

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE: Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (“SPD”)

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
03.03.2021	1	Allan Clarke / Tom Evans	Initial Draft
-	-	Sarah Walker	EDI sign off
27.08.2023	2	Tom Evans	Final Draft
07.09.2023	2	Phil Christian	EDI sign off
24.04.2024	3	Tom Evans	Adoption Version
01.05.2024	4	Phil Christian	EDI sign off

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 Description: Fact finding (about your policy / service / service users)

Department	Strategic Planning
Service	Environmental and Neighbourhood Services
Date	24/04/2024
Lead officer responsible for assessment	Tom Evans Interim Environmental Planning Manager
Other members of team undertaking assessment	Tom Evans Interim Environmental Planning Manager
Version	3
Type of document	Strategy
Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document	New

<p>Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation)</p> <p>Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service</p>	<p>Draft Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (“SPD”)</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Supplementary Planning Documents (“SPDs”) provide further detail to the policies contained in the development plan. They can be used to provide guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan. They must be consistent with national planning policy, must undergo consultation and must be in conformity with policies contained within the Local Plan.</p>
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	<p>The council has consulted on various drafts leading to the production of this adoption version of the Biodiversity Net Gain SPD. The adoption version provides additional guidance on the implementation of policies SE3 (“biodiversity and geodiversity”), SE5 (“Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland”) and SE6 (“Green Infrastructure”) in the council’s Local Plan Strategy (LPS), adopted in July 2017; and policies ENV1 (“Ecological Network”) and ENV2 (“Ecological Implementation”) of the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD). The SPD, once adopted, should assist applicants when making planning applications, to establish the BNG requirement for their site and give certainty to how the council will apply the relevant policies of the Development Plan. The SPD provides further guidance on how existing policies should be implemented, rather than setting a new policy approach in relation to biodiversity and habitats, and provides advice on localised approaches related national regulations.</p> <p>The SPD has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended by the Local Planning, Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings etc (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020), the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance and national regulations relating to BNG.</p> <p>An Equalities Impact Assessment was prepared alongside the integrated Sustainability Appraisal work which supported the Local Plan Strategy (LPS) and also for the SADPD. The assessment found that the LPS and SADPD policies are unlikely to have negative effects on protected characteristics or persons identified under the Equality Act 2010.</p>
<p>Who are the main stakeholders and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)</p>	<p>Two stages of public consultation have taken place on the draft versions of the SPD for four weeks in accordance with the Town and Country Planning ((Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) and the council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement. These consultations included issuing email notifications of the consultation to the general public, town and parish councils, statutory consultees, elected members, and consultees who have registered on the strategic planning database. The online consultation enables participants to provide comments on specific sections of the document or general comments as appropriate.</p>

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<p>What consultation method(s) did you use?</p>	<p>The council prepares a Statement of Community Involvement which provides detail on how it will consult on Local Plan documents and SPDs. This includes requirements on the availability of documents, how residents and stakeholders will be notified etc. The Council's Local Plan consultation database, which will be notified of the consultation, also includes a number of organisations who work alongside groups with protected characteristics in the borough.</p> <p>All consultation comments received have been reviewed ahead of amendments being made to the SPD. A report of consultation has also been prepared alongside the adoption version of the SPD setting out how the council has responded to issues raised during consultation. No issues related to protected characteristics or other equalities issues have been raised at previous stages of consultation.</p>
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Stage 2 Initial Screening

<p>Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)</p>	<p>Given the policy guidance relates to funding the provision of habitat improvements it is unlikely that there will be an impact on those with protected characteristics. Consultation has not raised any issues related to equalities issues.</p>
<p>Who is intended to benefit and how?</p>	<p>Local communities including landowners and developers. The SPD provides additional guidance on the implementation of existing planning policies related to the assessment of planning applications on matters relating to ecology and biodiversity, providing guidance on how a gain in volume and quality of such assets should be achieved. Achieving biodiversity net gain is beneficial to all communities through natural environmental services our ecosystem relies on. The means through which a net gain is achieved (by improving green spaces within development) may improve access to green space and recreation opportunities in, and nearby to, new and existing development.</p>
<p>Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?</p>	<p>No, the SPD builds upon existing planning policy guidance and provides further information about how the Council will consider planning applications. The provision of biodiversity net gain will assist</p>

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	in supporting communities to access green space for recreation, improve local amenity, and mitigate some impacts of climate change, such as flooding but the main focus is on achieving more and improved habitats to support biodiversity. Further guidance on factors that inform an appropriate approach to delivering more habitats and improve ecology will support ecosystems across Cheshire East. The SPD, in applying additional guidance to assist in the interpretation of planning policies should be beneficial to a variety of groups.
Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?	No, the introduction of the SPD is not based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances. The SPD includes information on the natural environment and characteristics of land and habitats in Cheshire East. The content of the SPD does not relate directly to the characteristics of human populations.
Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)	No, the SPD is not intended to affect different groups or communities in this way.
Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?	No, the SPD is not intended to target any group and will be consulted upon in line with the council's Statement of Community Involvement.

Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics?	Yes/ No
Age	No
Disability	No
Gender reassignment	No
Marriage & civil partnership	No
Pregnancy & maternity	No
Race	No
Religion & belief	No
Sex	No
Sexual orientation	No

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Characteristic	What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts
Age	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.
Disability	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.
Gender reassignment	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.
Marriage & civil partnership	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.
Pregnancy & maternity	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.
Race	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.
Religion & belief	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.
Sex	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.
Sexual orientation	No negative impacts are identified at this stage in relation to any of the specific characteristics. Public consultation did not result in any feedback in relation to protected characteristics.

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Lead officer sign off	
Date	24/04/2024
Head of service sign off	
Date	01/05/2024