

Draft strategies/policies – Equality and human rights impact check

Draft strategy/policy being checked: Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Is this draft strategy/policy:

- South only
- Vale only
- Joint across both councils

Service team: Planning

Officer completing this: Ben Davis

Once completed:

Date completed: 11/7/2016

Signed __ Ben Davis_____ (Officer)

Signed __ Adrian Duffield_____ (Head of Service)

Signed __ Cheryl Reeves_____ (Cheryl Reeves, equalities officer)

PLEASE NOTE – THIS CHECK MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE YOUR DRAFT STRATEGY IS SUBMITTED TO MANAGEMENT TEAM AND COUNCILLORS FOR APPROVAL

Why do you need to do this Equality and human rights impact check?

Our strategies and policies set out the way we will deliver our services (including employment opportunities). When we are developing them, we need to check that they are not going to create any barriers which could prevent people from accessing our services.

People in Vale of White Horse may face barriers because of things like disability, gender (including transgender, pregnancy and maternity), age, sexual orientation, rural isolation, income, religion/belief or ethnicity.

As well as thinking about how our services will meet the needs of these groups of people, we also need to consider how our draft strategies and policies will help us to:

- promote positive relations within communities
- give everyone a voice
- respect and value everyone
- protect people's human rights

This equality and human rights impact check provides officers with a framework to help them work through these considerations in relation to their draft policy/strategy, ensuring that we are meeting our legal duties with regards to equality, diversity and human rights.

We have a statutory duty to carry out these assessments and they contribute towards our corporate priority to 'optimise access to services (Vale)/'provide equality of access to our services' (South).

If you have any queries about this Check or would like some advice/support in completing it, please contact the Shared equalities officer (see contact details below).

Once you've completed this equality and human rights impact check, please send the paperwork to the shared equality officer, along with a copy of the draft strategy/policy.

Cheryl Reeves (equalities officer)
Email: cheryl.reeves@southandvale.gov.uk
Telephone: x2108

OUTLINE OF THE DRAFT STRATEGY / POLICY YOU ARE CHECKING:

1. What are the aims and objectives of this draft strategy/policy?

The council is committed to working in a clear and transparent way, and is keen to assist anyone who may wish to get involved in the planning process. The aim of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to set out how we wish to engage with our communities who can influence the preparation of new planning policy documents and the ways to comment upon planning applications for development.

2. Who is the proposed strategy or policy designed to support / help / serve?

The SCI will be used by planning officers to assist in making decisions on planning applications. The SCI will also help to support local residents, local community organisations, town and parishes, councillors and developers in how to get involved in the Local Plan and planning policy and the ways to comment upon planning applications for development.

3. If the draft strategy/policy relates to an existing council service/function, has an Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) already been completed on the service/function?

No

Yes – please list any issues/barriers identified within the assessment that your draft strategy needs to address:

4. Does the draft strategy or policy have the potential to cause a negative impact or discriminate against certain groups in the community?

Equality group	Yes	No	If 'yes', please explain how the strategy/policy could cause a negative impact or discriminate. If you can not justify this you will need to take mitigating action, complete the action plan at the end of this assessment.	If 'No,' What existing evidence (presumed or otherwise) do you have for this? e.g. Will the service changes advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic? This means will they <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics. Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
People from ethnic minority groups		√		The SCI recognises that the Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on the council to understand how our services impact on different groups of people.
People with disabilities (including carers)		√		The SCI recognises the needs of different groups within our community, the value of equality and the diversity that our communities represent
Men or women (including pregnant women, women on maternity and transgender people)		√		Part 1 sets out the council's overall approach to community engagement and involvement in the planning process. It complements the council's strategic objectives and priorities set out in its Corporate Plan and our Customer Engagement Charter. It sets out the ways we will involve the community when carrying out our consultations in relation to plan making and planning decisions, for example methods we will use to engage people include targeted work with community and voluntary organisations. For example we will endeavour to engage with groups in our community that can find us less accessible (e.g. disability groups and ethnic minority groups).
Gay, lesbian or bisexual people		√		We will encourage involvement from groups that have traditionally not been involved in the planning process (for example, younger people – through targeted events with schools etc.)
People from different religions/beliefs (including people without a religion/belief)		√		
Older or younger people		√		
People living in rural areas		√		Part 1 also sets out where our planning documents are

Equality group	Yes	No	If 'yes', please explain how the strategy/policy could cause a negative impact or discriminate. If you can not justify this you will need to take mitigating action, complete the action plan at the end of this assessment.	If 'No,' What existing evidence (presumed or otherwise) do you have for this? e.g. Will the service changes advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic? This means will they <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics. • Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
Local Voluntary, Community and Faith sector organisations				<p>available to view, including making our information and documents available in alternative formats upon request (e.g. large print, Braille, audio, easy read and alternative languages) We recognise that other forms of engagement are necessary for those who do not have access to internet. We make our planning documents, background studies and responses to our consultations available in hard copy at our local deposit points (e.g. local libraries and council offices)</p> <p>Part 2 sets out how the community can get involved with and influence the council as it prepares its Local Plan and other planning policy documents. It sets out the methods we use to consult on our planning policy documents, including recognising the need to fully consider and take account of community views. This may include targeted events with our hard to reach groups or targeted work with community groups and voluntary organisations e.g. access groups. It also refers to consulting geographical areas where appropriate.</p> <p>Part 3 sets out how communities can become involved with planning applications, including who and how we will consult the community on planning applications depending on the scale, location and/or nature of the proposal. Copies of the plans are also sent to the town and parishes. People who do not have access to the internet can view these through contacting the town/parish clerk.</p>

5. Have reasonable adjustments been made for people with disabilities to ensure they can use the draft strategy or policy? This might mean treating disabled people better than non-disabled people in order to meet their needs

- No
- Yes - please provide detail:

We will endeavour to consult or engage with our disability access groups in preparing our planning policy documents and consulting upon planning applications for development. Particularly on policies or applications which relate to the public realm.

6. Have there been any equality related recommendations in the area that your draft policy/strategy is covering which have arisen from, for example, internal/external audits or scrutiny reports?

Recommendation made	Is this being addressed in your draft strategy or policy? If not, please explain why.
No	

7. Will the draft strategy or policy help to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it e.g will the changes help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between the different groups

- No (*If you feel there is scope to improve how you foster good relations, amend your decision accordingly*)
- Yes – please explain how

The methods we use to consult on our planning policy documents and upon planning applications through public meetings, exhibitions, events and our developer forums will encourage different groups to engage in the planning process where appropriate.

Part three of the SCI also includes the following statement ‘The council will not tolerate comments that contain abusive, offensive or derogatory language, or those related to a personal circumstance. Any comments submitted to the council in this manner will not be published.’

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

8. Will the draft strategy or policy have an impact on any relevant human rights [You may find it helpful to view the human rights guide for public authorities on the intranet to help you decide]. Please identify which human rights have been considered?

Article 9 'Freedom of thought, conscience and religion'

Article 10 'Freedom of expression'

Article 14 'Prohibition of discrimination'

What impact was identified?

Was the impact identified positive (fulfilling, protecting, promoting, respecting)

Please indicate the positive effect:

The Statement of Community Involvement protects, promotes and respects people right to express their views on planning applications and planning policy documents through public consultation. It does so without discrimination by recognising that people need to engage with the council using different engagement and communication methods.

Was the impact negative (removing, unjustifiably interfering with any human rights)?

If so, please indicate how the strategy / policy will be amended to reduce or eliminate any negative impact

N/A

9. Has there been consultation with relevant community groups to help inform this draft strategy or policy?

If not, please explain why:

The draft Statement of Community Involvement will be subject to public consultation for seven weeks, at which point, those interested in the council's approach to community engagement in the planning process, will have an opportunity to comment on the content of the document.

The communications team will also issue a press release and an online news alert. We will also place a statutory notice in the local newspapers circulating in the district. The results of the consultation will be considered to assess any potential equality impact not currently considered by the council.

If yes, please list who you have consulted:

Do you feel there are any groups that the draft strategy or policy significantly affects who you have not currently consulted? If yes, please contact the shared equality officer for advice (see page 2 for contact details).

10. Has the draft strategy or policy missed opportunities to advance equality of opportunity, positive attitudes and promote respect for human rights?

No

Yes – please outline the plans you have to address the missed opportunities (complete table below)

Action plan for mitigating action or advancing equality of opportunity and promoting respect for human rights

Action	Person responsible	Target completion date
Part 3 – Only accepting comments on planning applications in writing could be an issues for people with disabilities. Consider adding a statement ‘If you would like to comment on an application but are unable to do so in writing because of a disability, please contact us to discuss how we might help’	Ben Davis	Prior to adoption