

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

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 the framework to guide the future development of the borough to 2031. The plan includes policies to promote growth and protect the environment, as well as more detailed development management policies that assist in the decision making processes. Site allocations for a range of land uses have been made to make clear to the public, stakeholders and development industry where development will be acceptable. These policies and land allocations will assist in the delivery of the council's strategic aims and corporate objectives. Consideration has been given to the Maidstone Community Strategy, the Strategic Plan, a range of local strategies, the Statement of Community Involvement and the Corporate Equality Policy.

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 has been applied to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, or any other conduct that is prohibited under the act. Policies are written, and land allocations made to be inclusive, and to foster positive relationships within and between communities. Public consultations meet the requirements of the duty by following the processes set out in the Statement of Community Involvement.

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

The policies and land allocations contained in the local plan aim to ensure that development occurs in such a way that its delivery contributes to equality. Delivery of the information within the local plan is managed through stakeholder and public consultation, with care given to ensuring that the information is available through multiple channels and in multiple formats to reach the widest possible audience, being mindful of those protected characteristics under the act and of other issues concerning the needs and abilities of the public across the borough.

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

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 land allocations will have a range of impacts on the lives of those living in, working in and visiting the borough. All of these impacts, positive and negative, have been rigorously assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal carried out on the component parts of the document, and on the local plan in its entirety. The Sustainability Appraisal is required to accompany the local plan by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 that govern how the local plan is produced. The Statement of Community Involvement has a positive impact on all members of the public, including groups who have protected characteristics, by setting out the plan making (and planning application) stages for stakeholder engagement and public consultations, together with a range of consultation methods to suit all potential respondents.

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.

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

Stage 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Name of Policy/Service/Function
Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan Public Consultation (Regulation 18)
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 restrained; and• Explains how the council and its partners will deliver the plan.
<i>Who defines and manages it?</i>
<p>The local plan is defined through the democratic process, via a number of stages involving both Members and officers. The plan is considered through Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (including its previous iterations), the Cabinet, and ultimately through full Council. Officers in the Spatial Policy team and other senior officers from other teams input into the work programme. The process is managed through a project team led by the Chief Executive in collaboration with the Head of Planning and Development and the Spatial Policy Team Leader.</p>
<i>Who do you intend to benefit from it and how?</i>
<p>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 will address such issues as 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.</p>

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

<i>What could prevent people from getting the most out of the policy / service / function?</i>
The local plan must be accessible and easy to understand through the use of Plain English and the exclusion of jargon. It is important to make the document available to all, with electronic access available alongside traditional paper versions in public libraries, and other buildings easily accessed by the public. Visual displays and exhibitions across the borough will be used during consultations, as well as media such as Facebook and Twitter, to aid inclusivity.
<i>How will you get your customers involved in the analysis and how will you tell people about it?</i>
The local plan and associated documents will be subject to a full, wide-ranging and thorough consultation process. The procedure for consultation is guided by the planning regulations and will be conducted in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement and the Member approved consultation plan. The Communication Team will assist with the publicity for public consultation stages. Responses to the consultation will be made through a web-based portal, by email or in writing, to ensure that all those wishing to comment can do so.
Evidence
<i>How will you know if the policy delivers its intended outcome / benefits?</i>
Relevant policies within the local plan will be monitored and their success or otherwise reported annually through the Monitoring Report.
<i>How satisfied are your customers and how do you know?</i>
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. It is more likely that comments on individual elements of the plan will be submitted through the consultation process.
<i>What existing data do you have on the people that use the service and the wider population?</i>
Data on people that will use the service are gathered from such sources as Mosaic and other sources of information such 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 local plan process in the past are maintained in the Objective database.
<i>What other information would it be useful to have? How could you get this?</i>
At present, no further information requirements have been identified.

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

<i>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)?</i>
Data is broken down by equality groups as appropriate and if relevant.
<i>Are you using partners, stakeholders, and councillors to get information and feedback?</i>
Through the consultation process information and feedback is sought from a variety of partners, stakeholders and ward and parish councillors.
Impact
<i>Are some people benefiting more – or less - than others? If so, why might this be?</i>
It is difficult to assess the impact of the local plan proposals until they are fully adopted. At this stage in the process, public opinion is sought on the content of the draft local plan which will allow modifications to the overall strategy framework and policies as appropriate. All of the identified impacts, positive and negative, have been rigorously assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal carried out on the component parts of the document and on the local plan in its entirety.
Actions
<i>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?</i>
The local plan must balance the views of all stakeholders, residents and businesses against the borough's objectively assessed needs.
<i>Is it discriminatory in any way?</i>
At this stage in the local plan process it is not considered that any elements are discriminatory.
<i>Is there a possible impact in relationships or perceptions between different parts of the community?</i>
Please refer to the 'Impact' answer for information.
<i>What measures can you put in place to reduce disadvantages?</i>
Until the impact of policies and land 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.
<i>Do you need to consult further?</i>

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

Further focused public consultation (Regulation 18) will be undertaken for additional site allocations/deletions and for open space standards. Under the planning regulations and as part of the ongoing programme, a further public consultation on the whole plan (Regulation 19 known as Publication) will be completed before the plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

Have you identified any potential improvements to customer service?

No potential improvements have been identified at this stage, but such issues remain under review. A publicity officer has been appointed to liaise with the public and the media in the short to medium term.

Who should you tell about the outcomes of this analysis?

The results of the public consultations will be published in support of recommended revisions to the local plan that are reported to Members for decision, and as part of the evidence base for the examination into the local plan. Anyone who has submitted comments or asked to be informed of local plan progress will be informed when these amendments are made.

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

The overarching local plan process is governed by the Local Development Scheme which is a statutory requirement. The work programme is managed by the project team responsible for the delivery of the local plan, and allows for analysis and detailed planning for consultation stages to ensure that matters relating to equality are fully considered. Risks to the programme are identified at an early stage through Project Highlight Reports.

When will this assessment need to be repeated?

This assessment will be reviewed and repeated at each stage of public consultation.