



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Partial Assessment Form

Policy, practice, function or project assessed	Empty Homes Strategy 2012-2016
Lead Officer	Julie Fletcher
Team	Housing Strategy & Development
Start date of assessment	27th February 2012
Completion of assessment	

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 Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's plans for bringing the District's empty homes back into use over the next 5 years. The Strategy aims to clearly set out:

- The current situation of empty homes in South Cambridgeshire
- Our work so far to bring empty homes back into use
- Our future priorities for tackling empty homes
- When we do this by and how

By understanding the reasons why properties remain empty within South Cambridgeshire, we will work with owners to encourage and assist them to bring back empty homes into use to help support the housing needs of the District.

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

Yes – The Empty Homes Strategy is a supporting document to the Council's Housing Strategy 2012-2016.

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

There are currently 561 long-term empty homes in South Cambridgeshire as at 1st April 2011. This Strategy is aimed at assisting these owners of empty homes to bring them back into use. Although home owners of empty homes are the main focus, implementation of the Strategy will have benefit to the wider public as a sustainable way of increasing the overall supply of housing and reducing the negative impact that neglected empty homes can have on communities.

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

Yes – bringing empty homes back into use is a National Priority and with the huge demand for housing in the District is one of the key priorities within the Housing Strategy 2012-16. It has an multi-departmental function with both Council Tax, Environmental Health and Planning.

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

The delivery of the Strategy is over a 5 year period and the Action Plan outlines the key actions to be taken forward during the course of the Strategy.

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

There was a previous Empty Homes Strategy but this was very outdated without any ownership/leadership. The new Empty Homes Strategy aims to bring together the key departments within the Council to work together towards reducing the number of empty homes in the district through joint working and progressing the Action Plan.

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 data collated to inform the Empty Homes Strategy focussed on the empty property rather than the owner.

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

N/A

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

In future will look to monitor the protected characteristics of owners of empty homes.

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

To kick-start the development of the Empty Homes Strategy, the completion of a survey from owners of long-term empty homes has helped to inform the direction of this Strategy. Following on from this, those that have indicated a wish to be further consulted have been sent a copy of the draft Strategy for comment. The aim of the survey was to:

- Gain a better understanding of the reasons for homes being empty
- Identify what help and advice owners would find useful
- Evidence a case for new initiatives and working practices

The results of the survey are available on our website at: http://www.scams.gov.uk/documents/retrieve.htm?pk_document=910960

Local Members and parish councils were also invited to comment on the draft Strategy.

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?

Yes, Officers within Housing Strategy, Council Tax, Planning Enforcement and Environmental Health have teamed up to take forward the issue of Empty Homes. We are working closely together to ensure a more joined up approach, through monitoring empty homes, providing advice and assistance to enforcement action.

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

N/A

C1. IMPACT OF THE POLICY OR FUNCTION

Assess the potential impact on each of the following protected characteristics. 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)
AGE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different age groups.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive to people of different age groups, but is not specific to age.	Neutral	
DISABILITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on disabled people.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive to people with disabilities, but is not specific to disability.	Neutral	
GENDER REASSIGNMENT: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on people that have changed gender identity.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive to people who have undergone or are undergoing gender reassignment, but is not specific to gender reassignment.	Neutral	
MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on people who are married or in a civil partnership.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive to people regardless of their marital status, but is not specific to marriage or civil partnerships.	Neutral	
PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on pregnant or maternal mothers and those women who wish to breastfeed.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive to pregnant and maternal mothers, but is not specific to pregnancy or maternity.	Neutral	
RACE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different ethnic groups, including national origins, colour and nationality.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive to different ethnic groups, including national origins, colour and nationality, but is not specific to race.	Neutral	

RELIGION/BELIEF: Identify the potential impact the policy or function on different religious/faith groups.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive and applies to people of all religious/belief groups, but is not specific to religion/belief.	Neutral	
SEX: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on men and women.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive and applies to both men and women, but is not specific to sex.	Neutral	
SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on lesbian, gay men, bisexual or heterosexual people.		
The Empty Homes Strategy is inclusive and applies to lesbian, gay men, bisexual or heterosexual people, but is not specific to sexual orientation.	Neutral	
OTHER CHARACTERISTIC SPECIFIC TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE – RURALITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on people who are rurally isolated.		
There is a real shortage of affordable and privately rented homes in the District and by bringing empty homes back into use this can increase the supply of housing available in our rural villages.	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.

N/A

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

The Empty Homes Strategy does not exclude anyone. It promotes good community relations as deteriorating empty homes can blight a street and can have a direct effect on property values. In 2003 a study carried out by researchers ‘Hometrack’ concluded that empty homes cause neighbouring properties to drop in value by on average 20%

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.

D. CONCLUSIONS			
D1. Was there sufficient data to complete the partial assessment?	Yes?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If “NO”, what arrangements are in place for evidence gathering and continuing with the assessment? Future monitoring to include gathering information on the protected characteristics for owners of empty homes.
	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?
	No?	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>If “YES”, have you included proposals in the Action Plan to further improve the impact of the policy or function on equalities?</p> <p>Do you plan to review the service or policy again in future to assess whether there has been any change? If so, when? The Empty Homes Strategy has a lifespan of 5 years. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually.</p>
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Has the Equalities Steering Group and the Consultative Forum reviewed the assessment? If so what were their comments?</p>

D4. Do you have any other conclusions/outcomes from the partial assessment?

Future monitoring to include gathering information on the protected characteristics for owners of empty homes.

ACTION PLAN for enhancing existing practice

Recommendation/ issue to be addressed	Planned Milestone	Planned completion of milestone (date)	Officer Responsible	Progress
Develop monitoring of protected characteristics for owners of empty homes	Annually	Sept 2012	Julie Fletcher	

RESOURCES

Does the above action plan require any additional resources?

Additional Officer time in collating survey results.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING

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

Action Plan attached to Strategy

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.