

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	10 April 2025
By	Director of Planning
Title of Report	Community Planning Update
Purpose of Report	Update Members on the progress of Neighbourhood Development Plan, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements across the South Downs National Park.

Note

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to note the progress to date on the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements across the South Downs National Park.

Executive Summary

The South Downs National Park Authority has set out a commitment in its Partnership Management Plan to support the development of community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the South Downs National Park. This means that support for community-led plans, and the volunteers who prepare them, can contribute to the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan. For the avoidance of doubt, community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements.

This report provides a biannual update to the South Downs Planning Committee about community-led planning across the South Downs National Park. This update is considered to be required as the main preparation of community-led plans is normally undertaken and considered by Authority Officers under delegated powers. This report enables Members to note the breadth of community-led planning across the South Downs National Park, and the work currently being undertaken by Authority Officers and volunteers in the preparation of both new and updated community-led plans. This 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 45 have “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans and the remainder are either preparing, or have ceased to prepare, a Neighbourhood Development Plan; and
- The Authority has adopted 11 Parish and Village Design Statements, and a further 2 are potentially under preparation; and
- The Authority is encouraging town and parish councils to engage proactively in the South Downs Local Plan Review through the preparation of Parish Priorities Statements.

I. Introduction

- I.1 The South Downs National Park Authority (“the Authority”) has set out a commitment in its Partnership Management Plan to support the development of 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. This means that support for community-led plans, and

the volunteers who prepare them, can contribute to the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan. For the avoidance of doubt, community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans, Parish and Village Design Statements, and Parish Priorities Statements.

1.2 The Authority offers support to community groups at the statutory stages of plan-making as required by legislation and the Planning Practice Guidance. Moreover, the Authority:

- Responds to all Regulation 14 and 16 public consultations where a Neighbourhood Development Plan may have a potential effect on the National Park and/or its setting.
- Supports all Authority-Led Neighbourhood Development Plans, especially when they require Examination and Referendum.
- Supports and undertakes the administrative process for adopting Parish and Village Design Statements as Supplementary Planning Documents.
- Publishes and has regard to all Parish Priorities Statements in the preparation of the South Downs Local Plan Review.

2. Neighbourhood Development Plans

2.1 A Neighbourhood Development Plan is prepared by a qualifying body (usually a town or parish council) as per the process and requirements set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). In general, a Neighbourhood Development Plan can set out a vision for the community and include non-strategic planning policies which must be in conformity with the Adopted Local Plan. Once a Neighbourhood Development Plan has passed a successful referendum and has been “made” by the local planning authority, it becomes part of the Development Plan for the respective designated neighbourhood area.

2.2 There are 62 designated neighbourhood areas in the National Park. A high-level summary of the number of Neighbourhood Development Plans which have been “made” part of the Development Plan (alongside the South Downs Local Plan and the Minerals and Waste Plans), and the number which are currently being prepared, is set out in **Table 1** (below) and **Appendices 1 and 2**. Please note, if a designated neighbourhood area includes land both inside and outside of the National Park, then the Authority agrees with the other local planning authority about who will be the Lead Authority. This is normally based on whether most of the parish population lives inside or outside of the National Park.

2.3 The South Downs Planning Committee was provided with a community planning update on 10 October 2024. Since then, the following has, or is anticipated to, take place:

- The **Peacehaven and Telscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan** is still currently at Examination.
- The **Pulborough Neighbourhood Development Plan** was subject to a focused consultation between August and October 2024 on new Policy 16 (Water Neutrality).
- The **East Dean and Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan** was subject to a Regulation 14 public consultation between September and October 2024, and the submission and Regulation 16 public consultation are anticipated for later in 2025.
- The **West Chiltington Neighbourhood Development Plan** was subject to a Regulation 16 public consultation between October and December 2024.
- The **Bramshott and Liphook Neighbourhood Development Plan** was subject to a successful referendum in October 2024 and was “made” in December 2024.
- The **Modified Boxgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan** was subject to a Regulation 14 consultation between January and March 2025.
- The **West Saltdean Neighbourhood Development Plan** was subject to a Regulation 16 public consultation between January and March 2025.

- It is anticipated that the **Coldean Neighbourhood Development Plan** will be submitted and subjected to a Regulation 16 public consultation later in 2025.

Stage	Total	Authority Led	Not Authority Led
Made	45	18	27
Referendum	0	0	0
Examination	2	0	2
Reg16 Submission	2	0	2
Reg14 Pre-Submission	2	1	1
Plans In Preparation	8	5	3
Plans Not Proceeded	3	1	2
TOTAL	62	25	37

Table 1: Status of Neighbourhood Development Plans as of March 2025.

- 2.4 **Plans Not Proceeded.** The three neighbourhood areas that have chosen not to proceed with the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan are Sheet, Sompting, and the parish cluster of Steyning, Wiston, Ashurst and Bramber. The latter cluster agreed to disband and withdraw from their designated neighbourhood area. Since then, the Bramber and Steyning Neighbourhood Development Plans have both been “made” by the Authority.
- 2.5 **Plans In Preparation.** It is believed that there are eight Neighbourhood Development Plans currently in preparation but have not yet reached the first formal stage of consultation – i.e., Regulation 14. In terms of the three plans being led on by other local planning authorities, these are the Lynchmere, Westhampnett, and Plaistow and Ifold Neighbourhood Development Plans. The Authority’s Officers continue to liaise with the Lead Authorities to offer advice and input where this is necessary to deliver the purposes and duty of the National Park. As for the five plans that the Authority is leading on, these are the Alfriston, Easebourne, Funtington, Greatham, and Singleton Neighbourhood Development Plans. There has been no recorded preparation for Easebourne and Singleton, and the most recent correspondence for Alfriston, Funtington, and Greatham was received in 2022/23.
- 2.6 **Reg14 Pre-Submission.** The Coldean Neighbourhood Development Plan and the East Dean and Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan have both completed a Regulation 14 pre-submission public consultation. The former is being led on by Brighton & Hove City Council, whilst the latter is being led on by the Authority. It is anticipated that both Plans will be submitted and subjected to Regulation 16 public consultations later in 2025.
- 2.7 **Reg16 Submission.** The West Saltdean Neighbourhood Development Plan is being led on by Brighton & Hove City Council and a Regulation 16 public consultation was completed earlier this year. As for the West Chiltington Neighbourhood Development Plan, this Plan is being led on by Horsham District Council and a Regulation 16 public consultation was completed between October and December 2024. It is anticipated that this Plan will move to Examination after the Examination Hearings of the Horsham Local Plan have concluded.
- 2.8 **Examination.** The Peacehaven and Telscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan is being led on by Lewes District Council and the Examination is ongoing. As for the Pulborough Neighbourhood Development Plan, this Plan is being led on by Horsham District Council and the Examiner’s report (published in September 2021) concluded that it should proceed to Referendum subject to modifications. Despite the above, the Plan has not proceeded to Referendum due to the water neutrality issues associated with the Sussex North Water

Supply Zone. The district council attempted to “unlock” the paused preparation of this Plan by carrying out a focused consultation between August and October 2024 on new Policy 16 (Water Neutrality). A decision statement was published in November 2024, but preparation has paused again whilst the Examination Hearings of the Horsham Local Plan are ongoing.

- 2.9 **Referendum.** There are no Neighbourhood Developments Plans awaiting referendum.
- 2.10 **Plans Made.** The 45 “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans are listed in **Appendix 1** and shown in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.11 **Plans Updated.** Boxgrove Parish Council, as the qualifying body, carried a Regulation 14 pre-submission public consultation on proposed modifications to the “made” Boxgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan earlier this year. The modifications include the retention of existing policies (either unchanged or amended) and the addition of new policies. The latter includes two new housing allocations outside, but in the setting of, the National Park.

3. Parish and Village Design Statements

- 3.1 A Parish or Village Design Statement is used to identify, describe, and/or outline the distinctive and local landscape character, design and special qualities of a parish or village. It should use the above to prepare design guidelines to guide future development in conserving or enhancing the identified character, design, and special qualities of that parish or village.
- 3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework [December 2024] emphasises the importance of achieving well-designed places as a key aspect of sustainable development – see Chapter 12. The Framework broadly explains that development should take account of local design guidance and that, to carry weight in decision-making, such guidance should be produced as part of the Development Plan or as a Supplementary Planning Document. The Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets requirements for the preparation and adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document, with further public consultation requirements set in the South Downs Statement of Community Involvement.
- 3.3 A Supplementary Planning Document adds further detail to existing planning policies in an Adopted Local Plan. As the name suggests, it is intended to supplement, rather than replace, existing planning policies. This means that although it is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals, it does not, itself, form part of the Development Plan. Moreover, if adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, a Parish or Village Design Statement would supplement and provide further detail to the interpretation and implementation of South Downs Local Plan Policies SD4 (Landscape Character) and SD5 (Design), and the South Downs Design Guide, when determining planning applications and appeals in a specific local area.
- 3.4 The Authority has adopted 11 parish and village design statements as Supplementary Planning Documents, of which four have been adopted in areas where a Neighbourhood Development Plan has either been “made” or is in preparation – see **Table 2** below and **Appendix 2**. The South Downs Planning Committee was provided with a community planning update on 10 October 2024. Since this time, the following has taken place:
 - The **Upham Village Design Statement** was subject to a second public consultation between November and December 2024 and was adopted in March 2025.
 - Soberton Parish Council is working on a parish design statement for consultation.
 - West Meon Parish Council is to decide whether it wishes to proceed with the design statement which was previously consulted on in Summer 2023.

Parish / Village Design Statement (P/VDS)	Status	Date
Buriton Village Design Statement	Adopted	10/08/2017
Clapham Parish Design Statement *	Adopted	10/11/2022

Parish / Village Design Statement (P/VDS)	Status	Date
Easebourne Parish Design Statement *	Adopted	09/02/2023
East Dean and Friston Village Design Statement *	Adopted	14/04/2016
Hambledon Village Design Statement	Adopted	09/09/2021
Liss Village Design Statement *	Adopted	10/07/2014
Lodsworth Parish Design Statement	Adopted	13/10/2016
Selborne Village Design Statement	Adopted	11/04/2024
Swanmore Village Design Statement ^	Adopted	12/09/2019
Upham Village Design Statement ^	Adopted	13/03/2025
Worldham Village Design Statement ^	Adopted	10/09/2015
Soberton Parish Design Statement ^	Preparation	Unknown
West Meon Parish or Village Design Statement	Preparation	Unknown

Table 2: Status of Parish and Village Design Statements as of March 2025.

* There is a Neighbourhood Development Plan either “made” or in preparation in this area.

^ The Parish or Village Design Statement includes areas outside of the National Park.

4. Parish Priorities Statements

- 4.1 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced Neighbourhood Priorities Statements as an optional, “light touch” alternative to Neighbourhood Development Plans. The Statements provide local communities with the opportunity to set out their aspirations for the future, whilst identifying any local issues in relation to planning matters. Although the Statements do not form part of the Development Plan (and, therefore, do not carry the same weight as Neighbourhood Development Plans), the legislation requires local planning authorities to “have regard” to the Statements in the preparation of local plans, so far as possible depending on the stage of local plan preparation.
- 4.2 The Authority is an early adopter of these Statements. In February 2023, as an informal pilot, the Authority invited all town and parish councils to prepare “Parish Priorities Statements” to inform the preparation of the South Downs Local Plan Review. At this time, a template was provided which followed the limited guidance set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The use of this template is intended to allow a Parish Priorities Statement to be easily converted into a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement at a later date when further legislation and guidance is published.
- 4.3 The Authority has received 43 Parish Priorities Statements as of March 2025, the equivalent of around one quarter of all town and parish councils in the National Park. Of these:
- 9 Statements are for areas which have a “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan.
 - 6 Statements are for areas which have an adopted Parish or Village Design Statement.
 - 2 Statements are for areas which have both a “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan and an adopted Parish or Village Design Statement.
 - 26 Statements are for areas which do not have either a “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan nor an adopted Parish or Village Design Statement.

4.4 As the Authority understands, there are some town and parish councils who feel that their “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan and/or Parish or Village Design Statement clearly sets out their aspirations, whilst others may still choose to prepare a Parish Priorities Statement after they have reviewed the content of the South Downs Local Plan Review Regulation 18 consultation which closed on 17 March 2025.

5. Resource Implications

5.1 The Authority receives funding through the New Burdens Grant (“the grant”) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans. The costs to the Authority (excluding staff costs) are normally covered by the grant and it is considered to be unlikely that the costs associated with the Examination and Referendum of any Neighbourhood Development Plans currently in preparation will exceed the grant. If a town or parish council decide to review their “made” Neighbourhood Development Plan, then the Authority can use the grant to cover the associated review cost, as proportionate to the scope of the review.

5.2 In terms of Parish and Village Design Statements and Parish Priorities Statements, there are no associated costs to the Authority other than staff costs / officer time.

6. Other Implications & Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

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

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No. 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 – and neighbouring local planning authorities for areas partially within the National Park - is an effective way to share costs and reduce the burden of community planning. The Authority also encourages town and parish councils to consider preparing Parish Priorities Statements 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. Community planning also 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?	The Development Plan for the South Downs National Park, and the Development Plans for neighbouring local planning authorities for areas partially within the National Park.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority’s climate change objectives	Community planning provides an opportunity to prepare a more localised approach to climate change.

Implication	Yes*/No
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.
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. In terms of parish and village design statements , the Authority prepares a Consultation Statement as per Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). This sets out the details of public consultations, including how, when, and with whom the consultations took place, and how representations have informed the final parish or village design statement. As for neighbourhood development plans , the qualifying body must prepare a Consultation Statement demonstrating how they have consulted the local community and statutory consultees. The Examiner who assesses the neighbourhood development plan will then consider whether the Consultation Statement meets the regulatory requirements.
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?	No.

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

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Appendices Appendix 1 - Table of “Made” Neighbourhood Development Plans across the South Downs National Park.

Appendix 2 - Map of Community Planning across the South Downs National Park.

SDNPA Consultees	Legal Services; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; and Director of Planning.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	None