



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Partial Assessment Form

Policy, practice, function or project assessed	Consideration and determination of planning applications
Lead Officer	David Rush, Emily Ip and Paul Derry
Team	Development Control and Paul Williams
Start date of assessment	25/03/09
Completion of assessment	03/04/09

Please use this form to record your findings in relation to the assessment of an existing policy, function, service or practice.

A. POLICY, PRACTICE, FUNCTION OR PROJECT TO BE ASSESSED

A1. Please describe what are the main aims, objectives, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy or function?

The main aims are the fair determination of planning applications in line with the adopted Local Development Framework, Supplementary Planning Documents and Government Guidance. National targets have to be reached regarding dates for the determination of such applications.

A2. Is this policy or function associated with any other Council policy or priority?

The function links closely with various other sections of the Council, such as Planning Enforcement, Appeals, Local Plans, the Conservation and Registration Teams, as well as more general links such as with the Business Rates Team, Environmental Health etc. It is intrinsically linked to the Council's Corporate Policies on issues such as Values, Customer Service etc.

A3. Who are the intended beneficiaries/stakeholders of the policy or function? How many people are affected and from what sections of the community?

The general public. The decisions made affect everyone. They also have specific impacts on groups such as Parish Council's and the statutory consultees ranging from the Ramblers Association to Residents Associations.

A4. Is the policy/function corporate and far-reaching?

The policy is a Corporate goal, and is overviewed by auditors. Its impacts are considered far-reaching given the financial implications for the Council for reaching targets. There is also potential for decisions to be referred through the Courts or Local Ombudsman.

A5. Are you expecting to make any significant change to the policy or service in the near future? If so, please give details.

The Team is constantly dealing with changes to the system, including the implementation of new Government guidance and legislation, and new adopted documents. The Government is currently in consultation regarding the recent Killian-Pretty review of planning applications. SCDC's functions are also changing such as the implementation of a Duty officer system, which is currently being monitored. Other changes are in the pipeline such as a review of the pre-application protocol and the introduction of pre-application charging.

A6. Is this a new or existing policy or function?

The policy is not new, but is constantly evolving.

B. EVIDENCE/ DATA and CONSULTATION

It is important to consider all information that is available in determining whether the policy or function could have a differential impact. Please attach examples of monitoring information, research or consultation reports.

B1. What monitoring or other information do you have about relevant target groups, which will show the impact of the policy or function?

The Council has various forms of feedback towards the function. The Disability Forum meets every 2 weeks, the Agents' Forum meets every 6 months, as does the Parish Council Forum. Parish Councils are sent Planning Packs to aid their understanding of the system. Also, satisfaction surveys of agents are carried out regarding the planning process.

B2. Have you compared the data you have with the equality profile of the local population? What does it show?

This is not considered relevant given the often lack of information available. It is questioned whether anything would be gained from the results.

B3. Have you identified any improvements or other changes that could be made from monitoring the data?

Monitoring of the processes has led to the establishment of the Parish Council Forum, the Agents' Forum and the Disability Forum. Most important is the constant flow of information and ensuring this is available to members of the public. The website is therefore constantly being updated.

B4. Have you consulted or involved external stakeholders about the policy or function? If so, what were their views?

This relates back to those groups mentioned above in B1. Meetings are minuted and passed to officers. Planning Committee minutes are published on the website, and notes from Chairman's Delegation meetings are held on the application files.

B5. Have you undertaken any consultation with staff to assess their perception of any impacts of the policy or function? If so, what has been learnt from them?

The Planning Team is involved in various meetings across the subject. Staff from the area Teams meet every month, there is a delegation and a surgery meeting every week, a Second Delegation meeting every two weeks and a weekly Improvement Meeting. The idea is to allow the flow of information and ideas/opinions and allow feedback. New ideas can also be discussed such as the new registration team, computer systems or the merger of the area teams. There is also a staff suggestion box for any new ideas.

B6. Please provide information about any other consultation, research, or involvement undertaken in relation to this impact assessment.

Officers can respond where relevant to comments made by any consultee, giving direct communication. A monthly magazine is also produced for all South Cambridgeshire residents.

C1. IMPACT OF THE POLICY OR FUNCTION		
Assess the potential impact on each of the equality strands/groups. The impact could be negative, positive or neutral. If you assess a negative impact for any of the groups then you will need to assess whether that impact is low, medium or high. Refer to the evidence you use.		
DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT	Nature of Impact (Positive, Neutral, Adverse)	Extent of Impact (Low, Medium, High)
GENDER: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on men and women	Neutral	
Gender is not considered relevant to the function of the service. An application can be determined without this information.		
RACE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different race/ethnic groups	Positive/Adverse	Low – may require additional time
The application forms do not ask for this information. However, the forms are only available in English, which may prejudice against non-English speakers. However, the website indicates the ability to get documents in other languages. The Travelling Community will have the benefit of a Supplementary Planning Document identifying potential sites. This is considered a positive.		
DISABILITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on disabled people	Positive/Adverse	Low – may cause time delays
The Council can provide documents in large text, Braille or by audio means if necessary. The Disability Forum is a positive step to achievable accessibility to all.		
AGE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different age groups	Neutral	
Age is not considered relevant to the function of the service		
SEXUAL ORIENTATION: potential impact of the policy on lesbian, gay men, bisexual or heterosexual people	Neutral	
Sexual orientation is not considered relevant to the function of the service.		
RELIGION/FAITH: Identify the potential impact the policy on different religious/faith groups	Neutral	
It is again considered irrelevant. However, there may be specific circumstances whereby a religious group may make an application. This would be judged on its own merits on planning grounds		
OTHER		
Affordable Housing exceptions sites favours people in housing need, and some personal circumstances are material considerations in determining applications.	Positive	

PLEASE NOTE: Following completion of the section above, if the nature of the impact is adverse then you may need to proceed to a full equality impact assessment.

C2. Could you minimise or remove any adverse or potential impact that is high, medium or low significance, in advance of a full impact assessment? Explain how.

The adverse impacts recorded are mainly Corporate concerns rather than planning in particular, and can be referred to the Action Plan

C3. Does the policy or function actively promote equal opportunities and good community relations? Or could changes be made so that it does so?

Development Services promotes public access to information, and has a number of positive actions as described. The subject can be controversial, as it can bring people together, but also can separate them too. However, this is often uncontrollable by the planning system itself.

C4. Please provide any further information, qualitative or quantitative that does not fit into the questions but you feel has a likely impact on this assessment.

The system is constantly evolving over time with new inputs and outputs, and this is important to note

D. CONCLUSIONS			
D1. Was there sufficient data to complete the partial assessment?	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	If “NO”, what arrangements are in place for evidence gathering and continuing with the assessment?
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
D2. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have an adverse impact (medium or high impact) on one or more target group?	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	If “YES”, will you proceed to a full assessment? If so, what arrangements are in place to carry out the full assessment? A full assessment is not considered appropriate given the potential impact is considered low.
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
D3. Is the outcome of the partial assessment that the policy or function would have a neutral or positive impact on equalities?	Yes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	If “YES”, have you included proposals in the Action Plan to further improve the impact of the policy or function on equalities? Yes, see the Plan Do you plan to review the service or policy again in future to assess whether there has been any change? If so, when? The system is always likely to be reviewed due to changing policies and IT systems etc.
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has the Equalities Steering Group and the Consultative Forum reviewed the assessment? If so what were their comments? No, but the assessment will be seen by the Corporate Manager and feedback functions are in place.
D4. Do you have any other conclusions/outcomes from the partial assessment? The contents of the Action plan appear to be Corporate rather than specific to Development Services and the determination of applications.			

ACTION PLAN for enhancing existing practice

Recommendation/ issue to be addressed	Planned Milestone	Planned completion of milestone (date)	Officer Responsible	Progress
The availability of services such as translations/large text/audio	Discussions with the communications team and updates to the website where applicable	01/12/09	Paul Williams	

RESOURCES

Does the above action plan require any additional resources?

No, the proposed Action Plan would require limited staff time, and is also incorporated into Corporate objectives.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING

Please give your plans for monitoring the achievement of the above actions.

The plans will be reviewed by December 2009 to ensure they are accessible to all.

SIGN OFF: The officers below confirm that this partial assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's guidance

Signature of Lead Officer		Date:
Signature of Corporate Manager or Chief Officer:		Date:

Please retain the original form on your service area and return a copy of the completed form to the Equality & Diversity Officer.