

Equality Impact Assessment Screening Opinion

Draft Statement of Community Involvement

October 2020



Introduction

1. It is the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to undertake an Equality Impact Analysis at the time of formulating a decision, drafting a report, designing or amending a policy. This will ensure that the Council is considering and taking positive action where possible to promote access to services for all their communities, including their wider communities. The Equality Impact Assessment Screening Assessment will assess whether there is any impact upon any of the groups with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, which are listed in the table below. If an adverse impact upon any of these groups is identified then a full Equalities Impact Assessment will be required.
2. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the measures and actions East Suffolk Council will take to consult and engage with the community during the preparation of planning policy documents, such as Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents, and when determining planning applications. These measures need to be as accessible as possible to ensure all groups and individual in the community have equal opportunities to participate in line with the Public Sector Equalities Duty.
3. In relation to planning policy documents, the Statement of Community Involvement sets out measures that the Council will take including initial engagement through workshops and exhibitions as well as the provision of draft documents online and physically in select locations. The document also outlines the Council's aim to utilise up-to-date methods of engagement such as social media, which will assist with engaging with a variety of groups in the community.
4. The document also outlines how the Council will engage during the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and the actions that will be taken during the statutory stages of their production. Neighbourhood Plans are primarily the responsibility of local community groups and Parish Councils, however East Suffolk Council has the responsibility of running statutory stages such as the Examination and Referendum.
5. The document also outlines the processes the Council will follow to engage with the community during the determination of planning applications. This includes the Councils encouraging the use of its pre-application service which makes the planning application process more efficient.
6. Circumstances may arise which make it impossible to undertake all of the consultation and public engagement activities specified in the Statement of Community Involvement. For

example, during the Covid-19 pandemic it has not been possible to safely undertake public exhibitions, workshops or public meetings due to the need to adhere to social distancing. It is important that the Statement of Community Involvement contains flexibility that enables the Council to respond to such circumstances and the Statement of Community Involvement sets out the steps the Council will take in such circumstances. The SCI states that: ‘The Council will always ensure that any consultations and documents are accessible to as many people as possible whilst also ensuring that the measures used to do this are safe.’

7. During such periods, the Council will seek to utilise alternative means of public access and engagement, which could include the use of online consultation material and virtual meetings. Where the Council deviates from the consultation requirements set out in the Statement of Community Involvement these changes will be clearly stated in publicity material, including an explanation as to why they were necessary as well as any mitigation measures used.
8. The Equality Act 2010 lists nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. East Suffolk Council has added a tenth characteristic, socio-economic deprivation, in addition to the nine protected characteristics listed in the legislation. This reflects the pockets of deprivation that exist across East Suffolk.

Screening of impact on different groups

	Groups	Likely Impact (positive/negative/no impact)	Reason for your decision
A	Age (Includes safeguarding issues)	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. This includes accommodating and proactively engaging different age groups through the use of various outlets such as using social media and also

			making documents available in paper form.
B	Disability	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. This will include making consultations and events accessible to everyone, including those with physical or psychological disabilities, through the use of accessible venues and online resources.
C	Gender reassignment	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. The document specifically states that no person of any gender will be prevented or discouraged from participating and that a variety of groups should be involved.
D	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. The document states that the Council will engage with a variety of groups regardless of any specific characteristic. This includes the marital status of individuals and groups.
E	Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the

			Council publishes. This includes making documents and events accessible to everyone through the use of easily accessible venues and online resources.
F	Race	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. The document specifically states that no person of any race or ethnicity will be prevented or discouraged from participating and that a variety of groups should be involved.
G	Religion or Belief	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. The document specifically states that no person of any religion will be prevented or discouraged from participating and that a variety of groups should be involved.
H	Sex	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. The document specifically states that no person of any gender will be prevented or discouraged from participating and that a variety of groups should be involved.
I	Sexual orientation	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to

			ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. The document specifically states that no person of any sexual orientation will be prevented or discouraged from participating and that a variety of groups should be involved.
J	Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	The Statement of Community Involvement has been created to ensure that all groups have equal access to any consultations the Council publishes. This includes groups who are experiencing economic deprivation, which also causes social deprivation as well. The range of measures detailed in the SCI, including making documents available online and sending hard copies of consultation materials to those who request them, will ensure that those who are experiencing socio-economic problems will still be able to access consultation materials and will not be disadvantaged.

Consultation and Engagement

There has been engagement with the following during the production of the Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Policy and Delivery Team, Development Management Team, Major Sites and Infrastructure Team and Planning Support Team.

Engagement took the form of face to face meetings with members from the various teams to outline the purpose and aims of the Statement of Community Involvement. Further discussions were held by email and draft documents were also circulated for comments. These comments were then considered and changes were made where appropriate.

The Council will publish the Statement of Community Involvement for public consultation for a period of six weeks. During this consultation the Council will also contact all organisations and individuals, including all town and parish councils and elected members, seeking their views.

In view of the current Covid-19 social distancing measures, the Council has set out measures to enable safe participation in the consultation and to ensure that those who wish to engage in the consultation are not disadvantaged. The Council would normally make hard copies of consultation documents available to view in libraries and in the Council's offices for those who are unable to view them online, however as this is not possible to do this at this time the Council has put alternative measures in place. For those unable to view the consultation documents online, hard copies are being made available on request (free of charge) by post. In view of these measures the Council does not consider that this consultation will disadvantage any of the groups covered by this EQIA screening exercise.

Presentation in different languages

The document will be published on the Council's website as part of a minimum six-week period of formal consultation. When the document is requested in another language the Customer Services Team will be involved with ensuring this request is actioned.

Proposed changes

The Council will analyse responses received during the public consultation and will make any necessary changes as a result of comments received.

Conclusion

No negative impact on any group with protected characteristics or experiencing socio-economic deprivation was identified and therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.