



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Partial Assessment Form

Policy, practice, function or project assessed	Statement of Community Involvement
Lead Officer	Claire Spencer
Team	Planning Policy
Start date of assessment	19.8.09
Completion of assessment	26.01.10

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 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out when and how the Council will be consulting on the Local Development Framework (LDF) and describes how to have a say on planning applications being considered by the Council.

The Council has devised a set of guiding principles for the SCI to make sure that the community involvement in the planning process is as effective as possible. These require that the District Council:

- Communicates effectively by making it clear in the information provided what is being proposed and how and when people can get involved
- Ensures that information is accessible to the community regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or disability
- Makes it easy for people to get involved. Helping and supporting groups and individuals with little or no knowledge of the planning process and encouraging involvement from groups that have traditionally not been involved in the planning process.
- Uses appropriate consultation methods in order to maximise involvement
- Makes sure involvement is effective by listening to the community at an early stage in the planning process.
- Ensures that there is effective engagement in the preparation of the planning policies in the Local Development Framework so that there will be less need for engagement on individual planning applications which are in line with the LDF.
- Provides feedback on all responses received and keeps consultees informed of progress made.

The Council is committed to treating everyone fairly and justly, whatever their race or background and wants to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to be involved in the planning process.

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

Council Aim A We are Committed to being a listening council providing first class services accessible to all; Approach 1 Listening to and engaging with our local community; Action 2 preparing and consulting on a Statement of Community Involvement on planning issues.

Other associated policies include:

- Community Engagement Strategy
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Comprehensive Equalities Policies
- Cambridgeshire Compact

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 SCI seeks to ensure that the way the Council undertakes public consultation on planning matters is inclusive, treating everyone fairly and justly, whatever their race or background and ensuring that everyone gets an opportunity to be involved in the planning process. This will allow everyone the opportunity to shape the places where they live and work, contributing to a high quality natural and built environment, and also contributing to a better quality of life.

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

Yes. District wide. One of Council Actions (see A.2 above).

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

The Council already has established processes in place for undertaking public consultation on planning matters. These comply with, and often exceed, the minimum requirements in the Planning Regulations. The Council must make the best use of limited resources. However some amendments have been made to the draft SCI as a result of feedback received during the public consultation. It is the Council's intension to regularly review the SCI to ensure it is setting out the best methods of involving the community in planning matters. There are unlikely to be significant changes proposed.

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

The SCI is a new document, but it sets out established processes.

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?

When undertaking public consultation on LDF documents, the Council includes an Equalities Monitoring Form on the back of the Response Form. Completion of the Equalities Monitoring Form is voluntary and will remain anonymous. The information will be passed to the Equalities Officer and will enable the Council to monitor whether a consultation has reached the community effectively. The Council has confirmed the importance of this monitoring by including the use of this form in the adopted SCI

Also in the adopted SCI there is a section relating to the review and monitoring of the implementation of the SCI, which will enable the Council to consider the success of the SCI. The data that will be monitored is as follows –

- Data collected from customer satisfaction research being carried out by the Council on its planning applications service
- Equalities monitoring form data collected from consultation response forms by Equalities and Diversity Officer (as highlighted above)
- Use data collected from additional question on consultation response forms about how respondent had heard of consultation and their preferred method for future consultations

The data collected will be published in the Annual Monitoring Report which the Council publishes each year. If this indicates that there are problems arising with the existing methods of consultation or improvements could be made to the way the Council involves the community and stakeholders in consultations on planning matters then changes may need to be made to the SCI. The monitoring could highlight where target groups are not being reached and changes would be needed to the methods in the SCI. There will need to be a review of the SCI and the timescale of this set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

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

The addition of the Equalities Monitoring Form on Response Forms is recent. In future the Equality and Diversity Officer will be able to monitor whether a consultation has reached the community effectively (see Action Plan).

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

Ongoing (see Action Plan).

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

The draft SCI was subject to six-weeks public consultation with a range of external stakeholders from October to December 2009. A public notice was placed in the Cambridge News at the start of the public consultation. A number of stakeholders were sent a letter and CD-Rom containing the public participation documents, and forms for making comments. The document was available to view and / or download from the Council's website: www.scambs.gov.uk/ldf, and a link was included from the home page. An interactive online version of the document was also available to enable people to make comments online during the consultation period, as well as Word and PDF versions of a response form that could be completed and emailed / posted to the Council. South Cambs Magazine, which is delivered to every household in the district, also included information on the consultation. Printed copies of the document were also available to view or purchase at the Council's offices.

During the consultation 21 respondents made 85 representations relating to the SCI, of which 4 were in support, 4 objections and 77 were comments. A detailed schedule of these representations was provided as an appendix to the adoption report for the SCI that went to the Planning and New Communities Joint Portfolio Holders Meeting on 26 January 2010. This provides a summary of each representation received in plan order together with any suggested change to the text of the SCI, the Council's assessment of them and, where appropriate, proposed amendments to the text of the draft SCI. The link to this report is as follows:

[http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/Published/C00000872/M00004839/AI00034810/\\$Appendix2Responses.doc.pdf](http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/Published/C00000872/M00004839/AI00034810/$Appendix2Responses.doc.pdf)

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, there has been internal consultation with staff in Development Control, New Communities, Communications, and with the Partnerships Officer and the Equality and Diversity Officer.

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

See B4 above.

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	Positive	
RACE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different race/ethnic groups	Positive	
DISABILITY: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on disabled people	Positive	
AGE: Identify the potential impact of the policy or function on different age groups	Positive	
SEXUAL ORIENTATION: potential impact of the policy on lesbian, gay men, bisexual or heterosexual people	Positive	
RELIGION/FAITH: Identify the potential impact the policy on different religious/faith groups	Positive	
OTHER		

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 SCI is considered to have a positive impact on all equality strands / groups as it seeks to ensure that the way the Council undertakes public consultation on planning matters is inclusive, treating everyone fairly and justly, whatever their race or background and ensuring that everyone gets an opportunity to be involved in the planning process.

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 SCI seeks to ensure that the way the Council undertakes public consultation on planning matters is inclusive, treating everyone fairly and justly, whatever their race or background and ensuring that everyone gets an opportunity to be involved in the planning process. At the present time it is not known whether this is achieved and any monitoring, for example, through the Equalities Monitoring Form, will be voluntary. Therefore, unless the Council receives feedback that individuals or groups are having difficulties the Council will not know if individuals or groups are not being reached. However, where the Council is contacted every endeavour is made to address their needs and the Council will take this on board when undertaking future consultations. The SCI will be monitored each year and indicators have been included in the document that will specifically look at the equality issues. (See section B1 for details)

One issue that has come to light is the lack of accessibility for people to access a paper copy of consultation documents, for people not wanting to rely on the internet, as they are only available to view at the Council's offices. Paper copies are available to purchase but at cost price which could be seen as not encouraging members of the public to participate in a consultation when they may only be interested in part of a document's contents. A number of representations were received during the consultation on the draft SCI relating to this issue. The Council has confirmed its commitment to making paper copies more widely available by stating in the adopted SCI that if a specific request is made the Council will provide paper copies to Parish Councils and to local libraries. Additionally the Council has now stated in the SCI that if a parish does not have a parish office or convenient local library then the Council will provide a paper copy for the Parish Clerk who can then make it available to the local community. It is hoped that these commitments will make paper copies more widely available to the residents of South Cambs particularly those that do not have easy access to the internet. As part of the consultation the City Council has offered to provide an additional access point for paper copies of documents and therefore in future additional copies will be made available for inspection at the City Council's Service Centre in Mandela House in Cambridge.

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?
	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"/>	If “YES”, have you included proposals in the Action Plan to further improve the impact of the policy or function on equalities? Yes. Do you plan to review the service or policy again in future to assess whether there has been any change? If so, when?
	No?	<input type="checkbox"/>	No. Has the Equalities Steering Group and the Consultative Forum reviewed the assessment? If so what were their comments? Yes

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

ACTION PLAN for enhancing existing practice

Recommendation/ issue to be addressed	Planned Milestone	Planned completion of milestone (date)	Officer Responsible	Progress
Monitoring of completed Equalities Monitoring Forms received through LDF consultations to understand whether consultations are reaching all sectors of the community.		Ongoing	Paul Williams	
Accessibility of local residents to view paper copies of LDF documents.	This issue is addressed in the adopted SCI with additional commitments by the Council to make more widely available paper copies of future consultation documents.	Completed in adopted SCI	Planning Policy Manager	Completed

RESOURCES

Does the above action plan require any additional resources?

Paper versions of the LDF documents are currently only available to view at the Council's offices in Cambourne. However as a result of the consultation on the draft SCI the City Council has offered to be an additional deposit point for consultation documents. South Cambs has welcomed this offer and in future consultations additional paper copies of documents will be available to the community in the City Council's Service Centre in Mandela House, Cambridge.

The Council has reaffirmed its commitment in the adopted SCI to, if requested, making additional copies available of consultation documents through Parish Councils and local libraries. This will require additional resources for printing and posting.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING

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

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SIGN OFF: The officers below confirm that this partial assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's guidance		
Signature of Lead Officer	Claire Spencer	Date: 28.1.10
Signature of Corporate Manager or Chief Officer:	Gareth Jones	Date: 1.2.10

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