

### **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Initial impact assessment**

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

#### **EqIA Titular information:**

Date:	7 January 2020
Service:	Strategy and Commissioning (Place)
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	Local Plan Update (LPU): Draft Plan Consultation
Completed by:	Ben Davis (Growth and Delivery Specialist)
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	Yes
Signed off by:	Nigel Bailey
Sign off date:	07/01/2019

17

#### **1. Policy, Project or service information:**

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

<b>What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change , its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:</b>
--

The purpose of the consultation is to seek views on the Local Plan Update (LPU): Draft Plan, the document that will guide how development will be managed. The Draft Plan includes proposed site allocations. Other supporting documentation including the draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and draft Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) amongst other technical studies also form part of the consultation. The Draft LPU comprises:
--

- Vision and objectives for the plan period 2018-2036

- Strategic matters (including sustainable development and locational principles, sites to be allocated for development to help meet needs (housing and economic development), infrastructure (including identifying areas of land to be safeguarded for strategic highway schemes) and responding to climate change)
- Policies to assist the council when making decisions on planning applications, covering topics such as:
  - Development in the Green Belt and countryside
  - Design
  - Protection of existing housing stock, specialist housing for older people and vulnerable people, rural exception sites, housing mix, criteria for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites and criteria for houseboat dwellers
  - Change of use within retail areas, and protection of community services and facilities (including a new policy to protect green areas important to the local community)
  - Heritage
  - Natural Environment (including biodiversity and nature conservation, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, valued landscapes and green and blue corridors)
  - Pollution (air quality, noise, water and light) and hazards, land potentially affected by contamination, flood risk and drainage
  - Transport, movement and connectivity

Public consultation on the Draft Plan LPU is planned to start no later than 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 and end 20 March 2020. The report to Executive seeks the agreement of the Draft Plan for consultation, agree delegation of minor changes and updates the programme moving forwards.

Public consultation on the draft plan is a legal requirement under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2017. The consultation will be undertaken in line with the principles set out in the council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and all relevant legislation and regulations governing that process. The draft plan will also be supported by a detailed Communications, Engagement and Marketing Plan setting out when and how consultation on the Draft Plan will take place and who will be consulted. The Communications, Engagement and Marketing Plan will set out the overall programme for the consultation period, including details of public consultation events (to be held at Grazeley, Wokingham and Woodley) and other engagement activities with stakeholders, local communities, town and parish councils and hard to reach groups. The plan also sets out the methods for communication and engagement on the draft plan for the consultation, including a social media campaign, press and news releases and website updates.

**Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members ect) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:**

The consultation framework for the Draft Plan will be undertaken in accordance with the council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement for planning policy consultations. A summary of the proposed wider public consultation is set out in the previous section of this EqIA but in addition our consultation will involve seeking feedback from a range of interested organisations and other parties (including general and specific consultation bodies specified in the Regulations) as well as councillors and officers.

Members (including the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement and Leader of the Opposition) have been engaged during the preparation of the draft plan through the cross party Planning and Transport Policy Member Working Group. Other internal stakeholders have been engaged on a general or specific basis throughout the preparation of this consultation draft including Corporate Leadership Team and lead specialists from across the Council.

**Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?**

The Draft Plan has been produced by the Strategy and Commissioning (Place) team, with the input of internal officers, communities and stakeholders through previous stages of consultation (Issues and Options; Homes for the Future). In the longer term and once adopted, all residents of the borough will benefit from having a new local plan, ensuring that planning policy remains and effective in managing decisions by the council. This provides greater certainty on the future delivery of development across the borough, including new housing, infrastructure, jobs and services and facilities.

Adoption of the new Local Plan will also reduce the risk of unplanned speculative planning applications and appeals being granted. This can lead to housing and other forms of development being allowed in poor locations, being of lower quality, and in places where infrastructure cannot be improved to deal with impacts, e.g. pressures on roads, schools and community facilities.

Planning policies in the new local plan will also provide a clear reference point for any town or parish council that is considering preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order.

**Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:**

Public consultation on the Draft Plan will generate comments from individuals and organisations (including statutory bodies). These will be used to confirm, refine or amend the proposed approach.

An amended Plan will be prepared and consulted under the next stage of the local plan process - the pre-submission plan (Regulation 19). This version will be submitted to government for independent examination.

**2. Protected characteristics:**

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

*To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.*

**3. Initial Impact review:**

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

*For information on how to define No, low or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.*

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

*For details on what constitutes a positive impact, please consult the EQIA guidance.*

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>The council will seek to meet the identified needs of different groups, or enable needs to be met, within the community (which includes gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople and houseboat dwellers).</p>
Gender:	No	<p>Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Draft Plan would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the Draft Plan.</p>
Disabilities:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>The Draft Plan includes policies relating to affordable housing, housing mix and specialist accommodation for older and vulnerable groups in the borough.</p> <p>The council will also seek to meet the identified needs of other different groups, or enable needs to be met, including older people, people with physical, mental or learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups.</p> <p>A policy is included in the Draft Plan to support the provision of specialist housing for older people and vulnerable people who suffers from issues such as reduced mobility and dementia. Requirements are also set out in policy for a proportion of new homes to be constructed to meet wheelchair and accessibility standards.</p> <p>Policies to improve accessibility and infrastructure are likely to benefit those with reduced mobility and physical and visual impairments, for example policies relating to walking and cycling, green and blue infrastructure and Public Rights of Way.</p> <p>The Draft Plan includes a policy relating to place making and design which ensures the design of building and places are fully accessible and inclusive for all users, including people with mobility impairments or other health issues.</p>

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Age:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>The delivery of development will include a proportion of affordable housing which is an important part of ensuring that no particular groups are unfairly disadvantaged.</p> <p>The council will also seek to meet the identified needs of different groups within the community, or enable needs to be met, including older people and younger people. The addition of the new homes will provide opportunities for first time buyers. A policy is also included in the draft plan to provide specialist housing for older people, including a proportion of new homes constructed to meet wheelchair and accessibility standards.</p> <p>The draft LPU also includes policies on housing for older people and vulnerable people, play space, open space, leisure and sports facilities, protection of community facilities and services. A new policy is included in the plan to protect areas of open/green space that are demonstrably special to the local community.</p> <p>The Draft Plan also includes a policy relating to place making and design to ensure the design of buildings and places are fully accessible and inclusive for all users, including people of all ages.</p> <p>Proposed allocations will need to mitigate their impact as appropriate, for example in relation to education facilities and youth facilities. The creation of a new garden town at Grazeley will deliver a mix of housing to meet different needs within the new community and significant infrastructure including open space, education, youth facilities and other services to accommodate all ages within the new community.</p>
Sexual orientation:	None	<p>Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Draft Plan would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the Draft Plan.</p>
Religion/belief:		<p>Potential for some positive impact, for example proposed allocations will need to mitigate their impact as appropriate, which may include improved/new community facilities (which could be used by all sectors of the community). The creation of a new garden town at Grazeley will provide substantial infrastructure and services, including a town centre, providing facilities that can be used by all sectors of the community.</p> <p>A policy is included in the Draft Plan to protect existing community services and facilities (including places of worship).</p>

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Gender re-assignment:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Draft Plan would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the Draft Plan.
Pregnancy and Maternity:	Positive	<p>Potential for some positive impact, for example proposed allocations will need to mitigate their impact as appropriate, which may include new/improved community services and facilities (which have ability to be used by health practitioners and children's/nursery facilities). The creation of a new garden town at Grazeley will also deliver substantial infrastructure, services and facilities including a new health care hub.</p> <p>Policies to improve accessibility and infrastructure are likely to benefit those with reduced mobility, for example provision for green and blue infrastructure, Public Rights of Way (including Greenways) and walking and cycling should be designed to meet the needs of all users, which may include pregnant women and those with babies/young children.</p> <p>A policy is also included in the draft plan relating to place making and design to ensure buildings and spaces are accessible and inclusive for all users, which may include pregnant women and those with babies/younger children.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the draft LPU would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the Draft Plan.

Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low or high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy or service change.

Initial impact assessment approved by

Nigel Bailey: Interim Assistant Director Housing & Place Commissioning

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020

This page is intentionally left blank