

## **Draft strategies/policies – Equality Impact Check**

**Draft strategy/policy being checked: Statement of Community  
Involvement (Draft for consultation)**

**Is this draft strategy/policy:**

- South only**
- Vale only**
- Joint across both councils**

**Service team:** **Planning Policy**

**Officer completing this:** **Yoanna Gardner**

**Once completed:**

Date completed: 25/08/2021

Signed Yoanna Gardner (Officer)

Signed Adrian Duffield (Head of Service)

Signed Lynne Mitchell (Lynne Mitchell Equalities officer)

## Why do you need to do this Equality Impact Check?

Our strategies and policies set out the way we will deliver our services (including employment opportunities). When we are developing them, we need to check that they are not going to create any barriers which could prevent people from accessing our services.

People in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse may face barriers because of things like **disability, gender (including transgender, pregnancy and maternity), age, sexual orientation, rural isolation, income, religion/belief or ethnicity.**

As well as thinking about how our services will meet the needs of these groups of people, we also need to consider how our draft strategies and policies will help us to:

- promote positive relations within communities
- give everyone a voice
- respect and value everyone
- protect people's human rights

This Equality Impact Check provides officers with a framework to help them work through these considerations in relation to their draft policy/strategy, ensuring that we are meeting our legal duties with regards to equality and diversity.

We have a statutory duty to carry out these assessments and they contribute towards our corporate priority to 'optimise access to services (Vale)/provide equality of access to our services' (South).

**If you have any queries about this Check or would like some advice/support in completing it, please contact the Shared equalities officer (see contact details below).**

**Once you've completed this Equality Impact Check, please send the paperwork to the shared equality officer, along with a copy of the draft strategy/policy.**

Lynne Mitchell (equalities officer)  
Email: [lynne.mitchell@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.mitchell@southandvale.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 07598 545906

## OUTLINE OF THE DRAFT STRATEGY / POLICY YOU ARE CHECKING:

### 1. What are the aims and objectives of this draft strategy/policy?

The aims and objectives of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to set out how residents and stakeholders can get involved in the planning process. The SCI outlines the principles of engagement and specific procedures to engage with a broad spectrum of people and organisations on all planning matters and at different stages of the planning process. The aim of the SCI is to make involvement in planning quicker, easier, more accessible and wider so that all our communities feel they have a voice in shaping our places and spaces.

### 2. Who is the proposed strategy or policy designed to support / help / serve?

The SCI sets out how planning applications and planning policy documents are made available and explains the engagement process. Therefore, this could have an impact on all those that live and work in the districts. The main stakeholders are South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse communities and those with an interest in the districts. These include residents, local businesses, stakeholders, staff, and partners.

### 3. If the draft strategy/policy relates to an existing council service/function, has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) already been completed on the service/function?

No

Yes – please list any issues/barriers identified within the assessment that your draft strategy needs to address:

The SCI relates to the planning service. EIA's are completed for certain documents that are prepared by the planning service – eg the local plan.

**4. Does the draft strategy or policy have the potential to cause a negative impact or discriminate against certain groups in the community?**

Equality group	Yes	No	If 'yes', please explain how the strategy/policy could cause a negative impact or discriminate. If you can not justify this you will need to take mitigating action, complete the action plan at the end of this assessment.	If 'No,' What existing evidence (presumed or otherwise) do you have for this? e.g. Will the service changes advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic? This means will they <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.</li> <li>• Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people</li> </ul>
People from ethnic minority groups		No		The SCI is not expected to create any barriers to participation for people in this target group. The SCI commits to making planning consultation documents available in alternative languages if this is needed, with the aim of reducing barriers for people who do not have English as their first language. The draft SCI promotes using a range of engagement methods to make it easier for people to engage.
People with disabilities (including carers)		No		The SCI commits to using digital methods of engagement alongside traditional methods. When we do hold face to face meetings we will seek to hold them in places that are accessible and have hearing loops. We will ensure that the consultation portal is as accessible and as easy to use as possible. We will achieve this by using simple language and icons. We will also make hard copies of documents available upon request.

Equality group	Yes	No	If 'yes', please explain how the strategy/policy could cause a negative impact or discriminate. If you can not justify this you will need to take mitigating action, complete the action plan at the end of this assessment.	If 'No,' What existing evidence (presumed or otherwise) do you have for this? e.g. Will the service changes advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic? This means will they <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.</li> <li>• Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people</li> </ul>
Men or women <i>(including pregnant women, women on maternity and transgender people)</i>		No		The SCI is not expected to create any barriers to participation for people in this target group and therefore it is not considered that it will cause a negative impact or discriminate this targeted group.
Gay, lesbian or bisexual people		No		The SCI is not expected to create any barriers to participation for people in this target group and therefore it is not considered that it will cause a negative impact or discriminate this targeted group.
People from different religions/beliefs <i>(including people without a religion/belief)</i>		No		The SCI is not expected to create any barriers to participation for people in this target group and therefore it is not considered that it will cause a negative impact or discriminate this targeted group.
Older or younger people		No		The SCI sets out that we will continue to use written methods of engagement alongside digital methods. We send out letters to those who request it and have no other means of engaging with us. We provide hard copies of documents upon request and consultation documents are distributed to deposit locations. For younger users, the impact is positive, as more young people are likely to engage with our online methods of communication, using social media and the council's YouTube channel.

Equality group	Yes	No	If 'yes', please explain how the strategy/policy could cause a negative impact or discriminate. If you can not justify this you will need to take mitigating action, complete the action plan at the end of this assessment.	If 'No,' What existing evidence (presumed or otherwise) do you have for this? e.g. Will the service changes advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic? This means will they <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.</li> <li>Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people</li> </ul>
People living in rural areas		No		South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse are rural districts. All documents are available on our websites and hard copies of consultation documents are provide in selected deposit locations, including libraries, across both districts. By live-streaming and recording meetings those who do not wish to travel can attend meetings online.
Local Voluntary, Community and Faith sector organisations		No		<i>If your draft strategy/policy doesn't relate to the VCF sector, please state that here. – No, it doesn't relate to this group.</i>

**5. Have reasonable adjustments been made for people with disabilities to ensure they can use the draft strategy or policy? This might mean treating disabled people better than non-disabled people in order to meet their needs**

No

✓Yes - please provide detail:

The SCI has been written using plain English and in a style that is easy to read and navigate. The survey has been designed to be understand and easy to use by using simple language and icons. We will make copies of any of our planning consultation documents available in Easy Read, Braille, large print and audio upon request.

**6. Have there been any equality related recommendations in the area that your draft policy/strategy is covering which**

have arisen from, for example, internal/external audits or scrutiny reports?

No.

Recommendation made	Is this being addressed in your draft strategy or policy? If not, please explain why.
n/a	n/a

**7. Will the draft strategy or policy help to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it e.g will the changes help to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between the different groups?**

No (*If you feel there is scope to improve how you foster good relations, amend your decision accordingly*)

✓ Yes – please explain how

The draft SCI helps to foster positive attitudes by ensuring that the councils are open about how they will engage with the community in the delivery of its planning function, removing barriers to participation in the planning process.

**8. Will the draft strategy or policy protect and promote human rights?** [You may find it helpful to view the human rights guide for public authorities on the intranet to help you decide]

✓ No – please explain why and how you will amend the draft policy/strategy to eliminate the effect (if you think the effect cannot be eliminated but can be justified, please also give details):

Yes – please list relevant articles and briefly explain how you think your policy/strategy demonstrates compliance

The contents of the SCI does not have the potential to affect Human Rights.

**9. Has there been consultation with relevant community groups to help inform this draft strategy or policy?**

The draft SCI will be subject to public consultation. This will be publicised by sending emails or letters to those registered on the planning consultation database, as well as promoting on our website, via social media, a press release and by providing posters to go up in public spaces eg libraries, village halls.

There is no statutory requirement to consult on the SCI.

**10. Has the draft strategy or policy missed opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and positive attitudes?**

No

Yes – please outline the plans you have to address the missed opportunities (complete table below)

The Council will continue to encourage the participation of all sectors of the community in the preparation of planning policy documents and consultation of planning applications. The draft SCI promotes the use of a range of engagement methods in order to reach local people, local businesses and other key organisations and stakeholders. The draft SCI helps to foster positive attitudes by ensuring that the Council is open about how it will engage with the community in the delivery of its planning function, removing barriers to participation in the planning process.