

Chelmsford City Council Equality Impact Assessment

This form enables an assessment of the impact a policy, strategy or activity on customers and employees.

A: Assessor Details

Name of policy / function(s):	Consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement
Officer(s) completing this assessment:	Jenny Robinson
Date of assessment:	13 August 2025

B: Summary Details

Description of policy, strategy or activity and what it is aiming to do	<p>This Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared to assess the content of the consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).</p> <p>The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) require Local Planning Authorities to review their SCI every five years. The current SCI was adopted in 2020.</p> <p>The SCI sets out our strategy for effectively involving the community, interested organisations and statutory stakeholders in planning and development matters which affect them. It covers both planning policy and development management functions, and complements Council-wide engagement commitments set out in the Consultation and Engagement Strategy and Our Chelmsford, Our Plan.</p> <p>Unlike other local development documents, there is no formal requirement to consult on the review of an SCI. However, it has always been our practice to consult on previous versions of the SCI (2005, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2020) and it is considered as best practice to do so.</p>
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	<p>The opportunity has been taken to update information including a description of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which accompanies the Local Plan, updated Masterplanning approaches, updated web links, and to remove specific reference to the coronavirus pandemic whilst retaining the commitment to follow Government advice in exceptional circumstances (such a public health or extreme weather events) where normal consultation activity cannot be carried out. Other changes relate to providing further clarity.</p> <p>This consultation will be facilitated through Objective Keystone – a third party platform, contracted through the Council that facilitates public consultations. Consultees will be able to submit representations through completion of a form either online or on paper.</p> <p>The focused consultation would target statutory stakeholders, duty to co-operate and other interested bodies, developers and planning agents. For the public, the consultation would comprise consultees on the planning policy consultation database, and website and social media publicity, and a City Life article in an attempt to consult people not already involved with the planning process.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> new OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> existing (<i>If existing</i>, when was the last assessment? 2020) <input type="checkbox"/> internal OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> external (i.e. public-facing) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> statutory OR <input type="checkbox"/> non-statutory </p>
Policy Owner (service)	Spatial Planning Services
Scope: Internal - Service/Directorate/Council wide	Internal – Directorate of Sustainable Communities – Planning Policy and Development Management

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C: Assessment of impact

Using the information above, assess if the policy / function could potentially disproportionately impact on different protected groups. Specify if the potential impact is positive, could adversely impact or if there is no impact. If an adverse impact, indicate how the impact will be mitigated.

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Age What will the impact be on different age groups such as younger or older people?	Yes The SCI sets out a variety of methods for engagement with all groups in line with best practice and guidance. This will benefit all groups for their involvement in the planning process.	No	No	The planning process involves changes to the environment, services and facilities such as housing, jobs, schools and shops. Throughout the Local Plan process and planning applications the community are invited to have their say on the plan preparation and development proposals.	Age may be a factor when encouraging engagement in the planning process. It is important to continue to ensure consultation and engagement is open, inclusive, accessible and effective to all groups. The SCI and the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy include working with groups that represent the interests of different age groups such as youth groups, the education and university sector, or organisations representing older people to help ensure consultations are accessible; and making the most of innovative techniques and technology.

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
					Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.
Disability Consider all disabilities such as hearing loss, dyslexia etc as well as access issues for wheelchair users where appropriate	Yes As above	No	No	The planning process involves changes to the environment, services and facilities such as housing, jobs, schools and shops. Throughout the Local Plan process and planning applications the community are invited to have their say on the plan preparation and development proposals.	<p>A range of factors are relevant when encouraging engagement in any planning process. It is important to continue to ensure consultation and engagement is open, inclusive, accessible and effective to all groups as required through the SCI and the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy e.g. working with groups that represent the interests of different groups and ensuring that engagement is accessible; and making the most of innovative techniques and technology.</p> <p>Documentation can be provided in alternative formats including audio and large print as appropriate and online documents meet accessibility standards.</p>

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
					Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.
Pregnancy and maternity Pregnant women and new and breastfeeding Mums	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A
Marriage or Civil Partnership Could this policy discriminate on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A
Sex Is the service used by more than one gender and are the sexes given equal opportunity	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A
Gender reassignment Is there an impact on people who are going through or who have completed Gender Reassignment?	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A
Religion or belief Includes not having religion or belief	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Sexual Orientation What is the impact on heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual people?	No	No	Yes	N/A	N/A
Race Includes ethnic or national origins	Yes	No	No	N/A	<p>A range of factors are relevant when encouraging engagement in any planning process. It is important to continue to ensure consultation and engagement is open, inclusive, accessible and effective to all groups as required through the SCI and the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy e.g. working with groups that represent the interests of different groups and ensuring that engagement is accessible; and making the most of innovative techniques and technology.</p> <p>Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.</p>
Are there any other groups who could find it difficult to access or	Yes	No	No		A range of factors are relevant when encouraging engagement in

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
<p>make use of the policy / function?</p> <p>For example: low income / people living in rural areas / single parents / carers and the cared for / past offenders / long-term unemployed / housebound / history of domestic abuse / people who don't speak English as a first language / people without computer access etc.</p>					<p>any planning process. It is important to continue to ensure consultation and engagement is open, inclusive, accessible and effective to all groups as required through the SCI and the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy e.g. working with groups that represent the interests of different groups and ensuring that engagement is accessible; making the most of innovative techniques and technology.</p> <p>Documentation can be made available in paper format for those without computer access and other languages (where possible) for people who don't speak English as a first language. Local Plan documentation and planning application material can be made available for inspection at the Council's Customer Service Centre- by appointment, and information can be sent in the post on request. Online</p>

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					documents meet accessibility standards. Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.

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D: Consultation process, information used to analyse the effects on protected groups/equality and key findings

Please describe the consultation process and evidence gathered. You may attach copies or links to the data / research you are using.

1.	<u>Consultation/engagement</u> What consultation or engagement has been undertaken regarding this policy? <i>[Please summarise what, when and who was involved]</i>	<p>Unlike other local development documents, there is no requirement to consult on the review of an SCI. However, it has always been Council practice to consult on versions of the SCI and it is therefore considered as best practice to do so for this revision.</p> <p>It is proposed that the draft SCI will be consulted on in September-October 2025. The exact dates will be confirmed following Chelmsford Policy Board.</p> <p>The Council will publish a Feedback Report following the consultation which will summarise the main issues raised in comments, and use this feedback to finalise the document.</p> <p>The City Council will continue to work in partnership with a range of other public and private organisations and agencies. These include Essex County Council, developers, Parish Councils, utility providers and service providers. The consultation will target statutory stakeholders, duty to co-operate and other interested bodies, developers and planning agents. For the public, the consultation will comprise consultees on the planning policy consultation database, and website and social media publicity in an attempt to consult people not already involved with the planning process.</p>
2.	<u>Key findings</u> <i>(Summarise the key findings of your consultation in relation to protected groups as outlined above).</i>	N/A – will be analysed following consultation with stakeholders.
3.	<u>Data/Information</u> What relevant data or information is currently available about the customers and employees who may use this service or could be affected by this policy?	<p>The commitment to preparing a new SCI has been set out above and will be reported to the Council's Chelmsford Policy Board on 4 September 2025.</p> <p>The consultations and engagement exercises that have been undertaken during the preparation of the Local Plan and for planning application process in the past has provided key information on how well consultation methods have worked previously.</p>

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	<p><i>(For example: equality monitoring, surveys, demographic data, research, evidence about demand/ take-up/satisfaction etc).</i></p> <p>What additional information could be collected which would increase your understanding about the potential impact of the policy?</p> <p><i>(What involvement or consultation with affected groups is still needed?)</i></p>	<p>Furthermore, those registered on the Council's Local Plan database will be contacted as part of the consultation on the SCI.</p> <p>The Council has and will continue to promote consultation and engagement on planning matters in order to maximise involvement and representations from residents, employers, developers, public bodies and service providers.</p>
4.	<p>For existing policies, strategy, activity only: What has changed since the last assessment?</p> <p><i>(For example: evidence of public concern or complaints / new information has come to light / changes in service provision / changes in service users/ assessed impact on protected groups etc)</i></p>	<p>The opportunity has been taken to update the SCI to include a description of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which accompanies the Local Plan, updated Masterplanning approaches, updated web links, and to remove specific reference to the coronavirus pandemic whilst retaining the commitment to follow Government advice in exceptional circumstances (such a public health or extreme weather events) where normal consultation activity cannot be carried out. Other changes relate to providing further clarity.</p>

E: Relevance to the Equality Duty Aims:

Consider how the policy relates to the aims below (directly or indirectly), and if it could be adjusted to further meet these equality aims.

1.	<p>To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation</p>	<p>The planning process seeks to promote social inclusion and ensure that all people (including vulnerable groups) have access to the services and opportunities that they may need such as housing, employment, public transport and community facilities (e.g. education, health and local shopping). This will work towards meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty as the needs of these individuals are incorporated into future development.</p>
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		In addition, the Council's Sustainable Communities Directorate seeks to ensure that the public have access to information on the Local Plan and planning application documents. This works towards meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty as the needs of individuals are considered carefully in the information made available e.g. providing written information in alternative formats on request. All comments received will be reviewed and any offensive or discriminative comments will be redacted/removed.
2.	To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not <i>(This means removing or minimising disadvantages, taking steps to meet needs of different people and encouraging participation. It can involve treating people better than others, e.g. disabled people).</i>	<p>We can provide information in a number of different formats and would aim to honour any special requests e.g. to accommodate any religious beliefs etc.</p> <p>All engagement seeks to inform and involve communities early and continuously throughout the planning process. The SCI sets out the Council's commitment to public participation and details activities used to engage harder to reach groups. Example of methods of involvement used previously include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters • City Life articles • Social media • Leaflets • Exhibitions • Letters and emails
3.	To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. If so, how? <i>(This means promoting understanding between different groups and tackling prejudice)</i>	<p>Information on the Local Plan and planning applications are made available to Chelmsford residents, landowners, developers and businesses. All groups are provided with opportunities to get involved and have their say on draft plans and proposals. Those registered on the Local Plan consultation database are notified at formal Local Plan consultation stages.</p> <p>We encourage good community relations by working with partners and other third parties e.g. increasing understanding of the Local Plan process and planning applications by presentations to Agent and Parish/Town Forums.</p>

F: Conclusion

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Decision:	Explanation:
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue the policy with no changes <i>[For example: evidence suggests no potential for discrimination / all opportunities have been taken to advance equality.]</i></p>	<p>The revised draft SCI updates key information on how we will consult on planning matters.</p> <p>It is considered that the SCI has no negative impacts and there is a low risk of negative impact on the affected groups. Impacts will continue to be monitored and if particular issues are identified, appropriate action will be taken. This could include changes to future consultation approaches and activities. It is considered that all opportunities will be taken to advance equality through planning consultations and engagement events.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Continue the policy with adjustments <i>[For example: Low risk of negative impact / actions or adjustments would further improve positives or remove a potential negative impact.]</i></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Adverse impact but continue <i>[For example: Negative impact has been objectively justified.]</i></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Suspend or withdraw the policy for further review / consideration of alternative proposals <i>[For example: High risk of negative impact for any group / insufficient evidence / need to involve or consult with protected groups / negative impact which cannot be mitigated or justified / unlawful discrimination etc.]</i></p>	

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Approved by:

Lead Officer / Responsible officer: *Claire Stuckey*, Principal Planning Officer (Planning Policy)

Date: 15/08/2025

Senior Manager: *Jeremy Potter*, Spatial Planning Services Manager

Date: 19/08/2025