

### **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:	12 November 2021
Service:	Place and Growth Directorate Delivery & Infrastructure Service
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	Local Plan Update Revised Growth Strategy
Completed by:	Ben Davis (Growth and Delivery Team, Planning Policy Officer)
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	Yes
Signed off by:	 <b>Mark Cupit</b> <b>Assistant Director Delivery &amp; Infrastructure</b>
Sign off date:	12/11/21

#### **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 a Revised Growth Strategy for the Draft Local Plan Update (LPU), the document which sets out the strategy for managing development. The council consulted on a Draft Local Plan in February 2020, where the central plank of the plan's strategy was the creation of a garden town at Grazeley. Subsequent to agreeing the Draft Local Plan, a change in legislation has resulted in the redetermination of the Urgent Action Area and the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone around AWE Burghfield. The change means that the Grazeley garden town proposal, and therefore the strategy proposed by the Draft Local Plan, is no longer achievable.

The revised spatial strategy retains the key principles, vision and objectives set out in the Draft Local Plan Update, which was consulted on in February 2020.

The main changes to the approach that was consulted on in February 2020 are:

- The removal of the Grazeley garden town
- A new strategic allocation to create a garden village on land south of the M4 between Shinfield, Arborfield and Sindlesham, referred to as Hall Farm / Loddon Valley
- Additional housing within the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL)
- Additional smaller development sites within and adjacent to a number of villages across the borough
- Additional allocations for Local Green Space across the borough, and
- The extension of the plan period from 2036 to 2038.

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.

Public consultation on the Revised Growth Strategy for the Draft Local Plan is planned to start no later than 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 and end on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022, an extended 8-week period to account for the Christmas and New Year period. The report to Executive seeks the agreement of the Revised Growth Strategy for consultation, agree delegation of minor changes and updates the programme moving forwards.

Public consultation on the Draft Local Plan is a legal requirement under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. 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, including to reflect latest planning guidance in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Revised Growth Strategy will also be supported by a Communications, Engagement and Marketing Plan setting out when and how consultation on the Revised Growth Strategy 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 four engagement events (two in-person staffed; two virtual). The plan also sets out the methods for communication and engagement on the Revised Growth Strategy for the consultation, including a social media campaign, press and news releases and website updates.

In support to the consultation two in-person staffed engagement events are planned in the borough, reflecting the Revised Growth Strategy for the Draft Local Plan. People are able to attend any event, however to minimise the spread of Covid-19, the two in-person events will be held in larger venues to allow for greater circulation space.

**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 Revised Growth Strategy will be undertaken in accordance with the council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement for planning policy consultations but are adapted to reflect latest government advice and guidance regarding Covid-19, including the temporary amendments to Regulation 35 of the Regulations. This will involve: distributing a 'postcard' notification to households across the borough to provide details of the engagement events; sending emails/letters to those registered on the consultation database, including organisations (general and specific consultation bodies specified in the Regulations), councillors and internal officers. Advertising and further information will be placed on the council's website and publicised through social and other forms of traditional media to promote the consultation.

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 Revised Growth Strategy through the cross-party Member Working Group. Stakeholders including all Directors have also been engaged through the Corporate Leadership Team. Lead Specialists from Place and Growth have also engaged with internal officers and specialists in the council.

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

The Revised Growth Strategy has been produced by the Growth and Delivery team (Place and Growth Directorate), with the input of internal officers, communities and stakeholders through previous stages of consultation (Issues and Options; Homes for the Future; Draft Local Plan). 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 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.

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

Public consultation on the Revised Growth Strategy will facilitate further engagement in the plan-making process, providing opinion on the proposed strategy from individuals and organisations (including statutory and prescribed bodies). Comments generated from the consultation will enable the council to refine the proposed approaches and allocations prior to the plan being drawn together into its full final version next year.

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

The Revised Growth Strategy forms a key component of the Local Plan which, once adopted, will also reduce the risk of unplanned speculative planning applications via the appeals process. 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

**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 Revised Growth Strategy has identified an opportunity to create a garden village on land south of the M4 between Shinfield, Arborfield and Sindlesham for 4,500 dwellings (minimum 2,200 dwellings to be completed in period 2037/38), which will help contribute towards the majority of the identified needs of different groups, or enable specific needs to be met within the new community (which includes gypsies, travellers and travelling show people).</p> <p>The Revised Growth Strategy also proposes to retain the three site allocations identified in Policy H2 of the Draft Local Plan to accommodate gypsies, travellers and traveller showpeople.</p>
Gender:	None	<p>Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Revised Growth Strategy would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Revised Growth Strategy.</p>
Disabilities:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>The development proposed in the Revised Growth Strategy will help contribute towards the majority of the identified needs of different groups, or enable specific needs to be met within the new communities (which is likely to include older people and vulnerable groups).</p> <p>Specific policies are included in the Revised Growth Strategy for the new Hall Farm / Loddon Valley SDL and existing SDLs. Examples of key requirements include providing measures to maximise opportunities for walking and cycling, green and blue infrastructure and Public Rights of Way. Such requirements for accessibility and infrastructure are likely to benefit those with reduced mobility and physical and visual impairments.</p> <p>A key element of the new garden village at Hall Farm / Four Valleys is to create publicly accessible green space and parkland along the River Loddon Valley for recreation.</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 development proposed in the Revised Growth Strategy will help contribute towards the majority of the identified needs of different groups, or enable specific needs to be met within the new communities (which is likely to include older people and vulnerable groups). The Hall Farm/Loddon Valley SDL policy requires the delivery of three primary schools and one secondary school.</p> <p>The delivery of development within the Strategic Development Locations and some additional housing allocations will include a proportion of affordable housing which is an important part of ensuring that no particular groups are unfairly disadvantaged.</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 village at Hall Farm / Four Valleys 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> <p>The Revised Growth Strategy also proposes additional areas of green space for Local Green Space designation, predominantly due to their recreational value. Examples include country parks, play areas, recreation grounds and SANG.</p>
Sexual orientation:	None	<p>Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Revised Growth Strategy would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Revised Growth Strategy.</p>
Religion/belief:	Positive	<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).</p> <p>The creation of a new garden village at Hall Farm / Four Valley will be supported by a comprehensive package of infrastructure and services, including neighbourhood centres, providing facilities that can be used by all sectors of the community.</p>
Gender re-assignment:	None	<p>Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Revised Growth Strategy would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Revised Growth Strategy.</p>

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
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).</p> <p>The creation of a new garden village at Hall Farm / Four Valley will also deliver substantial infrastructure, services and facilities. This could potentially include the full or partial relocation of the Royal Berkshire Hospital.</p>
Marriage and civil partnership:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Revised Growth Strategy would have any impact upon this group at this point in time. The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Revised Growth Strategy.

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....

**Mark Cupit**

**Assistant Director Delivery & Infrastructure**

Date:.... 12/11/21

This page is intentionally left blank