

Colchester Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment Form - An Analysis of the Effects on Equality

Section 1: Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy to be assessed:

Statement of Community Involvement (<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/13324/Statement-of-Community-Involvement-SCI>)

1. What is the main purpose of the policy?

To outline how the Council will consult and engage with the community and all stakeholders during the preparation of the Local Plan and during the determination of planning applications. The main objectives of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) are to:

- (a) show how the Council aims to strengthen community involvement in the planning process;
- (b) make sure that the local community and stakeholders know when and how they can get involved in the production of the Local Plan and major planning applications;
- (c) improve the quality of our community involvement by involving as many sectors of the local community as possible while recognising their different consultation needs;
- (d) show that there are sufficient resources to fund our community involvement;
- (e) show how community involvement in planning will, where possible, be joined up with other community involvement initiatives;
- and
- (f) explain the consultation process of the SCI and how it will be monitored and reviewed in the future.

2. What main areas or activities does it cover?

The SCI covers the following key sections:

- Social Inclusion;
- Stages of Community Involvement in the Local Plan;
- Community Involvement in Planning Applications;
- Stakeholder Involvement;
- The Role of Councillors;

- Consultation Feedback;
- Our Resources;
- Monitoring and review of the SCI;

The appendices include a list of relevant consultation organisations, potential methods of community involvement, a glossary, details on where to find further information and a table setting out how effective consultation should be structured.

3. Are there changes to an existing policy being considered in this assessment? If so what are they?

No changes are being considered.

4. Who are the main audience, users or customers who will be affected by the policy?

- Residents;
- Community, voluntary and specialist groups;
- Businesses, developers & agents;
- Statutory consultation organisations & government departments;
- Parish and Town Councillors;
- Surrounding District and Parish Councils.

5. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy?

- Strengthen community involvement in the planning process;
- Local community and stakeholders know when and how they can get involved;
- High quality of community involvement involving as many sectors of the local community as possible;
- Recognising different consultation needs;
- Best use of resources for community involvement;
- Join up planning consultations with other community involvement initiatives where possible.

6. Are other service areas or partner agencies involved in delivery? If so, please give details below:

The SCI relates to consultation on both the Local Plan and on Planning Applications. Delivery therefore involves both Commercial Services and also Professional Services. Other departments or partners such as Essex County Council can also be involved in the preparation of planning policy guidance and/or planning applications and may therefore also be involved in delivery. Other departments

or partners may also be involved whenever opportunities for joint consultations on planning documents arise. The arrangements for consultation procedures contained in the SCI impact upon many other departments, partners and consultees.

7. Are you aware of any relevant information, data, surveys or consultations¹ which help us to assess the likely or actual impact of the policy upon customers or staff?

Colchester Borough Council's first SCI was adopted in 2006, with various amendments and revisions published in line with relevant legislation in 2008 and 2011. Following the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework and further revisions to legislation surrounding Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and the Community Infrastructure Levy the Council has adopted a further revision to this document. Following a period of public consultation in January and February 2013, the Council formally adopted the 2013 update to the SCI at the Local Plan Committee meeting on 11th March 2013.

During consultations and community engagement activities we will seek to measure the demographic indicators of all those involved. We will be looking to monitor age, gender, ethnicity, disability and geographic location. We will then compare it to the basic demographics of the local area. By doing this we may be able to gain an insight into where information is or isn't getting through to and certain groups in the community that may require further assistance to be involved. We continue to ensure that hard to reach groups are included on the Council's consultation database and that they are able to get involved in our consultations and engagement exercises.

<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/13325/Statement-of-Community-Involvement---Adopted-March-2013>

8. The 'general duty' states that we must have "due regard" to the need to:

- (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic'² and those who do not;³
- (c) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.⁴

¹Click on [surveys or consultations](#) for more information. The Council's surveys and consultations include 'equality monitoring information' to help us identify any particular concerns or views expressed by any particular group or 'protected characteristic'. It can also help us to assess how representative of our customers the respondent group is. Local Data on the Protected Characteristics is available [on this page](#) of the Hub.

²The Equality Act's 'protected characteristics' include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but not for all aspects of the duty.

³This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to: (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it, and (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The SCI seeks to promote equality of representation amongst the stakeholders of the Borough throughout the plan-making process and planning application process. In doing so it fosters good relations between our stakeholders including those who have ‘protected characteristics’ and those who do not. The SCI attempts to engage with all people with an interest in the Borough to ensure that planning policies meet the needs of all people, including those with specific needs.

9. This section helps us to identify any disproportionate impacts. Please indicate in the table below whether the policy is likely to particularly benefit or disadvantage any of the ‘protected characteristics’.

‘Protected characteristic’ group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Age	Older people (60+)	X	The SCI outlines a range of consultation methods to suit all potential respondents including those regarded as being hard to reach.		
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	X			
Disability	Physical	X			
	Sensory	X			
	Learning	X			
	Mental health issues	X			
	Other – <i>specify</i>	X			
Ethnicity ⁵	White	X			
	Black	X			
	Chinese	X			
	Mixed Ethnic Origin	X			
	Gypsies/ Travellers	X			
	Other – <i>please state</i>	X			
Language	English not first language	X			
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	X			
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)	X			

⁴ This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

⁵ National Census 2011 categories are: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian (Asian or Asian British), African, Caribbean, Other Black (Black or Black British), White and Black African, White and Asian, White and Black Caribbean (Mixed), British, Irish, Other White (White), Chinese, Other (Other Ethnic Group).

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could particularly benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could particularly disadvantage the group
Sex	Men	X	The SCI outlines a range of consultation methods to suit all potential respondents including those regarded as being hard to reach.		
	Women	X			
Gender Reassignment ⁶	Transgender/ Transsexual	X			
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual, Heterosexual, Gay or Lesbian	X			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership	X			

10. If you have identified any negative impacts (above) how can they be minimised or removed?

N/A.

11. Could the policy discriminate⁷ against any 'protected characteristic', either directly or indirectly⁸?

No.

⁶ The protected characteristic of gender reassignment is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as “a person proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.” This is a personal process that may involve medical interventions such as counselling, psychotherapy, hormone therapy or surgery, but does not have to. NB: It is generally held that transgender people disguise their features or clothing to resemble their preferred sex, whereas transsexual people wish to change their body to completely resemble their preferred sex.

⁷ The Council has a general duty to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'. Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their 'protected characteristic' whether on grounds of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity; religion or belief; sex (gender), sexual orientation, or marriage and civil partnership. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision or practice would nevertheless disadvantage people on the grounds of their 'protected characteristic'.

⁸ If you answer 'yes' to question 11 (above) you will need to complete this section *and* go on to complete Section 2 in order to conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Summary and findings of Initial Equality Impact Assessment

12. Please put a tick in the relevant box to confirm your findings, and what the next step is:

Findings	Action required
No negative impacts have been identified X	Sign off screening and finish.
Negative impacts have been identified but have been minimised or removed <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and finish.
Negative impacts could not be minimised or removed <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.
There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement. <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.

13. Name and job title of person completing this form:

Christopher Downes, Planning Policy Officer

14. Date of completion:

March 2015

15. Date for update or review of this screening:

March 2018