, for which further examples of how these actions will be delivered are included. These are well grounded in the Vision and supported by the Asset Audit and Ecosystem Services Analysis. Within the Action Plan is an indication of which of the National Park's special qualities the project would support. This helps to frame the WEP within the context of the National Park setting and demonstrates commitment to the original concept of WEPs.
- 2.12 The action areas are deliberately broad to ensure that the SDNPA does not find itself in a position of unequivocal support for specific projects prior to necessary applications or consents being submitted.
- 2.13 A funding summary has also been included, which identifies how each of the potential projects would likely be funded and how dependent they are on additional capital investment. This is a useful inclusion and demonstrates how important ensuring the overall operation of NVE remains viable is to the current Estate Manager.

Community Engagement

- 2.14 The Estate has provided a details of their community consultation exercise within the main body of the WEP. This provides detail of the stakeholders approached as part of the Community (e.g. employees, visitors, parish councils and residents of Newton Valence and Selborne parishes). This was primarily conducted through the use of questionnaires, the information collected from which has been collated and considered within the WEP. NVE has also considered the Newton Valence Parish Plan and have made suggestions for ways the Estate could assist with delivery of some of the identified actions within. The level of engagement and the methods employed are considered to be appropriate.
- 2.15 Newton Valence Parish Council has provided comments to the SDNPA regarding an earlier draft of the WEP. These comments can be found in **Appendix 3**. Some of the comments made by the Parish Council set out points of clarification the SDNPA also raised with NVE (and have been addressed in the current version of the WEP). However, many of the comments from the Parish Council relate to specific development proposals. The WEP does not guarantee any future planning application would be successful and applications for planning permission would need to be accompanied by the appropriate supporting information, which the Parish Council would be able to comment on at such time that the application is submitted. It is at this stage that a full assessment of the merits of any proposed development would be undertaken. This is in accordance with the SDNPA guidance on preparing WEPs, which it is considered NVE has complied with.

3. Other Implications

| Implication | Yes*/No |
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| Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority? | No, although applications for grant funds or planning permission may be submitted for consideration by other forums relating to actions highlighted within the WEP. |
| Does the proposal raise any Resource implications? | No. If endorsed, the WEP will be included on the SDNPA website, however update and review of the document is the responsibility of the Estate. If the WEP is amended, it will need to be considered again by Officers and Members. |
| How does the proposal represent Value for Money? | N/A |
| Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal? | No |
| Has due regard been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as | This decision has no direct equalities implications. This document will be used to inform future decisions by the |

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| contained within the Equality Act 2010? | Authority , which will be subject to their own equalities impact assessments. |
| 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 Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy: 1. Living within environmental limits 2. Ensuring a strong healthy and just society 3. Achieving a sustainable economy 4. Promoting good governance 5. Using sound science responsibly | The WEP has principles 1-3 at its core, which is evidenced by the Plan being set within the context of the SDNP Partnership Management Plan and to support the delivery of the draft Local Plan. |

4. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 4.1 There is the potential for a reputational risk for the SDNPA through failure of endorsement after an Estate has gone through the process of producing a WEP that meets the criteria for endorsement. There is also a risk of WEPs being misunderstood and considered as planning documents only, or being interpreted as a 'green light' for development. Both of these concerns can be mitigated by providing continued support to Estates, case officers and other interested parties and providing guidance on the SDNPA website.

ANDREW LEE

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Appendices
1. Newton Valence WEP (Part B Exempt)
2. Summary of Consultation Responses
3. Newton Valence Parish Council Comments

SDNPA Consultees
Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services

External Consultees
None

Background Documents
SDNPA Whole Estate Plan Guidelines
[Producing a Whole Estate Plan - South Downs National Park Authority](#)
[SDNP Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019](#)
<http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf>

Agenda Item 13a Report PRI6/17 Appendix 2

| Officer | Comments |
|-------------------------|---|
| Local Plan Lead | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-use of existing buildings for agriculture purposes welcomed and noted • New buildings would need to have regard to relevant local plan policies • Potential requirement as part of applications for travel plan • Proposals to improve pedestrian access welcomed. Opportunities for cycle routes? • Identification of a site for local affordable housing welcomed • Should be a way of balancing requirements of affordable housing provision with aim of providing staff-only private dwellings. This will need to be worked through carefully with SDNPA planners to ensure no policy conflict occurs |
| Communities Lead | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy with level of community consultation and use of community led plans to inform the WEP |
| Planning Link Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estate should recognise wider responsibility to NP Purposes • Maps in main document are welcomed • Potential to mention the former railway line |
| Ranger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to clearly state Estate will go into Countryside Stewardship when ELS ends, with consultation with the Ranger at the start of the process. This will be the mechanism for ensuring other environmental benefits can be secured |
| Landscape Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incredibly comprehensive and useful steer for the work the Estate does now and hopes to do in the future • Landscape (environment) is the foundation of the business – possibility for this nuance to be balanced a little better? • Opportunities around cycling of resources internally (e.g. horse manure and water) • Opportunities to improve land management outside of SSSI's |
| Cycling Project Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former railway line is an asset and opportunity • Sustainable transport links with public transport and sustainable travel should be actively encouraged amongst staff and visitors • Sustainable tourism opportunities, in line with policy, should be encouraged • Potential to link some of projects to Miles Without Stiles |

