

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:	31 March 2023
Service:	Place and Growth (Planning)
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan – Submission Consultation and Future Examination
Completed by:	Ben Davis (Growth and Delivery Team, Planning Policy Officer)
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	Yes
Signed off by:	Trevor Saunders Interim Assistant Director, Planning
Sign off date:	4 April 2023

211

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.

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:
Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Ruscombe Parish Council has prepared a draft neighbourhood development plan for their area. This is the second time Executive approval has been sought to undertake public consultation and appoint an examiner to independently examine a neighbourhood plan for Ruscombe Parish. Earlier in October 2021, Ruscombe Parish Council submitted a draft Neighbourhood Plan to the council. Following Executive approval in January 2022, public

consultation was undertaken, and an examiner was appointed to undertake the examination. The examiner did not issue a final report on the draft plan and it was subsequently withdrawn by the Parish Council in February 2023.

Ruscombe Parish Council submitted an updated draft Plan in March 2023, which proposes the same vision, objectives, and policy aims, but incorporates minor changes to the proposed policy wording and additional evidence to support specific policies.

This report to Executive seeks agreement to publish the updated draft Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan for consultation and to delegate the appointment of an examiner and the submission of the examination documentation to the Director of Place and Growth in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan. Consultation and examination are required under the regulations governing neighbourhood development plans.

Public consultation on the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan is proposed to take place after the election period in May 2023, with the final dates to be confirmed.

Other supporting documentation including the SEA/HRA Screening Determination Statement also form part of the consultation.

Ruscombe Parish Council consulted on an earlier draft Neighbourhood Plan in February to April 2021 (Regulation 14).

Public consultation on the recommended version of the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan is a legal requirement under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). 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.

If made (adopted), the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan would help shape new development and improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the neighbourhood area.

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 publication of the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan 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. This will involve 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 Ruscombe Parish Council's and Wokingham Borough Council's website and publicised through social and other forms of traditional media to promote the consultation.

Stakeholders including the Assistant Director, Planning and Director of Place and Growth are engaged through the Place and Growth Leadership Team and Corporate Leadership Team. Lead Specialists from Growth and Delivery have also engaged with members of the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group and Ruscombe Parish Council and provided policy advice and support on earlier iterations of the neighbourhood plan and supporting documentation.

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

The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan has been produced by Ruscombe Parish Council (the qualifying body) with the input of officers in the council's Growth and Delivery team, communities and stakeholders through a previous consultation on a draft plan (under Regulation 14). If made (adopted), the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan would become part of the Development Plan for the parish and therefore be considered alongside the council's planning policies when making decisions on planning applications and help shape how development is managed in their area.

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

Public consultation on the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan will facilitate engagement in the plan-making process, by providing a further opportunity for individuals and organisations (including statutory and prescribed bodies) to comment on proposals, prior to an examination by an independent person (to be appointed jointly by the council and Ruscombe Parish Council).

The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted, will become part of the Development Plan and would help set out a vision and general planning policies for the development and use of land in the area, and in so doing guide decision making on planning applications in the area alongside the council's planning policies.

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.

214

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan would have any impact upon this group as policies contained in the draft plan provide additional detail to existing policies in the council’s local plans (e.g., Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans). The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan.
Gender:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan would have any impact upon this group as policies contained in the draft plan provide additional detail to existing policies in the council’s local plans (e.g., Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans). The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan.
Disabilities:	Positive	There is likely to be a positive impact. Policies are included in the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan to maximise opportunities for walking and cycling, green and blue infrastructure and Public Rights of Way (e.g., Policy RU2: Ruscombe Housing Design Code; Policy RU9: Green

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
		Infrastructure & Biodiversity). Considerations of factors such as safety, accessibility and infrastructure in future development proposals are likely to benefit those with reduced mobility and physical and visual impairments.
Age:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>Policy RU8: Local Green Spaces of the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan proposes areas of green space for Local Green Space designation, predominantly due to their recreational value. Examples include play areas and amenity green space.</p>
Sexual orientation:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan would have any impact upon this group as policies contained in the draft plan provide additional detail to existing policies in the council’s local plans (e.g., Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans). The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan.
Religion/belief:	Positive	<p>There is likely to be a positive impact.</p> <p>A policy is included in the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan (Policy RU7: Community Facilities) to protect existing community services and facilities, notably St James Church.</p>
Gender re-assignment:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan would have any impact upon this group as policies contained in the draft plan provide additional detail to existing policies in the council’s local plans (e.g., Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans). The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan.
Pregnancy and Maternity:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan would have any impact upon this group as policies contained in the draft plan provide additional detail to existing policies in the council’s local plans (e.g., Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans). The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan.

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Marriage and civil partnership:	None	Neutral impact – it is not envisaged that the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan would have any impact upon this group as policies contained in the draft plan provide additional detail to existing policies in the council’s local plans (e.g., Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans). The group would not be prohibited from reviewing and commenting on the consultation for the Ruscombe Neighbourhood 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....

Trevor Saunders

Interim Assistant Director, Planning

Date:.... 04/04/2023