

Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan: Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment)

Scoping Report – updated following consultation

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This document forms the Scoping Report for a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment for Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan. A map showing the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan is included in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 It sets out the social, economic and environmental issues that are relevant to Fittleworth parish, the relevant policies and plans for this Neighbourhood Plan and gives a sustainability framework that will be used to assess the Plans potential socio-economic and environmental impacts. This Scoping Report has been updated in light of comments received on the original report and also to ensure that all of the baseline information is up to date.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 1.3 Neighbourhood Plans were introduced in the Localism Act 2011. The Plans give local communities the opportunity to develop a shared vision for their areas for the use and development of land which “reflect the needs and priorities of their communities”¹. The Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan will set out the vision for the parish for the next 10 to 15 years.
- 1.4 Neighbourhood Plans should take the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) into account in their preparation and must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the relevant Local Plan. Once Neighbourhood Plans are made they **must** be taken into account when determining planning applications and, alongside the Local Plan, are a key consideration in all planning decisions.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.5 There is no legal requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan to have a Sustainability Appraisal. However, such Plans must be “based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development”². Carrying out a formal appraisal to assess the Plan against relevant sustainability issues provides a structured way of demonstrating this. Such an appraisal should form an integral part of the development of the Plan. This allows the outcomes of the appraisal to feed into the formation of the plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.6 Strategic Environmental Assessment is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of Neighbourhood Plans are identified. As with a Sustainability Appraisal this should form an integral part of the development of the plan allowing changes to be made to the Plan to reduce its impact on the environment.
- 1.7 A Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for all Neighbourhood Plans. The process is required where such a Plan allocates land for development and has the potential to have a significant impact on the environment or where the neighbourhood plan area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets. This is determined via a Screening Opinion.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG March 2012) para. 1

² National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG March 2012) para 15

- 1.8 The Screening Opinion for the early stages of the development of the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan confirmed the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This was determined because of the following:-
- The Plan has the potential to allocate up to 20 dwellings. Only 6 dwellings were assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal for the emerging South Downs Local Plan,
 - These allocations are likely to be focused in Fittleworth village which has a rich historic environment; namely a Conservation Area, numerous Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments,
 - The area also has a rich natural environment with designated biodiversity sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) close to the village and the Mens Special Area of Conservation nearby. The latter is of international significance and means that any proposed development in the area needs to be considered against the Habitats Directive,³
 - Other relevant issues to be considered are the flood risk associated with the River Rother and the impact of any proposed development on landscape character.
- 1.9 As an SEA is required for the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan a joint SEA/SA will be produced that considers relevant socio-economic and environmental issues and potential impacts from the policies and development proposed in the Plan.

The Scoping Report

- 1.10 This is the second stage of the SA/ SEA process (the Screening Opinion being the first stage). Although the production of a Scoping Report is not a requirement in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulations⁴ this stage provides the opportunity to confirm that the correct socio-economic and environmental issues have been identified and allows statutory consultees to comment on the methodology to be used to complete the formal assessment.
- 1.11 The Scoping Report will be available for comment by the relevant statutory bodies. Responses made during the consultation period will feed into the production of the draft Neighbourhood Plan and the Sustainability/Environmental Assessment process. The latter will be set out in a Sustainability Appraisal Report which will be completed at the same time as the pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan. Both will be subject to consultation by the public and the statutory bodies.
- 1.12 The Scoping Report has been updated to include comments received from the statutory consultees during the consultation process. One of the updates is to Appendix 2 which includes the relevant plans and programmes.

³ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. The Habitats Directive is primarily transposed in England under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and in the offshore marine area by the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 2007.

⁴ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

2.0 Background and Context

- 2.1 In order to carry out the Sustainability Appraisal of the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan the key sustainability issues that are relevant to the area need to be identified. These issues are identified by drawing together baseline information for the area as well as reviewing the plans and policies that are relevant to the parish.

Baseline information

Background and Demographics

- 2.2 The Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan covers the whole of the Fittleworth Parish Area. The parish is located in West Sussex between the larger settlements of Petworth to the west and Pulborough to the east. It is within the South Downs National Park.
- 2.3 Fittleworth parish is predominantly rural and covers 1,164 hectares. It is 5km from north to south and is 2km at its widest point. It has a population of 978 in 448 households⁵ mostly housed in the village of Fittleworth. There are also the smaller settlements of Little Bognor and Coates and isolated properties throughout the parish. Comparisons with the 2001 Census demonstrate that the population fell by 3.9% between 2001 and 2011 but the number of households increased slightly (by 1.1%). Hence, there is an indication that household sizes are reducing.
- 2.4 The population of Fittleworth has the highest percentage of residents in the 45-59 age group (at 26.89%) and aged 65+ (at 24%)⁶. Younger adults (between 18 and 29) represent the smallest percentage of residents in the parish, with 6.24% of the population. Comparisons with the previous Census in 2001 suggest that the population is aging with an increase of those aged 45 or over from 51% to 61% between 2001 and 2011. Although the population profile for the Chichester District has a large percentage of middle aged and older people this profile is more marked in Fittleworth parish.
- 2.5 Population projections for the Chichester District for 2021 suggest that the percentage of the population aged 54 and over will continue to increase whilst the percentage of those below 54 will continue to reduce. It is likely that this will also be the case in Fittleworth. However, it should be noted that several younger families (with adults aged 30-40) have moved into the village in the past few years.

Housing

- 2.6 The 2011 Census gave the tenure for households⁷ in the parish as follows:
- Owner occupier - 70%.

⁵ Census 2011

⁶ Census 2011 – Adult Lifestage

⁷ Census 2011 – Households Tenure

- Social rented – 10%
- Private rented – 15%.

There are few second homes in the parish.

- 2.7 Most of the housing in the Parish is 3 or 4 bedroomed detached properties; with 33% 4 bedroomed and 40% 3 bedroomed homes. Only 23% were 2 bedroomed. The average price paid for a property in the parish in 2014 was £533,698 whilst the average household income for Chichester was £42,000⁸.
- 2.8 The Rural Housing Survey Report for Fittleworth Parish carried out by Chichester District Council (August 2015) identified a housing need of 7 – 31 units made up of the following tenure:
- 0-5 market housing
 - 7-24 affordable housing
 - 0-2 market rent.
- 2.9 The Survey also identified the main housing issues as:
- The older age groups require smaller accommodation for downsizing with both market and affordable tenure consisting of 1 – 3 bedroomed bungalows and 1 and 2 bedroomed properties that are age restricted;
 - The younger age groups require 1 bedroomed flats and 2 bedroomed houses for affordable rent as well as first time buyer accommodation (with the latter preferably 2 bedroomed houses).

Built Environment

- 2.10 The parish has a rich built heritage. Much of Fittleworth village lies within a Conservation Area (CA) and there are two other Conservation Areas in the parish; namely Coates CA and Little Bognor CA. The Conservation Areas contain numerous Listed Buildings. Across the parish there are 89 Listed, including two Grade I Listed Buildings; the Church of St Agatha at Coates and the Church of St Mary within Fittleworth village. Finally, Fittleworth Bridge is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.⁹
- 2.11 The village has a long history (the Parish Church dates from 1220) and the buildings have been developed with a range of materials over the centuries. These include brick, timber framed with wattle and daub and the use of local sandstone. Roofing materials are clay tiles but also slate and some thatch and Horsham stone.
- 2.12 The following are undesignated buildings as of heritage interest:-
- Bedham Mission Church
 - Warren Barn
 - Egean Farm
 - Garden House (gardener's cottage at Coates Castle walled garden).

⁸ Rural Housing Survey Report – Fittleworth Parish (Chichester District Council August 2015)

⁹ Although collectively known as Fittleworth Bridge there are two Scheduled Ancient Monument designations for the north and south side of the bridge (UID 1005843 and UID 1005844 respectively).

- 2.13 There are no heritage assets in Fittleworth on the Historic England Buildings at Risk Register. There are however two grade II listed barns on the SDNPA Buildings at Risk Register, one at Bedham Farm, SE of the farmhouse and another barn adjacent Sorrels Farmhouse. There is no trajectory for the condition of these. Furthermore, there are no Conservation Area Appraisals available for these designated areas in the parish. This is a gap in the evidence base which does not allow features of importance to be identified or where enhancements could be provided.

Employment and Economy

- 2.14 At the time of the 2011 Census 475 people were economically active which represented 66% of the population and 245 (34%) were economically inactive. The vast majority of these were retired (60%) and unemployment rates were low (1.8%). Of those that were economically active most were in full time employment (43%), 23% were in part time employment and 30 % were self-employed (both full time and part time).
- 2.15 In terms of the type of employment, the following are the top five categories of employment taken from the 2011 Census:
- Wholesale and retail trade (13%)¹⁰
 - Professional (13%)
 - Education (11%)
 - Construction (11%)
 - Human health and social work activities (8%).
- 2.16 This indicates that there is a spread across different employment sectors. It is interesting to note that 3% of the population are employed in agriculture and forestry. This is a very different profile compared to the main employment sectors for the whole of the Chichester District.
- 2.17 In terms of qualifications, 37% of the population of Fittleworth have a level 4 qualification or above (these are qualifications above A levels or Vocational Qualifications Level 4) ¹¹. This mirrors the position for the whole of the Chichester District. However, 17% of the population have no qualification which is lower than that for the Chichester District (with 20%).
- 2.18 There is little employment within the village, though as set out in paragraph 2.23 some residents work predominantly from home. The South Downs Employment Land Review¹² does not suggest any allocation of land for employment within Fittleworth. The Review indicates where residents are likely to be employed via Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMA). Fittleworth falls within the FEMA for Northern West Sussex but it is on the boundary of the FEMA for Chichester and Bognor. These areas are likely to be where most of the economically active residents of Fittleworth commute to work. However, as the national park does not form an administrative boundary for data collection these should be treated with some caution.

¹⁰ This is the percentage of the population of Fittleworth that is economically active between the ages of 16 and 74 who are in employment. Census 2011 – Economic Activity

¹¹ Census 2011 – Qualifications gained

¹² The South Downs Employment Land Review Final Report (2015) GL Hearn for the SDNPA

Community

- 2.19 The village contains an Anglican church, a free church, a primary school, a village hall and one pub. The minimal services and facilities could cause issues of social deprivation, particularly for residents that do not have access to a car (see the Accessibility section).
- 2.20 There are numerous clubs and societies in the village, such as Cubs, Guides, Crusaders, a Horticultural Society and two branches of the West Sussex Decorative and Fine Arts Society (South Downs and West Sussex). Many of these meet in the Village Hall. There is also a Sports Association Club which has three affiliated clubs; a Stoolball Club, Football Club and Cricket Club which are based at the sports pavilion in the village.
- 2.21 A Play Group and Mother and Toddler Group are also based in the village. There are secondary schools in Midhurst (Midhurst Rother School 9 miles away), Billingshurst (The Weald 7 miles away) and Storrington (Rydon Community School 7 miles away).
- 2.22 Fittleworth village has good access to the countryside, with common land and heathland directly adjacent to the more built up parts of the village.

Accessibility

- 2.23 The main mode of transport is by car. Two well used roads (the A283 from Pulborough to Petworth and the B2138) pass through the village. Smaller roads serve the outlying parts of the Parish. The two roads passing through Fittleworth village are not congested but residents have commented that traffic flows are high at the end of each working day causing difficulties for pedestrians crossing the road. Residents have also commented that they are concerned about the speed of the traffic on these roads. Another transport concern is Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) using the B2138 which is not suitable for larger vehicles.
- 2.24 The majority of households in the parish have two cars (41%) whilst 6% of households (29) do not have access to a car.¹³ This differs from the profile for the Chichester District where 15% of households do not have access to a car and the majority of households have one car (42%). This reflects the rural nature of the parish.
- 2.25 In terms of the methods of travel to work, this is mostly by car or van; with 64% commuting by this method and an additional 3% being a passenger in a car or van. Interestingly 6% walk to work and 12% mostly work from home. The bus is not used as much as the train for commuting.
- 2.26 In terms of public transport there is one bus route serving the village. This goes from Worthing to Midhurst via Storrington, Pulborough, Fittleworth and Petworth. This is an hourly service (two hourly on Sunday) for both the westerly and easterly service. The times of the service start too late and finish too early for most commuting purposes. There is a railway station at Pulborough 5 km to the east. The rail route runs between the south coast and Horsham, Crawley, Gatwick Airport, Croydon London.

¹³ Census 2011

- 2.27 Numerous public footpaths and bridleways traverse the parish and there is a long distance route, known as the Serpent Trail, running north-south through the parish, which goes through Fittleworth village.

Landscape Character

- 2.28 The South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (Updated) divides the National Park into 18 generic landscape types which are sub-divided into 49 individual geographic character areas. Fittleworth parish is covered by the following main landscape character types:-
- The northern part of the parish lies within the Blackdown to Petworth Greensand Hills¹⁴ which has prominent hills formed from sandstone with significant woodland cover and extensive panoramic view from open hill tops
 - The southern part of the parish is within the Rother Farmland and Heath Mosaic¹⁵. This is characterised by a well-drained, sandy lowland landscape supporting a mosaic of oak and birch woodland, conifer plantations, open sandy heaths and rough grazed pasture. Views are limited by dense woodland cover.
 - The North Rother Valley Sandy Arable Farmland¹⁶ lies between these areas. It is characterised by gently an undulating lowland sandstone landscape with well-drained, easily eroded sandy soils. Generally the landscape is low lying. Mature standard oaks and ancient woodland remnants are key ecological features as are the floodplain habitats associated with the River Rother
 - The Arun and Lower Rother Floodplain¹⁷ lies within the above character area. The Rother is a tributary of the Arun and does not have the same large and expansive views that characterise the flat valley floor of the River Arun. It does have periodically waterlogged silty soils that support permanent pasture within fields reclaimed from the floodplain and supports important ecological flora.
- 2.29 According to the South Downs National Park (SDNP) Landscape Context for Relative Tranquillity¹⁸ the north west and south east of the parish are the most tranquil. The A and B roads reduce the levels of tranquillity around Fittleworth village; however, these are still above the lowest range for tranquillity defined in this study.
- 2.30 Another study carried out by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) relates to views within and into the National Park¹⁹. This identified 80 views which are representative of their type. In the case of Fittleworth the relevant viewpoint is Hesworth Common (viewpoint 59). This was selected as it represents views of the Farmland and Heath Mosaic landscape type looking over the Rother Valley with the downs scarp beyond.
- 2.31 The final issue relating to landscape and the character of the area is dark night skies. The SDNP has been defined as an International Dark Sky Reserve by the International Dark Skies

¹⁴ Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2011) Appendix N – Greensands Hills

¹⁵ Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2011) Appendix L – Wealden Farmland and Heath Mosaic

¹⁶ Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2011) Appendix M – Sandy Arable Farmland

¹⁷ Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2011) Appendix F – Major River Floodplains

¹⁸ South Downs National Park Tranquillity Study (2015) forms a baseline from which changes to the aural and visual environment can be assessed

¹⁹ South Downs National Park : View Characterisation and Analysis Final Report (LUC November 2015)

Reserve. In accordance with this designation the SDNPA will seek to protect the Park from intrusive light pollution and will encourage the reduction of light pollution in areas where night light levels are higher.

Ecology/geology

- 2.32 There are several sites with designations for their ecological value throughout the parish. The Mens is situated in the northern part of the parish and is designated as Special Area for Conservation²⁰. This recognises the international importance of this site. It is one of the most extensive examples of Wealden Woodland in West Sussex. The Mens qualifies as a SAC for both habitats and species. The habitat consists of Atlantic acidophilus beach forests with Ilex and Taxus shrub layer. The site also contains Barbastelle bats (a protected species under the Habitats Directive). Development within 7km has the potential to affect the Barbastelle flightiness and foraging areas.
- 2.33 There are five Sites of Special Scientific Interest which is a designation that recognises sites with national ecological and ecological importance. The five sites are:
- Coates Castle SSSI
 - Lords Piece SSSI
 - Bognor Common Quarry SSSI
 - The Mens SSSI
 - Arun SSSI.
- 2.34 In addition, there are six sites with local designations known as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. These have ecological importance at the county level. The sites are:
- Hammer Moor and Woodland SNCI
 - River Rother SNCI
 - Coates Sandpit SNCI
 - Hesworth Common SNCI
 - Flexham Park SNCI
 - Old Orchard Meadows SNCI.
- 2.35 The predominant land uses are arable farmland and deciduous woodland, some of which has been designated for its ecological value. There is an old quarry situated in the north west of the parish and some small areas of heathland; both have ecological/geological value. In addition, there are several smaller quarries around the parish. The main priority habitats present in the parish are:-
- Floodplain grazing marsh
 - Deciduous woodland
 - Ancient woodland
 - Lowland Dry Acid
 - Lowland Fens
 - Lowland Heathland.

²⁰ Special Areas of Conservation are strictly protected sites under Article 3 of the EC Habitats Directive. The Directive contains Annexes listing the habitats and species considered most in need of conservation at a European level.

- 2.36 In addition a total of 27 international designated species and 79 nationally designated species are present in the parish. These include numerous bat and bird species. The presence of these is most relevant in relation to the sites allocated for housing. It is noted that priority species have been recorded on two of the proposed sites (Smooth Newt, Grass Snake and Adder).
- 2.37 An important feature of the parish is retaining and enhancing ecological networks and ancient woodland. This is particularly important given the location of the parish in the western weald which has a number of connected wooded and riverine habitats which provide stepping stones throughout the landscape.

Flooding

- 2.38 The River Rother flows through the southern part of the parish and also to the south of the village of Fittleworth. Its banks are designated for their ecological value. In the winter the river regularly floods over the water meadows which lie mostly to the south of the river. Areas adjacent to the River Rother have been designated as flood zone 3 by the Environment Agency. This means that the land has a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding. Several flooding incidents from the River have occurred over the last 2/3 years. This has resulted in flooding of nearby houses and on occasion the road bridge on the B2138 was blocked to all but specialist vehicles. There are small areas of standing water throughout the parish.
- 2.39 Fittleworth also regularly experiences surface water flooding. The topography of the area with higher land to the north of the parish running down to the River Rother, combined with the high water table in the northern part of the settlement, contributes to the problems of surface water flooding causing problems for many houses and footpaths in the village.

Key Plans and Policies

- 2.40 There are some basic planning policy conditions that Neighbourhood Plan must comply with. It must have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework, contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and be in general conformity with strategic policies in the relevant Development Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012)

- 2.41 This sets out the Government's policies relating to land use planning and how they should be applied. The focus of the Framework is the presumption in favour of sustainable development and this should influence the formation of all development plans as well as planning decisions. This principle therefore, relates to Neighbourhood Plans.
- 2.42 The NPPF defines sustainable development in terms of the role that planning should play. These roles are:
- **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right

places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

- **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

2.43 The NPPF states that the natural environment should be conserved and enhanced. It stressed that “great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks.”²¹

The Chichester Local Plan (1999)

2.44 This Plan provides policies and guides development to the areas in Chichester District that are within the South Downs National Park. All Neighbourhood Plans within this area must be in conformity with this Plan. This applies to Fittleworth.

2.45 The policies that are relevant to Fittleworth are listed in Appendix 2. In summary the Plan defines the settlement boundary for Fittleworth. It only allows development within the National Park²² which could damage its landscape character in compelling circumstances. Furthermore, it seeks to protect high quality designated townscapes, buildings and sites with ecological value.

2.46 An Interim Statement on Planning for Affordable Housing was published by Chichester District Council in 2007. This set out a reduced threshold for affordable homes and the percentage of affordable homes that would be sought within such housing developments. This threshold has been clarified by Government guidance as contained in Planning Practice Guidance on Planning Obligations.²³ Generally section 106 obligations should not be sought for small scale residential developments of 10 units or less. However, in rural areas a lower threshold of 5 units or less can be applied. The Guidance specifically mentions National Parks as areas where a lower threshold can be used. Affordable housing and tariff style contributions can be sought for development between 6 and 10 units.

²¹ National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012) para 111.

²² The South Downs was an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty when the Plan was adopted.

²³ Paragraph 031 of this Guidance contains an update reflecting a Written Ministerial Statement of 28th November 2014 and an order of the Court of Appeal dated 13th May 2016

The South Downs Local Plan: Preferred Options (September 2015).

- 2.47 Once adopted, the South Downs Local Plan will contain the strategic policies which sit above the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan. The Preferred Options give a sense of the direction of travel for strategic planning policies covering Fittleworth.
- 2.48 This emerging Plan contains a comprehensive list of planning policies for the National Park which focus on “living landscapes, people and places and ensuring a sustainable future within environmental limits”. It will cover the period between 2014 and 2032. If adopted in 2018 it will shape growth in the area for 15 years and provide a strategic planning policy framework for all communities in the National Park.
- 2.49 Once it is adopted it will replace the saved local plan and core strategy policies inherited by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) when it became the local planning authority in April 2011. It will also replace all joint core strategies relating to the National Park adopted since April 2011.
- 2.50 The Plan contains six objectives that will meet the National Park Vision:-
1. To achieve a sustainable use of ecosystem products and services thus enhancing natural capital across the landscapes of the National Parks and contributing to human health, wealth and well being
 2. To conserve and enhance the cultural heritage and large areas of high quality and well-managed habitat to form a network supporting wildlife through the landscape
 3. To provide and protect opportunities for everyone to discover, enjoy, understand and value the National Park and its special qualities
 4. To adapt well to and mitigate the impacts of climate change and other pressures
 5. To maintain and enhance the villages and market towns of the National Park as thriving centres for residents, visitors and businesses
 6. To maintain and enhance farming, forestry, tourism and other business activities that are compatible with and relate to the landscape and special qualities of the National Park.
- 2.51 The strategic policies for the plan are defined via five main landscape character areas that make up the National Park. Fittleworth lies in the Western Weald and any development should conform to Core Policy SD4/WW and Strategic Policy 22. In terms of these policies, Fittleworth has a defined settlement boundary where small scale growth will be delivered that is sensitively planned to reflect the Scarp Slope and important views and where the scale and nature of the development is appropriate to the character and function of the settlement.
- 2.52 The Plan acknowledges that an appropriate provision of housing to meet local needs is “crucial to ensuring the sustainability and viability of communities within the National Park”. The expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements. As such Strategic Policy SD 23 makes an allocation of 6 houses for

Fittleworth²⁴. The Plan recognises the need for a mix of dwelling types and tenures are required in the area with a particular need for smaller units and affordable homes. Strategic Policy SD24: Affordable Housing Provision states that at least 40% of all net dwellings on schemes of 6 or more units will be provided as affordable homes. Other relevant policies from this plan are listed in Appendix 2.

The Chichester Local Plan – Key Policies (2014 – 2029)

- 2.53 This plan was adopted by Chichester District Council on July 14 2015. It covers the parts of Chichester District that lie outside of the South Downs National Park. Hence, there are no policies in the Plan that directly relate to Fittleworth. Nevertheless, as a neighbouring plan it can influence issues that could affect areas within the National Park.
- 2.54 In addition, the SDNPA worked with Chichester District in developing the plan under the “duty to co-operate”. In this instance both authorities sat on The Coastal West Sussex Strategic Planning Board. The Board commissioned several joint strategic studies, such as an Economic and Infrastructure Study. The plan recognises the need to increase the supply of business space for employment. In addition, it seeks to address the transport congestion issues affecting parts of the plan area. Both of these could have an influence on Fittleworth parish and its residents. Relevant policies from this plan are listed in Appendix 2.

The English National Parks and the Broads Circular 2010

- 2.55 This sets out a vision for the English National Parks and the Broads for 2030 but also includes key outcomes that the Government wishes to achieve over the next 5 years. This vision is included in Appendix 2 of this report. One item of relevance to the SEA/SA is a focus on sustainable development and the pivotal role that communities of the Parks play in transforming to a low carbon society and sustainable living.
- 2.56 As well as issues that would be expected in Government policy relating to National Parks, such as preserving landscape quality, biodiversity and the built environment, the Circular mentions the importance of the need for affordable housing in the Parks. It states that although these areas are not suitable for unrestricted growth there is an “expectation that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services”.²⁵

Partnership Management Plan: Shaping the Future of your South Downs National Park 2014-2019 (South Downs National Park)

- 2.57 This plan does not contain planning policies but does provide a framework for the emerging Park-wide Local Plan through shaping all other aspects of the future of the National Park. It seeks to influence the changes that will occur in the National Park to ensure that it is left in a better state for future generations. Some of these will be due to impacts from outside the Park’s boundary. It was produced in partnership with key stakeholders.

²⁴ This figure and a site were identified in the South Downs National Park Strategic Land Availability Assessment (2014)

²⁵ English National Parks and the Broads Circular 2010 paragraph 78

- 2.58 The Plan contains a vision and 11 outcomes and policies that seek to implement these over a five year period on a range of key issues. It also contains a delivery framework and sets out how the plan will be monitored and reviewed. The vision is high level and sets out what the SDNPA and its partners hope the South Downs National Park will be like in 50 years time. The 11 outcomes fall under three headings; a thriving living landscape, people connected with places and towards a sustainable future. These are listed in Appendix 2.
- 2.59 All of the objectives and policies are high level but will influence the environment and socio-economic issues in Fittleworth. There are synergies with the emerging Local Plan such as conserving and enhancing the landscape and biodiversity as well as protecting the historic environment from harm. Other relevant policies include:-
- Policy 25 which promotes water efficiency measures,
 - Policy 36 which seeks to improve existing public transport provision for local communities,
 - Policy 48 which supports villages in the Park to enhance their role as social and economic hubs,
 - Policy 50 which seeks to ensure that housing development closely matches the social and economic needs of local people to support balanced communities and that has high design and energy efficiency standards,
 - Policy 56 which supports appropriate renewable energy schemes, sustainable resource management and energy efficiency.
- 2.60 Following the consultation on the original Scoping Report comments were received from the Environment Agency on the need to include relevant issues from the **Strategic Flood Risk Strategy** for the area as well as the **South East River Basin Management Plan**. These are included in Appendix 2. Both of these documents mostly include information that is relevant at a strategic level.

3. Sustainability Issues

- 3.1 The key sustainability issues for Fittleworth that need to be taken into account in the Neighbourhood Plan are set out in the table below. These are presented as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They have been identified by taking into account the relevant plans and policies that relate to this Parish and also the baseline information. These have also been influenced by sustainability issues identified by the South Downs National Park Authority and the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong sense of community with a reasonable number of community facilities in comparison to the size of the village and several active community groups • A village that has maintained its rural nature and its distinctive character, with much of the Parish being very tranquil • A high quality built environment with many heritage assets that are protected through national designations • A rich ecology that adds to the rural character of the area and the high quality of the landscape • An excellent network of local footpaths and bridleways provides access to the open countryside, as well as and common land and heath land within Fittleworth • A high percentage of the population is skilled and many have home based employment. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population is not demographically balanced with a larger percentage of the population aged over 65 • A lack of smaller (1 and 2 bedroomed) affordable properties to allow young people to move into the area and for older residents to downsize • A lack of mixed tenure with most properties being owner occupied and expensive compared to local average salaries • Over reliance on non-sustainable forms of transport and limited public transport serving the village • Issues of highway safety from speeding, and sometimes heavy traffic, on the A283 and B2138 through Fittleworth and HGV's using the B2138 • Limited employment and services, such as medical facilities, within the parish combined with limited public transport is an issue for those without access to a car.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional allocations for housing identified through the Neighbourhood Plan could address the pressing need for smaller affordable homes with a mix of tenures • Additional allocations for housing could stem the decline in population that supports local community facilities e.g. the primary school, as well as creating a more demographically balanced community • Appropriate scale development could provide opportunities to enhance the local landscape/townscape and ecology • Appropriate policies in the Neighbourhood Plan would ensure that new development reflects the existing density and scale and use of sympathetic materials • New development schemes could incorporate appropriate renewable and low carbon technology as well as measures that increase water efficiency and reduce the risk of flooding 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for the age profile of the area to continue to be dominated by older retired residents • Lack of local employment opportunities means most residents commute which could increase with more housing • The high quality landscape and number of built heritage designations need to be protected, which could limit the number of houses that can be built in the area for local residents • Parts of the area regularly experiences fluvial flooding (adjacent to the River Rother) as well as surface water flooding • Changes to the climate could increase pluvial and fluvial flooding and have a negative impact on the landscape and ecology

4.0 Sustainability Assessment Framework

- 4.1 The Sustainability Appraisal will consider the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan, in terms of its policies and proposed development sites along with reasonable alternatives against a series of objectives. These have been influenced by the Sustainability Appraisal for the South Downs Local Plan - Preferred Options (August 2015). The objectives reflect the three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. The assessment criteria indicate the questions that will be used to consider each objective and policy. This will ensure that a consistent approach is taken.
- 4.2 Once adopted the Neighbourhood Plan will be monitored and part of this monitoring will be the ongoing sustainability impact of the plan. The potential indicators listed in the following table could form part of the ongoing monitoring. Only the significant effects (both positive and negative) will be monitored so not all of the suggested indicators are likely to be required. Some will be monitored by the SDNPA others by Fittleworth Parish Council.

Sustainability Theme	Objective	Assessment criteria	Potential Indicator
Landscape (Environment)	Conserve and enhance the landscape character of the parish	<p>Will the plan ensure that development schemes have a minimal impact on key landscape features; such as being sited appropriately and being small in scale to reflect the Scar Slope and views into Fittleworth?</p> <p>Will the plan ensure that developments enhance the local landscape?</p> <p>Will the plan contribute to maintaining the current dark night skies status of the Park?</p>	<p>Number of applications with landscape enhancement conditions (Source: Fittleworth Parish Council)</p> <p>Number of applications that incorporate the recommendations from the Landscape Officer at the South Downs National Park (Source: Fittleworth Parish Council)</p> <p>Dark night status is maintained and enhanced (Source: SDNPA Authority Monitoring Report (AMR))</p>
Biodiversity (Environment)	Protect sites designated for their ecological and geological value and conserve and enhance biodiversity of the parish	<p>Will the plan protect and enhance existing flora, fauna and habitats; such as heathland, floodplain with marshy grassland, woodland (semi-natural broadleaf, mixed and ancient)</p> <p>Will the plan ensure that designated sites are protected?</p> <p>Will the plan retain and enhance habitat networks and wildlife corridors (ancient woodland and riverine habitats)?</p>	<p>Condition of designated ecological sites (Source: SDNPA AMR)</p> <p>Number of applications which include schemes to improve local biodiversity (Source: SDNPA via Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL))</p> <p>Condition of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland (Source: SDNPA Authority Monitoring Report (AMR))</p>

Built environment and heritage assets (Environment)	Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings, as well as preserving the existing townscape.	Will the plan ensure that that the built heritage is protected and enhanced? Will the plan ensure that the design of new development does not detract from the local townscape, through the use of mixed local materials and appropriately scaled developments?	Number of applications that incorporate heritage enhancement or improvement schemes (Source: SDNPA via Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)) Number of historic features lost through new development schemes (Source: Fittleworth Parish Council)
Housing (Social)	Provide homes that are suitable for all sections of the community, including affordable homes	Will the plan increase the number of affordable homes and provide smaller housing units with mixed tenures?	Number of affordable dwellings built within the life of the Plan (Source: SDNPA) Number of new 1,2,3 and 4 bed houses constructed and as a proportion to the total built (Source: SDNPA)
Climate change adaptation (Environment)	Minimise the risk of flooding and use water efficiently	Does the plan restrict development in the Flood Risk Zone? Does the plan encourage development to incorporate measures that reduce pluvial flooding? Does the plan encourage developments that use water efficiently?	% of residential applications approved in Flood Risk Zone 3 (Source: SDNPA AMR) Number of developments that incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (Source: Fittleworth Parish Council) Number of developments that incorporate measures to improve water efficiency (Source: Fittleworth Parish Council)
Climate Change Mitigation (Environment)	Address the causes of climate change through reducing greenhouse gas emissions	Will the plan encourage the installation of appropriate forms of renewable/low carbon energy?	Number of applications that incorporate renewable/low carbon technology. (Source: Fittleworth Parish Council)
Sustainable Transport (Environment and social)	Reduce the need to travel and increase the proportion of travel by sustainable modes	Does the plan ensure that residents can use sustainable forms of transport?	% of residents using sustainable forms of transport to travel to work e.g. public transport, cycling and walking (Source : Census)
Vitality of Communities (Social)	Create and sustain a safe, healthy and	Will the plan encourage a community that has a well-balanced demographic?	Population age structure (% in different age groups) (Source : Census)

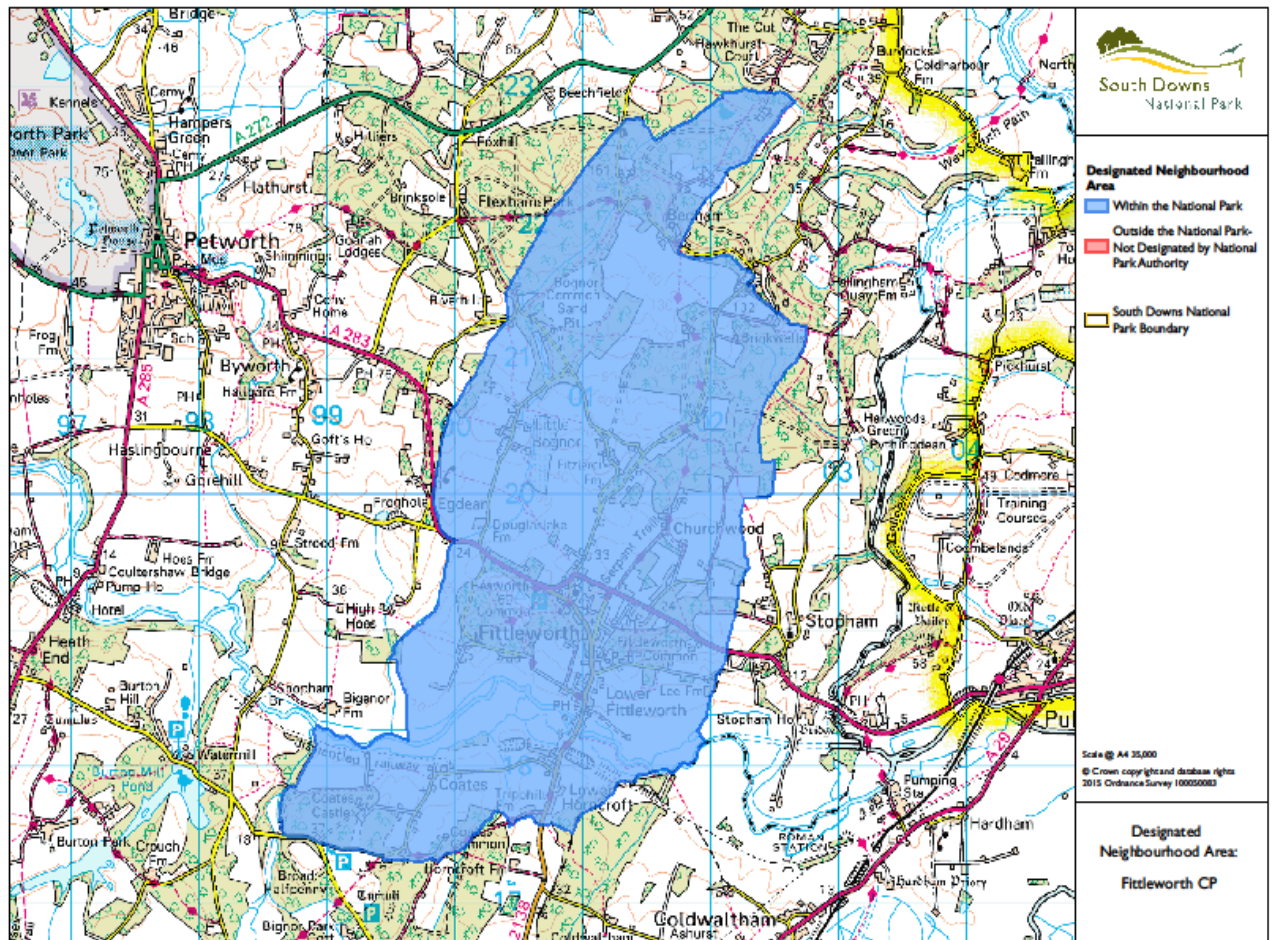
	vibrant community	<p>Will the plan seek to improve the standard of public open spaces and leisure, recreation and community facilities in Fittleworth?</p> <p>Will the plan seek to reduce speeding traffic on the main highways in the area?</p>	<p>Number of contributions from the Community Infrastructure Levy for enhancements to leisure, recreation or community facilities? (Source: SDNPA Annual Monitoring Report AMR)</p> <p>Number of contributions from the Community Infrastructure Levy for highway safety improvements (Source: SDNPA via Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL))</p>
Rural economy (Economy)	Encourage access to local employment, skills and training	Will the plan encourage residential developments that allow home working?	<p>Number of residential applications with space for home working (Source: Fittleworth Parish Council)</p>

5.0 Next Steps and Conclusions

- 5.1 The content of this Scoping Report has been agreed by the group producing the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan. The report establishes the baseline for the Sustainability/Environmental Assessment of the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan. It identifies the main sustainability issues that affect Fittleworth Parish and sets out the objectives that will form the basis for the assessment of the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.2 Comments on this report are welcomed. It is available on the Parish Council website for information. It has been sent to all of the organisations in Appendix 3. The formal consultation period is 5 weeks, starting on Monday 15th August and finishing on Monday 19th September 2016. All responses received during this time will be taken into account in formulating the approach taken to assess the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and where necessary updates and changes will be made to the baseline data, plans and policies and the Sustainability Assessment Framework. Comments may also be received that will influence the formation of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.3 The final Sustainability Appraisal Report will be published alongside the Neighbourhood Plan and both of these will be subject to an Examination in due course.

APPENDIX 1

Map of Fittleworth Parish



APPENDIX 2

List of relevant plans/policies relating to the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan

English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 (DEFRA)

Vision for the English National Parks and the Broads

By 2030 English National Parks and the Broads will be places where:

- There are thriving, living, working landscapes notable for their natural beauty and cultural heritage. They inspire visitors and local communities to live within environmental limits and to tackle climate change. The wide-range of services they provide (from clean water to sustainable food) is in good condition and valued by society.
- Sustainable development can be seen in action. The communities of the Parks take an active part in decisions about their future. They are known for having been pivotal in the transformation to a low carbon society and sustainable living. Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, low carbon transport and travel and healthy, prosperous communities have long been the norm.
- Wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained, restored and expanded and linked effectively to other ecological networks. Woodland cover has increased and all woodlands are sustainably managed, with the right trees in the right places. Landscapes and habitats are managed to create resilience and enable adaptation.
- Everyone can discover the rich variety of England's natural and historic environment, and have the chance to value them as places for escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection, and a source of national pride and identity. They will be recognised as fundamental to our prosperity and well-being.

Partnership Management Plan: Shaping the Future of your South Downs National Park 2014-2019 (South Downs National Park)

The outcomes that flow from the shared vision for the South Downs National Park (for up to 2050) are set out below. The outcomes are under three themes.

A thriving living landscape

- Outcome 1: The landscape character of the National Park, its special qualities and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by effectively managed land and the negative impacts of development and cumulative change.

- Outcome 2: There is increased capacity within the landscape for its natural resources, habitats and species to adapt to the impacts of climate change and other pressures.
- Outcome 3: A well managed and better connected network of habitats and increased population and distribution of priority species now exist in the National Park.
- Outcome 4: The condition and status of cultural heritage assets and their settings is significantly enhanced, many more have been discovered and they contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

People connected with places

- Outcome 5: Outstanding visitor experiences are underpinned by a high quality access and sustainable transport network providing benefits such as improved health and well being.
- Outcome 6: There is widespread understanding of the special qualities of the National Park and the benefits it provides.
- Outcome 7: The range and diversity of traditional culture and skills has been protected and there is an increase in contemporary arts and crafts inspired by the special qualities of the National Park.
- Outcome 8: More responsibility and action is taken by visitors, residents and business to conserve and enhance the special qualities and use resources more wisely.

Towards a sustainable future

- Outcome 9: Communities and businesses in the National Park are more sustainable with an appropriate provision of housing to meet local needs and improved access to essential services and facilities.
- Outcome 10: A diverse and sustainable economy has developed which provides a range of business and employment opportunities, many of which are linked to the special qualities of the National Park.
- Outcome 11: Local people have access to skilled employment and training opportunities.

Chichester Local Plan 1999

Policy – BE1 Settlement Area Boundaries

Fittleworth has a defined settlement area boundary where certain developments will be permitted.

Policy BE4 – Buildings of Architectural or Historic Merit

Places a high priority on protecting the character and appearance of such buildings; with a presumption in favour of preserving such buildings and resistance to any proposals which would result in the loss of character of an area.

BE6 – Conservation Areas

Preserve and enhance the special architectural or historic character of such areas

BE11 – New Development

Must not detract from its surrounding and lists matters that must be taken into account e.g. design, scale, siting and layout

BE14 – Wildlife habitat, trees, hedges and other landscape features

Lists issues that will be considered when they affect landscape, trees and hedges. Protects wildlife sites

BE16 – Energy Conservation

Encourages energy conservation and energy efficiency

H4 – Size and density of dwellings

Will grant new housing developments where a substantial proportion of the development is for smaller units and must be in sympathy with existing residential development

H8 - Social and low cost housing in settlement policy areas

Defines this type of housing and states that the LPA will seek to negotiate an appropriate proportion of social housing on previously unidentified sites

Policy H9 – Social Housing in the rural areas

Lists the criteria that must be taken into account in allowing sites for housing that would not normally come forward to meet affordable housing needs.

H12 – Replacement dwellings and extensions in the rural area

Restricts the extension of small dwellings (an increase of no more than 50% of the gross floorspace

RE1 – Development in the rural area generally

Restrict development outside settlement policy areas

RE4 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (South Downs). Protection of landscape and character

Development will only be permitted that is harmful to their visual quality or distinctive character in compelling circumstances

RE7 – Nature Conservation Sites (designated sites)

Will refuse permission for development which would damage, destroy or adversely affect such sites

RE8 – Nature Conservation Sites (non-designated sites)

Protects development for such sites; including ancient woodlands, ancient woodlands and sites with geological significance

TR6 – Highway Safety

Refuse proposals which would adversely affect highway safety; includes internal road design, cycle facilities and footpaths

TR8 – Cyclists and pedestrians

Ensures that such facilities are provided as part of development proposals

Interim Statement – Planning for Affordable Housing (Chichester District Council September 2007)

This applies to areas within the South Downs National Park until the SDNPA has an adopted Local Plan. The District Council's Housing Strategy set a target of 25 affordable homes per year within villages. To increase supply the Statement lowered the site size threshold where affordable housing should be provided. "On all sites of 5 to 9 dwellings net, 20% affordable housing will be sought, and all sites of 10 dwellings net or more, 40% affordable housing will be sought".

The South Downs Local Plan: Preferred Options (September 2015).

Policy SD5 – Landscape Character

Seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape and contains a list of criteria to determine development proposals

Policy SD6 – Design

Links to policy SD5 but with additional criteria including the need to make a positive contribution to the built environment and landscape

Policy SD7 – Safeguarding Views

Conserve and enhance views as per the Viewshed Characterisation Study

Policy SD8 – Relative Tranquillity

Conserve and enhance the relative tranquillity of the park and developments are informed by the South Downs Tranquillity Study

Policy SD9 – Dark Night Skies

Includes a lighting hierarchy within environmental zones and includes criteria for lighting associated with development

Policy SD11 – Historic Environment

Protects designated and non- designated heritage assets and their settings

Policy SD12 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Protects and enhances biodiversity and geodiversity and ensures development has particular regard to ecological networks. Includes a hierarchy of designations and includes the need for HRA for sites with European designations

Policy SD13 – International sites

“Development proposals on greenfield sites and sites that support or are in close proximity to suitable commuting and foraging habitat (including mature vegetative linear features such as woodlands, hedgerows riverine and wetland habitats) within 7km of the Mens SAC or 5km of the Ebernoe Common SAC should have due regard to the possibility that barbastelle and Bechstein bats will be utilising the site and will be required to incorporate necessary surveys and ensure that key features (foraging habitat and commuting routes) are retained, in addition to a suitable buffer to safeguard against disturbance.”

Policy SD17 – Flood Risk Management

Mentions the sequential test and the requirement for Flood Risk Assessments and what these should contain, as well as ensuring that proposals would not negatively impact on water quality (surface water and ground water).

Policy SD18 – Transport and accessibility

Aims to reduce the need to travel. Developments generating significant amounts of traffic should be located near existing centres

Policy SD22 – Development Strategy

Fittleworth is within the broad landscape area of the Western Weald

Policy SD23 - Housing

Allocates 6 houses for Fittleworth

Policy SD24 – Affordable housing provision

Seeks to maximise the delivery of affordable housing with 40% of all net dwellings on schemes of 6 or more units to meet local needs. For sites with 11 or more dwellings all of the affordable should be provided on site. On sites with 6-10 the affordable homes should be provided on site if not a commuted sum should be provided

South Downs National Park Authority: Water Cycle Study and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

Level 1. Scoping and Outline Report (April 2015)

The report is part of the evidence base for the SDNPA Local Plan. It identifies the constraints to development from existing environmental and infrastructure capacity related to water.

Flood Risk

The Study includes a baseline flood risk characterisation as a precursor to the Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. One of the sources of fluvial flooding is the River Rother. In addition, groundwater flooding is a major source of flood risk due to the extensive chalk geology beneath the SDNP. Long periods of sustained flooding can elevate groundwater levels. Such flooding may occur along the valley bottom and valley sites of rivers where they pass over the chalk. This applies to the FNP area (which is in a white chalk subgroup).

SHLAA sites were also identified in terms of their groundwater and surface water flood risk. Three sites in Fittleworth have been identified as having some flood risk. These are as follows:-

- Two sites at Tripp Hill Farmhouse Paddocks, Lower Horncroft; main risk is from groundwater flooding which is less than 25% (this is a low level risk)
- Land at Fleet Cottage; main risk is from groundwater flooding which is between 25 and 50% (this is a medium level risk).

Groundwater Protection Zones

Part of the parish falls within groundwater protection zone 3. As such run off from development sites should not be increased through the use of appropriate surface water management. This is to ensure that the quality of the groundwater resources is protected.

Water stress

The Study identifies that some parts of the region are under serious water stress. Water supplies will be secure over the next 25 years so long as demand management measures are implemented.

The Study made a series of recommendations for the SDNPA. Several of these are strategic in nature and are therefore, not of direct relevance to the FNP. However, the following relate to the parish:

- Recommendation 2 – to integrate water efficiency in new homes
- Recommendation 9 – provide a limit on run off from new developments to reduce the risk of surface water flooding; as a minimum there should not be an increase in discharge as a result of development

- Recommendation 10 – use of Sustainable Urban Drainage systems within new development to reduce flood risk.

South East River Basin Management Plan

The River Rother is one of 9 management catchments that make up the river basin district. A number of measures are identified to be delivered by the Arun and Western Streams catchment partnership. None of these have planning policy implications.

APPENDIX 3

List of consultees for the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment - Scoping Report

Statutory Consultees

Natural England
Environment Agency
Historic England

Others

South Downs National Park Authority
Chichester District Council
West Sussex County Council