

Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:
 - (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
 - (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
 - (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
 - (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).
3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership*
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
 - removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
8. In terms of timing:
 - Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
 - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
 - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Armed Forces Community

9. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.
10. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:
 - Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

Case law principles

11. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:
 - Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
 - Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.

- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on “Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making” (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	Stewart Smith
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	To proceed with the outlined project as described (Mecca/Vicarage Lane development).
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	Cabinet 14 March 2019 and Council 25 April 2019.
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes 	To proceed with obtaining detailed planning permission and delivering by way of Development Management Agreement the proposed development scheme on the Mecca / Vicarage Lane car park site.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who will be affected and how? How many people will be affected? 	<p>Shoppers and visitors to the high street will be affected due to the loss of parking provision (to be replaced with a multi-storey car park) and temporary disruption.</p>	
<p>Information and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. Include sources and key findings. 	<p>Consultants were appointed to consider the theatre use of the existing Mecca building and the cultural and arts offer within the Borough.</p> <p>Pre-app highways and planning advice has been taken.</p> <p>A public consultation exercise has been carried out at the Ashford Gateway and online from 18 February to 4 March 2019. A total of 187 responses were received.</p>	
<p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? What were the results of the consultation? Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>Following the architect's proposals, a public consultation exercise has been carried out at the Ashford Gateway in which participants were asked for their feedback on the suggested development of the Mecca site. They were given the opportunity to respond by either completing a form or an online survey.</p> <p>The salient points arising from the feedback were as follows. Some of the positively received aspects of the proposals were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility and visibility of St Mary's Church; The proposed multi-use community space and performance space; Attractiveness of the proposals; The retention of the Mecca Frontage. <p>Additionally, further consideration should be given to the impact of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The loss of parking at Vicarage Lane Car Park, the impact of which has been considered in this impact assessment; Additional housing and new parking for residents; Vacancies at new retail units; Light and accessibility to the Ashford Baptist Church, who regularly use the car park. 	
<p>Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.</p> <p>When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.</p>		
<p>Protected characteristic</p>	<p>Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None</p>	<p>Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral</p>
<p><u>AGE</u> Elderly</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Negative (Minor) – engagement has revealed that the Vicarage</p>

		car park is a preferred car park for elderly visitors
Middle age	Low	Neutral
Young adult	Low	Neutral
Children	Low	Neutral
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	Medium	Negative (Major) - removal of disabled provision. Loss of parking results in walking further into town from other car parks.
Mental	None	Neutral
Sensory	Medium	Negative (Major) – loss of parking results in walking further into town from other car parks.
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	N/A – only applies for certain applications
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	N/A – only applies for certain applications
<u>RACE</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	Medium	Negative (minor) - disruption to access routes to a place of worship
<u>SEX</u> Men	None	Neutral
Women	None	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	None	Neutral
Former service personnel	None	Neutral
Service families	None	Neutral

Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline	Although there is a short-term negative impact, the ultimate redevelopment of the site will result in a positive impact for groups of people with protected characteristics by providing new community and cultural facilities in the town which is
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<p>the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>publically accessible. The site will also provide new employment and residential space. The resulting development will ensure residents have new and improved access routes to the town.</p> <p>Any new parking developments will consider additional provision and high quality provision for visitors to the town with disabilities, in particular visitors to the town with mobility difficulties.</p>
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Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?

Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's [Essential Guide](#), alongside fuller [PSED Technical Guidance](#).

Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>Throughout the process due consideration has been given to inclusivity, equality and the equality duty on the local authority with compliance a priority. While the immediate impact is negative the development will result in a positive on the community generally.</p> <p>Ultimately the redevelopment of the site will result in positive impacts for those with protected characteristics to the extent highlighted in the assessment.</p> <p>No adjustments are required as the negative impact of the decision would only last in the short term. The council should consider the quantity and quality of disabled parking provision in any future parking developments.</p>
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>27 February 2019</p>

