

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	29 March 2018
By	Director of Countryside & Policy Management
Title of Report Decision	Iford Whole Estate Plan

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

1. Introduction

- 1.1 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estate and plans do not have to cover a specific time period, and may be updated to reflect changes in circumstance or withdrawn if appropriate.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.

3. Issues for consideration

- 3.1 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.

- 3.2 Iford have been engaged in the WEP process from an early stage, attending early workshops and meeting with SDNPA Officers. A WEP for the Iford Estate was submitted for endorsement in January 2018, with the final formatted version received in March (**Appendix I**). It has been considered by officers from the Countryside Policy and the Planning Directorates and follows several meetings between officers and representatives of the Estate. The WEP broadly follows the structure suggested in the SDNPA guidance, although has taken a different approach to the Asset Audit and Ecosystem Services Analysis section, having structured the bulk of the Plan around 4 themes that run through the Estate. There are also additional sections to support the WEP on the history of the estate and how the Estate supports the SDNP Special Qualities. This approach still captures all 4 of the necessary elements of a WEP and is considered to reflect a good level of the understanding by the Estate and its commitment to fulfilling the National Park's purposes.
- 3.3 There have been ongoing discussions between officers and the Estate regarding the structure of the WEP and how to draw out the good work the Estate have been undertaking for years. Overall, it is considered that the Estate has responded positively to these suggestions and this has resulted in a balanced, well presented WEP, which is a successful example of joint working. The WEP 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.
- 3.4 The following provides a summary assessment of each of the 4 elements that make up the WEP and the evidence of community engagement.

Vision

- 3.5 The Iford Vision is clear and concise and successfully represents the objectives running through the Plan. The Vision is underpinned by a summary of where the Estate hopes to be in 25 years-time, in terms of its farming and diversification practices and the landscape in which it sits. This provides focus for the Estate and understanding of their intentions moving forward.

Asset Audit

- 3.6 The Asset Audit provides the geographical and historical context for the Estate. This is supported by the useful 'Estate at a Glance' graphic at the beginning of the Plan and the timeline provided, detailing the formation of the landscape and the Estate. The Audit is structured around 4 key themes:

- Sustainable and Resilient Farming
- Landscape and Biodiversity
- Local Rural Economy
- Community and Cultural Heritage

Each theme chapter starts with a 'key facts' box, which provides useful figures regarding the amount and type of farming activities, designated landscape, access land and rights of way. Case studies are also used throughout to highlight current good work and potential threats to this work continuing, for example the North Hill SSSI.

- 3.7 Each chapter also concludes with an explicit link back to the main Vision and provides theme-specific aims to support this wider vision. There are also sections on the challenges and scope for improvement within each chapter. This is arguably part of the Ecosystem Services Analysis, however is clearly presented and fits well with the overall structure of the WEP. It is considered that the Audit represents a comprehensive and holistic review of the assets on the Estate.

Ecosystem Services Analysis

- 3.8 The Ecosystem Services Analysis begins in the preceding theme chapters and continues in the chapter entitled 'Ecosystem Services'. Here it draws out what the Estate provides under each of facets of the Ecosystem Services wheel, acknowledging where there might be specific opportunities associated with them. The section could go even further to summarise the strengths, which are clearly there, associated with each of these facets, in order to provide a clearer analysis and link between the Asset Audit and the Ecosystem Service Analysis itself.

However, the Estate have demonstrated a good understanding of what they have and the analysis that has been completed both here and in the earlier chapters is sufficient.

Action Plan

- 3.9 The Action Plan is covered by 2 chapters, Plan Outcomes and the Action Plan. The former provides additional case studies for potential projects and is structured around the objectives of the Vision. In each section, a table is provided outlining the Estate's commitments, for example 'To fully consider landscape and biodiversity whenever new practices or techniques, buildings or machinery are introduced,' which is linked to an action: 'Work with the East Downs Farm Cluster group to devise a strategy for landscape scale improvements that can be delivered through changes in farming practices'. The table concludes by demonstrating which of the 2033 outcomes these projects will help realise. This approach provides a very clear demonstration of how all the sections of the WEP are linked and evidences the understanding the Estate has of their relationship to the SDNP, and their ability to fulfil the Park Purposes and Duty.
- 3.10 The Action Plan chapter provides a summary of these projects, with a time frame for potential delivery and details of the next steps associated with each. This is useful and demonstrates a commitment on the part of the Estate to fulfilling their Vision. The delivery of some of the projects identified is clearly predicated on planning permission (or other consent) being granted. The projects themselves have been kept deliberately vague to ensure the SDNPA does not find itself in a position of unequivocal support for specific projects prior to necessary applications or consents being submitted. Officers consider they are sufficiently detached to prevent Members being placed in a position where they are deemed to absolutely support the projects in the Action Plan.

Community Consultation

- 3.11 The Community Consultation section to the rear of the WEP summarises the actions that have been carried out by the Estate to involve the local community in the development of the WEP. This has included a workshop meeting, which the public were invited to, and a follow-up session as part of a Parish Meeting. The Estate also produces a quarterly newsletter, which is used to pass information about what the Estate is doing throughout the community. The production and distribution of this newsletter will continue after the WEP has been endorsed. It is considered that the consultation exercise is appropriate and reflects the requirements for endorsement.

4. Options & cost implications

- 4.1 There are no direct cost implications associated with the consideration of the endorsement of the WEP. There will be a likelihood once endorsed that the Authority may be expected to work with the Estate to realise some of the projects identified.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 If the WEP is endorsed, it will be placed on the SDNPA website and officers will be made aware that is now a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
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	No

implications arising from the proposal?	
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	This decision has no direct equalities implications. This document will be used to inform future decisions by the 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 Data Protection implications?	None
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy.	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.

7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 Describe any risks associated with the recommendation including possible risks to delivery, budgets in the table below.

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Appendices 1. Iford Whole Estate Plan (attached as a separate document)
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](#)
[SDNP Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019](#)