



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

September 2021

Equality Impact Assessments

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) reviews the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI sets out who, how and when Cherwell District Council will engage as part of the planning process. This includes preparing key planning policy documents and the determination of planning applications. All local planning authorities are required under section 18(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, to prepare and maintain a SCI.
- 1.2. The purpose of this EQIA is to assess what impact the temporary changes set out in the draft SCI will have on different sections of the community referred to as the 'protected characteristics' which include:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
- 1.3. Equality Impact Assessments systematically assess and record the actual, potential or likely impact of a service, policy or project – or a significant change in the same – on different groups of people. The consequences of policies and projects on particular groups are analysed and anticipated so that, as far as possible, any negative consequences can be eliminated or minimised and opportunities for ensuring equality can be maximised. This EQIA will be published on the Council's website with the draft SCI.
- 1.4. This EQIA highlights the steps that have been undertaken to evaluate the potential impact of the publicity arrangements on those in the community with protected characteristics, and what steps have been taken to address any negative impacts. The assessment follows the Council's standard methodology as outlined below:

Stage 1 involves the Initial Screening of the assessment and is intended to check whether the SCI Addendum has an adverse impact on equality groups and identify relevant actions and likely costs/resources associated with any proposed improvement. **Appendix 1** contains the initial screening of the draft SCI.

Stage 2 of the Council's EQIA requires the completion of an In Depth (Full) Assessment if the answer is yes to more than one of the Initial Screening questions.
- 1.5. Following the initial screening of the SCI it is concluded that an In Depth (Full) Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Equality Impact Assessment

APPENDIX 1 STAGE 1 - INITIAL SCREENING DETAILS ASSESSING POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES

Please tick/delete as appropriate: Is this EQIA for a,

Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Existing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	New/Existing	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	New/Existing

Name of Strategy, Policy or Service Development:

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

AIMS, OBJECTIVES & PURPOSE OF THE POLICY OR ACTIVITY:

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out who, how and when Cherwell District Council will engage as part of the planning process. This includes preparing key planning policy documents and the determination of planning applications.

The aim of the draft SCI is to explain how we will consult and provide information to help encourage community and stakeholder participation in the planning process. The SCI gives the public and stakeholders certainty over the type of engagement expected and the ways they can get involved. The SCI sets the framework for planning-related consultation which will enable us to demonstrate how we have met and, in some cases, exceeded statutory requirements.

We must comply with the adopted SCI in preparing relevant planning policy documents and in determining planning applications.

PLEASE LIST THE MAIN STAKEHOLDERS/BENEFICIARIES IN TERMS OF THE RECIPIENTS OF THE ACTIVITY OR THE TARGET GROUP AT WHOM THE POLICY IS AIMED:

The SCI sets out how planning applications and planning policy documents are publicised and explains how responses could be made, therefore this could have an impact on all those that live and work in the district. The main stakeholders are, therefore, the Cherwell community and those with an interest in the Cherwell District. These include residents, local businesses, stakeholders, staff, and partners.

IF THE ACTIVITY IS PROVIDED BY ANOTHER DEPARTMENT, ORGANISATION, PARTNERSHIP OR AGENCY ON BEHALF OF THE AUTHORITY, PLEASE GIVE THE NAMES OF THESE ORGANISATIONS/AGENCIES:

N/A

LEAD OFFICER:	Heather Seale	TEL: 01295 227985
SERVICE AREA:	Planning and Development	
DIRECTORATE:	Environment and Place	

ASSESSMENT REVIEW DATE: 15 September 2021

Equality Impact Assessment

STAGE 1 – INITIAL SCREENING ASSESSMENT

Q	Screening Questions	Y/N
1.	Does the policy or activity knowingly prevent us in any way from meeting our statutory equality duties under the 2010 Equality Act?	N
2	Is there any evidence that any part of the proposed policy or activity could discriminate unlawfully, directly or indirectly, against particular equality groups?	N
3	Is there any evidence that information about the policy or activity is not accessible to any equality groups?	N
4	Has the Council received any complaints about the policy or activity under review, in respect of equality issues?	N
5	Have there been any recommendations in this area arising from, for example, internal/external audits or scrutiny reports?	N
6	Will the proposed policy or activity have negative consequences for people we employ, partner or contract with?	N
7	This Strategy, Policy or Service Development has an impact on other council services i.e. Customer Services and those services have not yet been consulted.	N
8	Will there be a negative impact on any equality groups? If so, please provide brief details below.	Y
	<p>Equality Impact: Evidence:</p> <p>The SCI has the potential to impact upon equality as its implementation will affect how the Council engages with all those who live and work in Cherwell District and other key organisations and stakeholders on planning policy documents and planning applications.</p> <p>The SCI is not expected to create any barriers to participation for people with the following protected characteristics: marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; religion or belief; gender reassignment; sex; and sexual orientation.</p> <p>The SCI could act as a barrier to participation for people with the following protected characteristics: age and race. The Council have put measures in place to mitigate against these negative impacts.</p> <p>Age – The SCI has a greater emphasis on online engagement methods including direct notification by email, digital consultations, social media and publishing documents for inspection on the Council website. Research indicates that those aged 65 plus are less likely to be computer literate, which may impede their ability to participate in the planning process. In Cherwell, this age group accounts for 18.3% of the population. Contact details for the Planning Policy team will be provided on all consultation materials to ensure those who may have difficulty in accessing documents online can receive assistance or be provided with the document in an alternative format. Inspection copies of the consultation documents will be made available at Bodicote House and at libraries within Cherwell District when publicly accessible during advertised opening hours. For Development Management, details of how to respond using alternative methods such as letter will be clear. Public notices posted at Bodicote House, at libraries within the District and at sites will be used to publicise consultations and will include contact details.</p> <p>Race – It is recognised that there may be challenges in engaging all racial groups due to language barriers, or cultural differences. To address this, the planning policy consultation database includes contact details for a range of organisations representing different racial groups who will be notified of any consultations.</p> <p>In order to ensure those with physical disabilities are not denied access to public</p>	

	<p>consultation events, the Council will seek to hold meetings in places that are accessible to those who have mobility issues, where possible. In addition, we will make hard copies of documents available at request, consider holding virtual meetings and utilise disability networks/organisations from the consultation database to promote information.</p> <p>The SCI could act as a barrier to people on low incomes due to digital inequality. Research confirms that low income households have lower rates of in-home internet connectivity compared with higher-income groups. People on lower incomes are also more likely to depend exclusively on non-contract smartphones and other handheld devices to access the internet in the home and therefore may not have the ability to download large documents. This is mitigated through internet availability at libraries and other locations where internet access is provided and by inspection copies of the documents being made available at Bodicote House (and libraries for planning policy documents) within the District when publicly accessible and during advertised opening hours. There is also an option to contact the Planning Department for assistance or to request information in an alternative format.</p>	
9	<p>Is the proposed policy or activity likely to have a negative effect on our relations with certain equality groups or local community? If so, please explain.</p> <p>The SCI aims to remove barriers to participation in the planning process. Where barriers to participation have been identified, the Council have put measures in place to mitigate against any negative effects.</p>	N
10	<p>There has been no consultation with equality groups about this policy or activity? Answer yes if you agree with this statement. If there has been consultation, please list the equality groups you have consulted with:</p> <p>The draft SCI was subject to a six-week period of public consultation in summer 2021. A final SCI has been prepared taking into account representations received from the public consultation before being presented to Members for approval.</p> <p>The Council's EQIA contact officer was consulted on the preparation of this EQIA.</p> <p>It is considered that all sectors of the community still have the opportunity to have their say in how their community is planned and developed, irrespective of age, sex, ability, ethnicity, background or disability as a result of the measures contained in the draft SCI.</p>	N
11	<p>Has this assessment missed opportunities to promote equality of opportunity and positive attitudes?</p> <p>No. The Council will continue to encourage the participation of all sectors of the community in the preparation of planning policy documents and consultation of planning applications.</p> <p>The SCI promotes the use of a range of engagement methods in order to reach local people, local businesses and other key organisations and stakeholders.</p> <p>In order to promote equality of opportunity for young people the Council will continue to use social media as a means of involving the community in planning policy.</p> <p>Research suggests that young people are difficult/reluctant to engage in the planning process. Social media is a popular means of interaction for young</p>	N

	<p>people and the Council is committed to the use of online platforms to engage younger people on planning matters, as a means of enhancing equality of opportunity.</p> <p>The SCI commits to facilitate focussed meetings or forums with interest groups, organisations and other stakeholders where there is demand. These may be held in person or virtually. Overall, the aim of this is to advance equality of opportunity to respond to consultations.</p> <p>The SCI helps to foster positive attitudes by ensuring that the Council is open about how it will engage with the community in the delivery of its planning function, thus removing barriers to participation in the planning process.</p>	
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Proceed to In Depth (Full) Assessment (complete **Appendix 2) if the answer is YES to more than one of the above questions.**

For any YES answers include an improvement action in your Equality Improvement Plan.

Declaration

I am satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out on this policy or activity and an In Depth (Full) Equality Impact Assessment is not required. I understand that the EQIA is required by the Council and take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed by:

Heather Seale – Planning Research and Monitoring Officer
Date: 15 September 2021

Approved by Assistant Director Planning and Development

David Peckford
Date: 15 September 2021

Equality Impact Assessment

Please detail below your evidence which has determined whether you have answered either Yes or No to the initial screening questions.

Screening Questions	Screening Narrative
Does the policy or activity knowingly prevent us in any way from meeting our statutory equality duties under the 2010 Equality Act?	The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which sets out how we will engage our community in the preparation of planning policy documents and planning applications are consulted, actively seeks involvement in planning from all areas of the community.
Is there any evidence that any part of the proposed policy or activity could discriminate unlawfully, directly or indirectly, against particular equality groups?	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that any of the protected groups have been disadvantaged by the SCI as the aim of the document is to try and help people engage in the planning process.</p> <p>Where the consultation and engagement methods set out in the SCI could act as a barrier to participation for some equality groups, the Council have put measures in place to mitigate against these negative impacts.</p>
Is there any evidence that information about the policy or activity is not accessible to any equality groups?	<p>There is no evidence that information about the SCI is not accessible to any equality groups.</p> <p>The aim of the SCI is to encourage community and stakeholder involvement.</p> <p>The consultation draft SCI was published on the Council's website and emails/letters were sent to specific, general and all other relevant consultees and stakeholders on the Planning Policy consultation database. Contact details for the Planning Policy team were provided for anyone who may have difficulty in viewing documents online and a hard copy of the document could be sent by post for a fee. Stakeholders were given the option of responding to the consultation by email or by post. The draft SCI and the consultation were promoted through the Council's social media accounts.</p>
Has the Council received any complaints about the policy or activity under review, in respect of equality issues?	No. There is no evidence to suggest that any equality issue related complaints have been received.
Have there been any recommendations in this area arising from, for example, internal/external audits or scrutiny reports?	No recommendations received
Will the proposed policy or activity have negative consequences for people we employ, partner or contract with?	There are no negative outcomes identified.
This Strategy, Policy or Service Development has an impact on other council services i.e. Customer Services and those services have not yet been consulted.	The SCI has been prepared in consultation with the Council's EQIA contact officer and the changes do not affect how other Council services are provided.
Will there be a negative impact on any equality groups?	No. The SCI includes various ways the Council will ensure that there are no barriers to people having a say in the planning process, with the aim of advancing equality of

	<p>opportunity for all.</p> <p>Where barriers to participation have been identified, the Council have put measures in place to mitigate against any negative effects.</p>
<p>Is the proposed policy or activity likely to have a negative affect on our relations with certain equality groups or local community? If so, please explain.</p>	<p>No. The SCI includes various ways the Council will ensure that there are no barriers to people having a say in the planning process, with the aim of advancing equality of opportunity for all.</p> <p>Where barriers to participation have been identified, the Council have put measures in place to mitigate against any negative effects.</p>
<p>There has been no consultation with equality groups about this policy or activity? Answer yes if you agree with this statement. If there has been consultation, please list the equality groups you have consulted with:</p>	<p>The draft SCI was subject to a six-week period of public consultation in summer 2021.</p> <p>The Council's EQIA contact officer was consulted on the preparation of this EQIA.</p> <p>The aim of the SCI is to encourage community and stakeholder involvement.</p> <p>Consultations on planning policy documents and planning applications are open to everyone to comment. These are widely publicised to give opportunities to anyone who wishes to be involved.</p> <p>Consultation responses to planning policy documents are captured in Statements of Consultation, which are published on the Council's website.</p> <p>The consultation draft SCI was published on the Council's website and emails/letters were sent to specific, general and all other relevant consultees and stakeholders on the Planning Policy consultation database. Contact details for the Planning Policy team were provided for anyone who may have difficulty in viewing documents online and a hard copy of the document could be sent by post for a fee. Stakeholders were given the option of responding to the consultation by email or by post. The draft SCI and the consultation were promoted through the Council's social media accounts.</p>
<p>Has this assessment missed opportunities to promote equality of opportunity and positive attitudes?</p>	<p>No</p>