



Position Statement of the South Downs National Park Authority

Matter I – Vision and Objectives

DATE: October 2018

Is the Plan based on an appropriate Vision and appropriate Objectives, with reference to established legislation and guidance governing National Parks?

KEY DOCUMENTS for cross-reference:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (Nat 01)
 - English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular (DEFRA, 2010) (Nat 03)
 - A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (DEFRA, 2018) (Nat 05)
 - State of the South Downs National Park (SDNPA, 2012) (Core 02)
 - Partnership Management Plan (2014-19) (SDNPA, 2014) (Core 03)
 - South Downs National Park Vision: National Park Authority Report (SDNPA, 2012) (Core 03A)
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1. Introduction

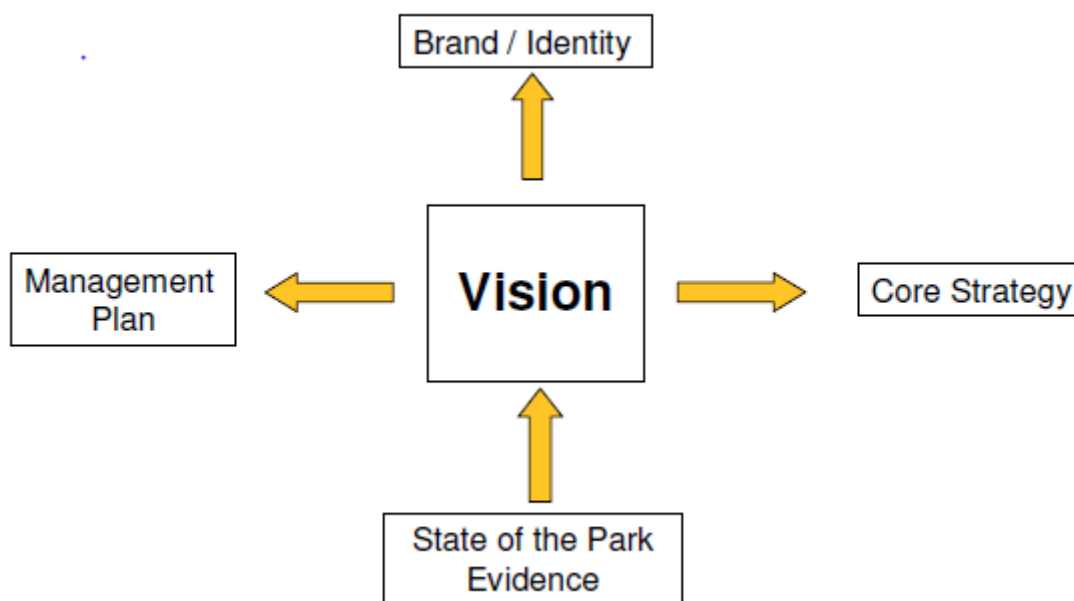
1.1 This Position Statement has been prepared by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) on the Vision and Objectives of the Local Plan, because a Background Paper was not previously prepared by the Authority on this matter.

2. Is the Plan based on an appropriate Vision and appropriate Objectives, with reference to established legislation and guidance governing National Parks?

2.1 The SDNPA considers that the Vision and Objectives of the Local Plan are appropriate to England's newest and most populous national park. They seek to conserve and enhance the iconic English lowland landscapes, whilst reflecting the needs and aspirations of the local communities, who have helped to shape this living landscape and its special qualities. The Vision and Objectives are consistent with the purposes of the National Park, which are set in statute in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949, as amended by the Environment Act 1995. That is why this is a landscape-led Plan, which means that landscape has been put first in the formulation of all its policies. It also explains the particular importance attached to biodiversity and the historic environment.

2.2 The Vision and Objectives seek to deliver local aspirations for development in a protected landscape in line with national legislation and policy on national parks, planning and the environment. This is a high level Vision for over fifty Neighbourhood Development Plans and other community led plans that are in various stages of preparation across the National Park.

2.3 The Vision set out in chapter 2 of the South Downs Local Plan was originally agreed by the SDNPA in 2012 (Core 03A). The State of the South Downs National Park Report (Core 02) provided the baseline against which progress on achieving the Vision could be measured. The intention was that it would provide a strategic steer for the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) (Core 03), the Local Plan and the shared identity for the National Park. The Local Plan has a significant role in delivering the Vision and its objectives and policies are worded accordingly. The linkages between the different documents are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Vision for the South Downs National Park¹

2.4 A great deal of engagement, data gathering and policy work was undertaken over two years to inform the Vision. Around 3,000 members of the public, schoolchildren, business owners and farmers provided ideas for the Vision through the ‘postcards for the future’ campaign. There was also extensive stakeholder engagement most notably through the South Downs Partnership, which is a high level body made up of senior individuals from organisations and sectors across the purposes and duty of the National Park. Other important stakeholder groups that fed into the Vision are the South Downs Land Managers, the South Downs Society and the South Downs Network.

2.5 The Vision describes where we want to be in 2050. The report to NPA in 2012 states that ‘There is a balance to strike between agreeing a Vision which is bland, offends no-one, but provides insufficiently strong overall direction of the National Park, and one which is too divisive to command general support. This risk has been mitigated by combining of broad consultation with a strong steer from the NPA and the South Downs Partnership.’

2.6 The Local Plan Objectives act as stepping stones between the Vision, spatial strategy and policies of the Local Plan. They are based on the National Park purposes and duty and outline the direction that the Local Plan will take to achieve the vision. The relevant objectives are listed at the start of each Local Plan section. For example, four objectives are identified for a Thriving Living Landscape, namely objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 which relate to landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity and ecosystem services respectively.

2.7 Section 66 of the 1995 Environment Act and section 3 of the 1988 Local Government Act require National Park Authorities to produce a Management Plan

¹ Source: Report to National Park Authority 26-07-12 (Core 03A)

and review it every five years. The Vision and Circular (Nat 03) states that these Management Plans should set the Vision and Objectives to guide the future of the National Park over the next 10 to 20 years and should have significant 'buy in' from key partners. There is also an overarching joint Vision for English National Park and the Broads to help the long-term planning and decision making of NPAs.

- 2.8 The 25 Year Environment Plan (Nat 05) published by the Government this year states that 'Our vision for the natural world of the future is one in which economic growth, development and environmental protection go hand in hand wherever you are in the globe.' This is consistent with our 2050 Vision for the South Downs. The 25 Year Environment Plan states that the creation of national parks 'has been among the outstanding environmental achievements of the past 100 years. They provide a patchwork of stunning, and protected, landscapes.'
- 2.9 The Local Plan Vision is consistent with national planning policy set out in the NPPF (Nat 01). It sets out a positive vision for the future of the area in line with paragraph 17 and a shared vision with communities of the residential environment and facilities they wish to see in line with paragraph 69. Many local communities do further work on their own community-led plans that contain distinctive visions such as that for Lewes set out in the Lewes NDP. It is important to note that the South Downs Local Plan Vision is for a nationally protected landscape and that paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that national parks have 'highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.' It therefore seeks to do more than meet the needs and aspirations of the local communities notwithstanding their importance. We consider that the Vision for the South Downs is both aspirational but realistic in line with paragraph 154 of the NPPF.

3. Summary

- 3.1 The Local Plan Vision and Objectives are appropriate for England's newest and most populous National Park, whilst being consistent with national legislation and policy.

South Downs Centre, North Street,
Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH

T: 01730 814810

E: info@southdowns.gov.uk

www.southdowns.gov.uk

Chief Executive: Trevor Beattie