

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Planning Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>11 April 2024</b>
<b>By</b>	<b>Director of Planning</b>
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Community Planning Update.</b>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Update Members on the progress of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS) across the South Downs National Park.</b>

#### Note

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**Recommendation:** The committee is asked to note the progress to date on the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS) across the South Downs National Park.

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#### Executive Summary

The South Downs National Park Authority has set out a commitment in the South Downs Partnership Management Plan [2020-25] to support the development of high-quality community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the South Downs National Park – see Outcome 9.2 and Policy 34. As such, support for community-led plans, and the volunteers who help to prepare them, contributes to the partnership management plan. Please note, community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans and Parish/Village Design Statements.

This report provides a biannual update to the planning committee about the preparation of community-led plans. The update is required as the main preparation of such plans is normally considered by Authority Officers under delegated powers. This report enables Members to note the breadth of community-led plans across the South Downs National Park, and the work currently being undertaken by Authority Officers and volunteers in their preparation. The report will also be used to inform the Authority Monitoring Report later this year. In summary:

- There are 62 designated neighbourhood areas in the South Downs National Park, of which 44 have “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans;
- The Authority is the Lead Planning Authority for 7 of the 18 emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans;
- The Authority has adopted 9 Parish/Village Design Statements, and a further 3 are being prepared as per the ninth edition of the South Downs Local Development Scheme;
- The Authority encourages town and parish councils to engage proactively in the South Downs Local Plan Review through the preparation of Parish Priorities Statements; and
- The Authority has received and published 40 Parish Priorities Statements.

#### I. Introduction

- 1.1 The South Downs National Park Authority has set out a commitment in the South Downs Partnership Management Plan [2020-25] to support the development of high-quality community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the National Park – see Outcome 9.2 and Policy 34. As such, support for community-led plans, and the volunteers who help to prepare them, contributes to the partnership management plan. For the avoidance of doubt, community-led plans can include both Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS).

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)

- 1.2 An NDP is prepared by a qualifying body (usually the town or parish council) as per the process / requirements set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. An NDP sets out a vision for the community and includes non-strategic planning policies which have been assessed to be in conformity with the Adopted Local Plan – in this case, the South Downs Local Plan. Once the NDP has passed a successful community referendum – and has been “made” by the local planning authority – the NDP becomes part of the Development Plan for the respective designated neighbourhood area.
- 1.3 There are 44 “made” NDPs in the South Downs National Park, with a further 18 emerging NDPs at various stages of preparation – see Section 2, and Appendices 1 and 2. If an NDP includes land both inside and outside of the South Downs National Park, the Authority agrees with the other local planning authority about who will be the Lead Planning Authority for that particular NDP. This is normally based on whether the majority of the parish population lives inside or outside the National Park. Of the 18 emerging NDPs, the Authority is the Lead for 7, of which 2 have confirmed that they do not wish to proceed.

Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS)

- 1.4 A P/VDS is used to identify, describe, and/or outline the distinctive and local landscape character, design and special qualities of a parish/village, especially those characteristics, design and qualities which are highly valued by local residents.
- 1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework [2023] emphasises the importance of achieving well-designed and beautiful places. The Framework also explains that design guidance can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site specific scale, and that to carry weight in decision-making, such guidance should be produced as part of a plan or as a supplementary planning document. The Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements to follow to adopt a P/VDS as a supplementary planning document, whilst the South Downs Statement of Community Involvement [2022] adds further requirements in relation to public consultation.
- 1.6 A supplementary planning document adds further detail to policies in the Adopted Local Plan – in this case, the South Downs Local Plan. As its name suggests, the document is intended to supplement, rather than replace, existing planning policies. This means that although it is capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions, it does not, itself, form part of the Development Plan. As such, if adopted as a supplementary planning document, a P/VDS would supplement – and provide further detail and guidance to help interpret and implement – South Downs Local Plan Policies SD4 (Landscape Character) and SD5 (Design), and the South Downs Design Guide, in relation to planning applications in a specific local area.
- 1.7 There are 9 adopted P/VDS in the South Downs National Park, with a further 3 P/VDS being prepared as per the ninth edition of the South Downs Local Development Scheme. These emerging design statements are for Selborne, Upham, and West Meon.

**2. The Authority’s Activities in relation to Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS).**

- 2.1 The planning committee was provided with a community planning update on 13 July 2023. Since this time, the following has taken place:
- **West Meon VDS** was subject to its first public consultation in June-Aug 2023.
  - **Selborne VDS** was subject to a second public consultation in July-Sep 2023.

- **Bramshott & Liphook NDP** was subject to Reg14 consultation in July-Sep 2023.
- **Peacehaven & Telscombe NDP** was subject to Reg16 consultation in Oct-Nov 2023.
- **Rowlands Castle NDP** was made part of the Development Plan in Nov 2023.
- **Selborne VDS** was subject to a third public consultation in Feb-Mar 2024.
- **Rottingdean NDP** was made part of the Development Plan in Mar 2024.
- **Bramshott & Liphook NDP** is currently subject to Reg16 consultation until Apr 2024.

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP)

2.2 There are 62 designated neighbourhood areas in the South Downs National Park, of which 44 have “made” NDPs – see Appendices 1 and 2. The 44 made NDPs form part of the Development Plan, alongside the South Downs Local Plan and the Minerals & Waste Local Plans. The remaining 18 designated neighbourhood areas are at various stages in the NDP process as set out in **Table 1** below.

Stage	Total NDPs	Authority Lead
<b>Made</b>	44	18
<b>Referendum</b>	0	0
<b>Examination</b>	1	0
<b>Reg16 submission stage</b>	2	0
<b>Reg14 pre-submission stage</b>	1	0
<b>Plans in preparation</b>	10	5
<b>Plans not proceeded</b>	4	2
<b>Designated neighbourhood areas</b>	62	25

**Table 1:** Status of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) as of March 2024.

2.3 **Plans not proceeded.** The 4 neighbourhood areas that have chosen not to proceed with the NDP process are Sheet, Singleton, Sompting, and the parish cluster of Steyning, Wiston, Ashurst and Bramber. The former two are wholly within the South Downs National Park, and the latter cluster previously agreed to disband and withdraw from their designated neighbourhood area. Since this time, the Bramber and Steyning NDPs were “made” in June 2021 and September 2022 respectively by the Authority.

2.4 **Plans in preparation.** There are 10 NDPs currently in preparation which have not yet reached the first formal stage of public consultation – i.e. Regulation 14 pre-submission. The South Downs National Park Authority is the Lead Planning Authority for 5 (half) of these NDPs. Authority Officers maintain an open dialogue with the local planning authorities who are the Lead Planning Authorities for the other 5 NDPs currently in preparation. For these NDPs, Authority Officers continue to liaise with the Lead Planning Authorities to offer advice and input where this is necessary to deliver the purposes and duty of the South Downs National Park. Returning to the 5 Authority Led NDPs, a summary is set out below:

- **Alfriston NDP**

The neighbourhood area was designated in February 2022. The parish council formed a NDP Committee in 2022 which has met on three occasions - the most recent in September 2022. Authority Officers attended a parish council meeting in June 2022 to provide advice and guidance on the possible content and function of an NDP.

- **East Dean & Friston NDP**

The neighbourhood area was designated in April 2019. There have been a number of parish council meetings and public events since the neighbourhood area was designated. Authority Officers have attended the above and provided advice / input on the possible content and structure of the NDP. The parish council is continuing to prepare a draft NDP for Regulation 14 pre-submission consultation.

- **Easebourne NDP**

The neighbourhood area was designated in December 2017. There has been no NDP preparation. However, the parish council went on to prepare a PDS which was adopted by the Authority in February 2023.

- **Funtington NDP**

The neighbourhood area was designated in March 2021. Authority Officers attended a public event to provide advice and guidance on the preparation of an NDP in March 2021. There has been no further NDP preparation since this time, although recent correspondence was received in August 2023.

- **Greatham NDP**

The neighbourhood area was designated in June 2019. Authority Officers have attended a number of parish council meetings since the neighbourhood area was designated; however, there has been no significant development in NDP preparation.

2.5 **Reg 14 pre-submission stage.** The West Chiltington NDP has undergone a number of Regulation 14 pre-submission consultations. However, NDP preparation has been paused due to strategic issues related to water neutrality in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone. Horsham District Council has explained that the NDP process will proceed once a strategic solution to water neutrality has been implemented.

2.6 **Reg 16 submission stage.** The Bramshott & Liphook NDP is currently the subject of a Regulation 16 submission consultation until 23 April 2024, whilst a second submission consultation on the Peacehaven & Telscombe NDP ended in November 2023.

2.7 **Examination.** The Examiner’s report on the Pulborough NDP was issued in September 2021 and concluded that the NDP should proceed to referendum subject to modifications. However, since this time, NDP preparation has been paused due to strategic issues related to water neutrality in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone. Horsham District Council has explained that the NDP process will proceed once a strategic solution to water neutrality has been implemented.

2.8 **Made.** Details of the made NDPs can be found in Appendix I of this report.

Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS)

2.9 The Authority has adopted 9 P/VDS as supplementary planning documents, and a further 3 P/VDS are currently being prepared as per the ninth edition of the South Downs Local Development Scheme. A summary of the status of P/VDS across the South Downs National Park (as of March 2024) is provided in **Table 2** below.

<b>Parish / Village Design Statement (P/VDS)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Buriton VDS</b>	Adopted	10/08/2017
<b>Clapham PDS</b>	Adopted	10/11/2022
<b>Easebourne PDS</b>	Adopted	09/02/2023
<b>East Dean &amp; Friston VDS</b>	Adopted	14/04/2016
<b>Hambledon VDS</b>	Adopted	09/09/2021

<b>Parish / Village Design Statement (P/VDS)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Liss VDS</b>	Adopted	10/07/2014
<b>Lodsworth PDS</b>	Adopted	13/10/2016
<b>Swanmore VDS</b>	Adopted	12/09/2019
<b>Worldham VDS</b>	Adopted	10/09/2015
<b>Selborne VDS</b>	Preparation	2024/25 Q1
<b>West Meon P/VDS</b>	Preparation	2024/25 Q2
<b>Upham VDS</b>	Preparation	2024/25 Q3

**Table 2:** Status of Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS) as of March 2024.

- 2.10 The Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023, in combination with anticipated planning reforms, sets out that supplementary planning documents will now only remain in force for a time-bound period. This period is until the local planning authority adopts a “new-style” local plan under the reformed planning system. After this time, supplementary planning documents will automatically cease to have weight as formal planning documents, although their content will remain a material planning consideration where relevant. The Authority has informed the three active P/VDS groups of the above.
- 3. Parish Priorities Statements (PPS) - An Alternative to Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS)**
- 3.1 The South Downs National Park Authority offers support to community planning groups at the statutory stages of plan-making, as required by legislation and the National Planning Practice Guidance. More specifically, the Authority:
- Responds to all Regulation 14 and 16 public consultations where an NDP may have a potential effect on the National Park and/or its setting;
  - Supports all Authority-Led NDPs that require examination and referendum; and
  - Supports and undertakes the administrative process for adopting P/VDS as supplementary planning documents.
- 3.2 The Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 has introduced Neighbourhood Priorities Statements. These are statements prepared by the local communities that summarise their principal needs and prevailing views for their local area. The statements are intended to provide a “light touch” alternative to NDPs. Whilst the statements do not carry the same weight as NDPs, the legislation requires local planning authorities to “have regard” to the statements when preparing local plans under the new planning system. Further information about these statements is anticipated later this year through secondary legislation.
- 3.3 In February 2023, as an informal pilot of this approach, the Authority invited all town and parish councils to prepare “Parish Priorities Statements” (PPS) to inform the South Downs Local Plan Review – incl. the allocation of development sites and what facilities and amenities are needed to accompany such allocations. A template was provided which followed the format and content of the Neighbourhood Priorities Statements as set out in the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023. The template enables any PPS to be easily evolved into a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement as further legislation and guidance is published.
- 3.4 There are 176 town and parish councils in the South Downs National Park. As of March 2024, 40 PPS have been submitted and published by the Authority – equivalent to one fifth of all town and parish councils. There are some town and parish councils who feel that their

existing NDP and/or P/VDS clearly sets out their aspirations, whilst others have prepared a combination of NDP, P/VDS and/or PPS, or none at all. It is understood that some town and parish councils are still preparing their PPS, and/or may choose to prepare a PPS once it is clear about which sites may progress as allocations in the South Downs Local Plan Review.

- 3.5 The Authority encourages town and parish councils to consider preparing PPS as these offer an alternative and efficient way to influence the South Downs Local Plan Review. Moreover, the Authority will continue to accept and publish PPS as and when they are received, and will “have regard” to them so far as is possible depending on the stage of the review.

**4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The South Downs National Park Authority receives funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to support NDP work, known as the “New Burdens Grant”. The NDP cost to the Authority (excl. staff costs) is normally covered by the grant. If a town or parish council decide to review their “made” NDP, then the Authority is able to use the grant to cover the review cost, as proportionate to the scope of the review.

- 4.2 A table listing the 44 “made” NDPs is shown in Appendix I. The examination and referendum costs for the 18 emerging NDPs is unlikely to exceed the grant.

- 4.3 In terms of P/VDS and PPS, there are no costs to the Authority beyond existing staff costs.

**5. Other Implications & Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

- 5.1 There are not considered to be any risks associated with this report or decision. In terms of any other implications (beyond resource implications), please see **Table 3** below.

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	None
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	None. All is within budget and/or grants received.
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 is an effective way to share costs and reduce the burden on plan making for community planning. That said, the Authority encourages town and parish councils to consider preparing PPS as these offer an alternative and efficient way to influence plan-making.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate Plan Objectives does this deliver against?	PMP Outcome 9.2 and Policy 34. In addition, community planning 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?	Development Plans for the South Downs National Park and neighbouring local planning authorities.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority’s climate change objectives	NDPs provide an opportunity to prepare more localised policies on climate change both in terms of mitigation and adaptation.
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.

Implication	Yes*/No
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. The qualifying body with responsibility for preparing a NDP must prepare a Consultation Statement demonstrating how they have consulted the local community and statutory consultees. The Examiner who assesses the plan will consider whether the Consultation Statement meets regulatory requirements.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None

**Table 3:** Other implications for community planning in the South Downs National Park.

**MIKE HUGHES**

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Appendices: 1. A Table of "Made" Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)  
2. A Map of Designated Neighbourhood Areas & "Made" Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)

SDNPA Consultees: Legal Services; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; and Director of Planning (Interim).

External Consultees: None

Background Documents: None

