

APPENDIX IV

Stage 1: Equality Impact Assessment

1. What are the main aims purpose and outcomes of the Policy and how do these fit with the wider aims of the organization?

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan sets out the strategy to achieve development and growth across the borough for the period 2011 to 2031. The plan includes policies to promote development in accordance with an overall spatial strategy, as well as more detailed policies to assist in the determination of planning applications. To give certainty to the public, stakeholders and developers, allocations for residential and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation as well as land for retail provision, employment and open space have been made. These policies and allocations will assist in the delivery of the council's strategic aims and corporate objectives. Consideration has been given to Statement of Community Involvement and the Corporate Equality Policy in the preparation of the Plan.

2. How do these aims affect our duty to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the act.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The council's Corporate Equality Policy would be applied to ensure that there was no unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, or any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.

Policies are written, and allocations made to be inclusive, and to foster positive relationships within and between communities.

3. What aspects of the policy including how it is delivered or accessed could contribute to inequality?

The policies and allocations contained in the Local Plan aim to ensure that development occurs in such a way that its delivery contributes to equality. Policies have been developed to continue to promote access to services provided by the council and where the council is able to influence such matters to ensure that services and opportunities provided by others do not contribute to inequality.

Delivery of the information within the Local Plan is managed through public consultation, with care given to ensuring that the information is accessible through the use of multiple channels, being mindful of those protected characteristics under the act, and of other issues concerning the needs and abilities of the public across the borough.

4. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including particular communities and groups who have protected characteristics? What evidence do you have for this?

The Local Plan, its policies and allocations, will have a range of impacts on the lives of those living in, working in and visiting the borough, for example by planning for the additional homes needed by the growing population, by aiming to match the type and tenure of this housing to residents' needs, including the elderly, and by providing the framework for financial contributions towards key social infrastructure such as GP surgeries and health centres. All of these impacts, positive and negative, have been rigorously assessed through the Sustainability Appraisals carried out on the component parts of the document, and on the Local Plan in its entirety. This Sustainability Appraisal is required to accompany the Local Plan by the Town and County Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2012 that govern how the Local Plan is produced.

If the answer to the second question has identified potential impacts and you have answered yes to any of the remaining questions then you should carry out a full EQIA set out as stage 2 below.

Stage 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Name of Policy/Service/Function
Maidstone Borough Local Plan: Proposed Main Modifications Consultation
Purpose
<i>What are you trying to achieve with the policy / service / function?</i>
<p>The Maidstone Borough Local Plan is the strategic planning document that sets the framework for development in the borough between 2011 and 2031. It explains the "Why, What, Where, When and How" development will be delivered through a strategy that plans for growth and regeneration whilst at the same time protects and enhances the borough's environmental and built assets. The Local Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out the scale and distribution of development • Identifies, by site, where development will be located • Identifies where development will be constrained • Explains how the council and its partners will deliver the plan <p>A Planning Inspector has been appointed to undertake an independent Examination of the Plan. An outcome of the Examination process is a list of proposed changes to the Plan, called Main Modifications. The Inspector requires that these proposed Main Modifications are published for public consultation before he reaches his final conclusions on the Plan.</p>
<i>Who defines and manages it?</i>
The Local Plan is defined through the democratic process, via a number of stages involving both Councillors and officers. The Plan is overseen by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee (including its previous iterations), and ultimately through Council. Officers in the Spatial Policy team and other senior officers from interested teams input into the work programme.

The preparation of the Plan is the responsibility of the Head of Planning and Development and the Planning Policy Manager.

Who do you intend to benefit from it and how?

The Local Plan will benefit those living in, working in and visiting the borough, as well as key stakeholders and developers by giving certainty about the shape and form of development, and by providing a framework to encourage development to occur in a planned and co-ordinated manner. It addresses such issues as meeting objectively assessed housing need, providing for local needs housing, provision of accommodation for the Gypsy and Traveller community, and providing for economic development growth, whilst simultaneously protecting the environmental, historic and built assets within the borough.

The Main Modifications propose changes to a limited number of policies and sections of the Plan.

What could prevent people from getting the most out of the policy / service / function?

The Local Plan must be accessible and easy to understand through the use of Plain English and the exclusion where possible of jargon.

The Proposed Main Modifications document will be available to all, with electronic access available alongside traditional paper versions in public libraries and the Maidstone Link which are easily accessed by the public. Parish councils and neighbourhood groups will be notified about the public consultation who in turn help to publicise it in their own local areas. Groups representing specific interests for example the elderly, disabled and Gypsies and Travellers are included on the consultation database and will be directly informed of the consultation.

How will you get your customers involved in the analysis and how will you tell people about it?

The procedure for consultation is guided by the Planning Inspectorate's Practice Guidance and will be conducted in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement, and having regard to the Parish Charter. The consultation will be publicised with stakeholders, in the local press and on the Council's website (as above). Responses to the consultation will be made through a web-based portal, or in writing, to ensure that all those wishing to comment can do so.

Evidence

How will you know if the policy delivers its intended outcome / benefits?

Policies within the Local Plan detail how they will be monitored once adopted. The proposed Modifications include a comprehensive list of specific indicators with specified targets, trigger points and actions. The indicators measure, amongst other things, housing delivery, infrastructure provision and the performance of the Plan at appeal. These monitoring indicators will be reported on annually in

the Authority Monitoring Report or any subsequent document that supersedes the Monitoring Report.

How satisfied are your customers and how do you know?

Customer satisfaction can be ascertained in part through the responses to the consultation. The council will endeavour to gain a comprehensive understanding of overall satisfaction although the plan will generate very emotive responses in relation to specific local issues and this will make it difficult to gain a broad-scale understanding of satisfaction with the overall plan. It is more likely that comments on individual Main Modifications to the plan will be submitted through the consultation process.

What existing data do you have on the people that use the service and the wider population?

Data is gathered from such sources as the Office for National Statistics. Use is also made of results from historic and emerging census data. Details of those people and organisations that have shown an interest in the process in the past are maintained in the Objective database.

What other information would it be useful to have? How could you get this?

At present, no further information requirements have been identified.

Are you breaking down data by equality groups where relevant (such as by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity)?

Data is broken down by equality groups as appropriate and where relevant. The Local Plan evidence includes data on groups in housing need for example.

Are you using partners, stakeholders, and councillors to get information and feedback?

Through the consultation process feedback is sought from a variety of partners, stakeholders and ward and parish councillors. As stated above, specific interest groups are contacted via the consultation database.

Impact

Are some people benefiting more – or less - than others? If so, why might this be?

It is difficult to assess the impact of the Local Plan proposals until they are fully adopted. All of the identified impacts, positive and negative, have been rigorously assessed through the Sustainability Appraisals carried out on the component parts of the document, and on the Local Plan in its entirety.

Actions

If the evidence suggests that the policy / service / function benefits a particular group – or disadvantages another - is there a justifiable reason for this and if so, what is it?

At this stage in the process this question is not applicable. Please refer to the previous answer for more information.

Is it discriminatory in any way?

At this stage it is not considered that any elements are discriminatory. Please refer to the 'Impact' section answer for more information.

Is there a possible impact in relationships or perceptions between different parts of the community?

Please refer to the 'Impact' answer for more information.

What measures can you put in place to reduce disadvantages?

Until the impact of policies and allocations in the Local Plan is fully understood, through implementation and monitoring, it is not possible to prescribe measures to deal with disadvantages to certain groups or individuals. Such matters will be dealt with in the latter stages of the programme and through the ongoing monitoring work that will follow the adoption of the Local Plan.

Do you need to consult further?

No. This should be the final stage of consultation on the Local Plan.

Have you identified any potential improvements to customer service?

No potential improvements have been identified at this stage. The consultation on the preceding stages of the Local Plan's preparation has been repeated and extensive. In particular, the consultation at the Regulation 18 stage (March 2014) was designed to encompass specific interest groups and to publicise the Plan widely. The current stage relates to very select changes to specific aspects of the Plan only and therefore an extensive engagement exercise would be disproportionate.

Who should you tell about the outcomes of this analysis?

A report regarding any significant changes would be prepared for consideration by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee.

Have you built the actions into your Service Plan or Policy Implementation Plan with a clear timescale?

Yes. The overarching process is governed by the Local Development Scheme which is a statutory requirement.
The work programme is carefully managed by the project team responsible for the delivery of the Local Plan, and is constructed to allow for analysis and

detailed planning for consultation periods to ensure that matters relating to equality are fully considered.

When will this assessment need to be repeated?

No. This should be the final stage of consultation on the Local Plan.