

South Cambridgeshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Introduction – Please read

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) allow the Council to:

- Show that the Council are meeting its legal duty, demonstrating due regard for the provisions of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) as below:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Methodically consider and assess the impacts of proposals across the [nine protected characteristics](#)
- Allow the Council to develop and implement high quality proposals that maximise positive outcomes for all.

EqIAs should be completed during the development and review of all Council policies, strategies, procedures, projects or functions. Where there is any doubt, the completion of an EqIA is always recommended.

When the form is completed, please send an electronic copy to equality.schemes@scambs.gov.uk. Further support and guidance, [including a video on how to fill out EqIAs](#), is available on Insite or you can contact the Policy and Performance Team.

Equality Impact Assessment Complete Form

Section 1: Identifying Details

- 1.1 Officer completing EqIA:
Kevin Ledger and Clare Gibbons
- 1.2 Team and Service:
Policy and Performance (Kevin), Communities (Clare)
- 1.3 Title of proposal:
Northstowe Faith and Community Land Evaluation and Assessment Process
- 1.4 EqIA start date:
27/01/2026
- 1.5 Proposal implementation date:
05/02/2026
- 1.6 Who will be responsible for implementing this proposal (Officer and/or Team):
Clare Gibbons – Growth Manager, Communities

Section 2: Proposal to be Assessed

- 2.1 Type of proposal:
Other - Please specify
If other, please specify
Evaluation and assessment of applications for Northstowe faith land. This EqIA is supplementary to the EqIA carried out in relation to the 2020 Faith / Community Land Allocation Policy for Northstowe)
- 2.2 Is the proposal:
New
- 2.3 State the date of any previous equality impact assessment completed in relation to this proposal (if applicable):

31/03/2020

- 2.4 What are the headline aims of the proposal and the objectives that will help to accomplish these aims? (Max 250 words)

To undertake a fair evaluation and assessment process relating to Northstowe Faith and Community land applications, resulting in the selection of the group(s) to which land secured through s106 agreements may be awarded to a group to develop and subsequent benefit to the local community.

- 2.5 Which of the Council's equality objectives (as detailed in the Council's Equality Scheme) does this proposal link to or help to achieve?

Identify, prioritise and deliver actions that will narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community

SCDC is an employer that values difference and recognises the strength that a diverse workforce brings.

Protected characteristic groups have a voice and are represented in forming the future shape of the district.

None.

- 2.6 Which groups or individuals will the proposal affect:

Service Users

Councillors

External Stakeholders

Other

Employees

If other, please specify External stakeholders include the general population of Northstowe (approximately 28,000 people once fully built out), plus those from surrounding settlements that look to Northstowe as a potential site for employment, service centre and place of worship as an expression of their person faith. It also includes faith and community interest groups who have ambitions to establish in Northstowe.

- 2.7 Broadly speaking, how will these groups or individuals be affected? (you will be asked to provide more detail on the specific impacts on different protected characteristic groups later in the form) (max 250 words)

The choice of group selected may impact on the sense of inclusion felt by members of the community.

SCDC staff will be impacted in that they are responsible for implementing the process, and the assessment panel will be made up, in part by SCDC staff.

The assessment panel will be selected on the basis of their ability to make a judgement with respect to the assessment criteria alone, based on relevant experience.

Councillors will be impacted as representatives and members of the local community.

- 2.8 If any part of the proposal is being undertaken by external partners, please specify how the Council will ensure that they will meet equality standards? (Max 250 words)

It is proposed that the assessment panel will be made up of two non-SCDC staff members. One of these individuals is a member of staff at Cambridgeshire County Council, and as such must uphold the seven principles of public life and contribute to the meeting of obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty in the same way as SCDC staff and panel members. The second external panel member is a highly experienced representative of the third sector in Cambridgeshire. All members of the panel will be required to make a declaration of interest in the allocation of the Northstowe Faith land, and the panel and assessment process will be run strictly in accordance with an assessment process that has been designed to assess and score submissions against a matrix, agreed as part of the 2020 Cabinet decision to approve the Faith Land Allocation for Northstowe and which has been publicised extensively since. This panel and assessment approach has been designed to align with the Council's well established, fair and transparent procurement assessment approaches.

Section 3: Evidence and Data

- 3.1 Describe any work you have done (this could include consultation) to understand any effects on groups of people, including those within [9 protected characteristic groups?](#) Please list any key sources (e.g. web-search, previous versions of document, customer feedback etc) that you used to reach your conclusions.

(Max 250 words)

Please see original March 2020 EqIA for details of research and data that contributed to the development and approval of the Faith / Community Land Allocation Policy for Northstowe. Since this time, extensive additional engagement has taken place with the Northstowe community including faith and community groups. The 2021 census has also provided an update in relation to the religious makeup of Northstowe as follows: Christian – 982, Muslim – 114, Hindu – 115, Sikh – 4, Buddhist – 14, Jewish – 1, Other religion – 19, no religion – 1,238. However it is recognised that these figures may have since changed as Northstowe, as a new settlement, is experiencing rapid growth.

- 3.2 If you have not undertaken any consultation, please detail why not, or when consultation is planned to take place.

(Max 250)

An engagement exercise is being undertaken inviting local comment on the submissions. Responses to this engagement will inform part (5%) of the criteria for the assessment of applications. This will be in terms of evidence of public support for the proposal.

Section 4: Impact of proposal on those with protected characteristics

4.1 Please select all characteristics that may or will be impacted (positive or negative). When providing details of the impact please consider the following questions

- whether each impact is positive, neutral or negative
- whether it is a high, medium or low impact. (both the number of persons affected and the severity of the impact)
- you will be asked to set out actions to manage these impacts in the following question (4.2)

All - general to all protected Characteristics.

Details: It is important for general community that the faith land allocation assessment process is both undertaken and seen to be undertaken in a fair, transparent and inclusive manner, and that the outcome provides significant benefit to residents and the developing town of Northstowe (and its surrounds). To ensure this transparency, the scoring matrix that was agreed as part of the original 2020 Faith Land policy decision has been made available to all groups through our webpage, which holds supporting information about the process. This can be found at [Faith and Community Land - South Cambs District Council](#). Reference was also made to this at Northstowe Community Forum presentations in May and September 2024 and December 2025. It was also referenced in a press release on 6 January 2026, including direct link to the scoring matrix ([South Cambs District Council: Reminder to faith and community groups as end of Northstowe bidding window nears](#)). It is also worth noting that submitting groups were asked to demonstrate their commitment to equality by providing and Equal Opportunities policy as part of the submission process.

Age

Details: Click or tap here to enter text.



Disability

Details: Any space that is obtained and provided through this policy for community uses must be constructed to current accessibility standards.

Gender reassignment

Details: Click or tap here to enter text.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Details: Some faith groups discourage or do not permit re-marriage, some do not support or permit same-sex relationships or marriage. These stances on marriage are not up for negotiation with faith groups – the process does not exclude such groups but seeks to ensure that for shared community space (as opposed to dedicated worship space) the religious group managing the space cannot discriminate against any person on the grounds of their marital or civil partnership status. The choice of faith group successful through the land allocation process may have an impact on the choices of the population locally to select a venue that corresponds to their own requirements for marriage or civil ceremony.

Pregnancy and maternity

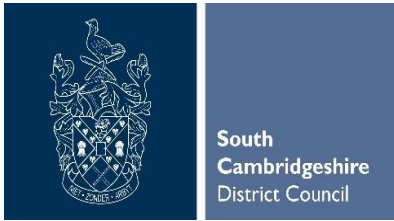
Details: Click or tap here to enter text.

Race

Details: Issues of race and ethnicity are brought in when the allocation of faith land is considered, as alignment with a particular religious conviction can strongly correlate with ethnic background. The degree to which a particular faith group draws from a diverse ethnicity or racial background will vary significantly between faith groups. It would be incorrect to make a decision based on the racial/ethnic make up of the congregation. However, it is legitimate to assess the community outreach the group intends to offer as to whether it is likely to be inclusive or exclusive in terms of race and the likely ethnicity of users of any general community space.

Religion and belief

Details: The assessment of submissions for faith land will affect all those faith groups and community interest groups who submitted bids as part of this process. The choice of group selected may impact on the sense of inclusion felt by members of



the Northstowe community – i.e. whether the presence and activity of a particular group could be perceived as restricting their freedoms or diminishing their value as members of society. It is therefore important that the assessment process is both undertaken and seen to be undertaken in a fair, transparent and inclusive manner. As part of the assessment process it is worth acknowledging that that faith/community groups who legitimately claim freedom of worship and expression may espouse views that other members of the community may not agree with. These stances are not up for negotiation with faith groups and assessment process will not exclude or make judgements on such groups based on these factors. It will however seek to ensure that for shared community space (as opposed to dedicated worship space), the religious group managing the space cannot discriminate against any person on the grounds of their protected characteristics.

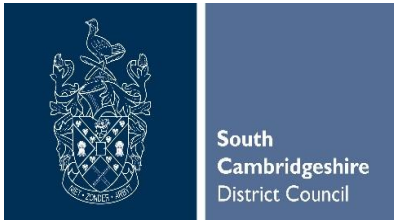
Sex

Details: The role of women within and circumscribed by religion can be a hotly debated topic and is simultaneously upheld both as an example of female agency or subjugation according to which side of the debate is taken. Again, the assessment process does not seek to prescribe what is acceptable in terms of religious conviction. It will however seek to ensure that for shared community space (as opposed to dedicated worship space), the religious group managing the space cannot discriminate against any person on the grounds of sex.

Sexual orientation

Details Again this process does not seek to exclude faith groups on the basis of their religious conviction regarding sexual orientation. It will however seek to ensure that for shared community space the group abides by UK legislation with respect to this protected characteristic in the same way as any other and it would be legitimate to assess a group's application based on their commitment to ensuring that any such religious conviction would not result in exclusion of any person from using shared community space.

None of the above



4.2 Other characteristics

Some characteristics are not yet protected in law, but the Council has made declarations it will consider them in policy making.

Digital inclusion ([what is this?](#))

Details: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Care experience ([what is this?](#))

Details: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Rurality

Details [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Socio-economic

Details [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

4.3 Considering the above impacts you have identified above, please detail any actions (specific or general) which may help to enhance or mitigate impacts.

Please include the timescale for completing the action.

| Action and timescale | Officer |
|--|----------------------|
| <p>The evaluation and assessment panel will be made up of a range of experienced SCDC officers with different areas of expertise of relevance to the decision making process. This includes finance, procurement, commercial development, grants assessment, urban design and community development. It will also be made up of representatives of Cambridgeshire County Council and the Community Sector.</p> | <p>Clare Gibbons</p> |
| <p>All members of the panel will be required to declare any specific interests in the allocation of the Northstowe Faith land. The declaration of such an interest, which cannot be successfully mitigated, would disqualify from participation in the panel.</p> | <p>Clare Gibbons</p> |



| | |
|---|---------------|
| The panel and assessment process will be run strictly in accordance with a selection process that has been designed to align with the Council's well established, fair and transparent procurement assessment approaches. This will include a moderation process to be chaired by the Council's Head of Climate, Environment and Waste. | Clare Gibbons |
| All SCDC members of staff participating in the panel will be required to have completed mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training prior to participation in the assessment exercise. | Clare Gibbons |

4.4 How will you monitor that the above actions have been completed and that this proposal, once implemented, is impacting fairly on everyone it affects? In answering this question, please include information about feedback you will seek and/or data you will collect and analyse, and how often you will do this

The completion of the above actions will be confirmed by the responsible officers listed above. Following the assessment process and decision, scores and rankings will be made available to all applicants. Further feedback on the breakdown of scoring will be made available to applicants on request and there will be a window for appeals to challenge the decision taken by Cabinet.

As part of the bid submissions, groups have been asked to outline their proposed milestones towards delivery. The award of the land will be subject to adhering to those milestone with the potential for the leasehold agreement to be withdrawn if the view is reached that their milestones will not be achieved.

Section 5: Summary

5.1 Briefly summarise the key findings of the EqIA and any significant equality considerations that should be taken into account when deciding how to

proceed with the proposal (this section can be included within the 'equality implications' section of any committee reports). (Max. 250 words)

The Equality Impact Assessment identifies several important sensitivities associated with the assessment and selection of a group to receive the Northstowe faith and community land. These relate particularly to the potential for perceptions of exclusion, unequal treatment, or diminished inclusion among members of the community, given the interaction between faith identity, protected characteristics, and how community spaces are experienced.

The assessment confirms that while different faith or community groups may hold doctrinal positions that intersect with protected characteristics, the Council's role is not to assess or judge those beliefs, but to ensure that any group managing shared community space complies with equality legislation and cannot lawfully discriminate. The EqIA also highlights that perceptions of fairness - particularly around religion and belief, race, sex, sexual orientation, and marital or civil partnership status - are central to maintaining confidence in the process. However, the EqIA demonstrates that these risks can be effectively mitigated through a robust, transparent and procedurally consistent approach.

The planned actions - including a panel with diverse expertise, clear declarations of interest, mandatory EDI training, and use of the Council's established fair procurement-style assessment methods - provide assurance that the process will be delivered in an equitable and inclusive manner. Overall, the assessment concludes that the proposal can proceed, with the identified mitigations ensuring that the process is fair, legally compliant, and capable of securing an outcome that provides the greatest benefit to the Northstowe community.

5.2 Confirm the recommendation of the officer completing the EqIA:

Proceed with the proposal (with any actions identified as required within Section 4 of the EqIA). Analysis demonstrates that the proposal is robust, we have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups.

Reject the proposal: Analysis demonstrates that the proposal will cause unlawful discrimination and it must be removed or changed

Section 6: Sign Off

6.1 Signature of individual completing EqIA:

Kevin Ledger and Clare Gibbons

6.2 Date of completion:

28/01/2026

6.3 When will this proposal next be reviewed and who will this be? (when in doubt 3 years minimum)

NA – this is a temporary piece of work

6.4 Approving officer signature *, this should be your Head of Service, Service Area Manager, or Project Sponsor:

Gareth Bell

6.5 Date of approval:

29/01/2026

Please send the completed document to Equality.Schemes@scambs.gov.uk for publishing on the website.

**in the event that this EqIA is completed by Head of Service, then no additional approving signature is required.*