

**MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Equality Impact Assessment**

**Title of Policy/Service/Contract: Development Management**

**Division: Economic Promotion and Planning**

**Lead Officer: Andy Watt**

**Date Assessment completed: November 2014**

**1. SCOPING**

**1.1 What are the aims of the policy, service/service change or contract?**

To determine planning and other applications in accordance with government guidance and development plan policies.

To deal with breaches of planning control.

To provide advice to customers on the likelihood of gaining planning permission.

To respond to planning-related queries and complaints by telephone, letter and email.

To defend decisions at appeal.

Separate equality impact assessments are carried out for relevant larger developments and development briefs.

**1.2 Who does the service/policy/contract affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?**

The service affects potentially all members of the public, who may live near or have an interest in a new development.

The main customers are developers, property owners, architects, agents, amenity societies, town and parish councils, ward councillors, specialist consultees (internal and external), neighbouring residents and any other interested members of the public.

A planning consultant is used on an occasional basis to carry out a specific planning appeal. This effectively involves outsourcing paperwork to be done at the consultant's home/office and appearance as an expert witness and has no effect on equality policy.

**1.3 What equality information is available, including any evidence from engagement and analysis of use of services?**

The weekly list of planning applications received is sent to the East Grinstead Access Group. The group reviews relevant applications and provides appropriate comments to the case officer. These are taken into account in the decision making process.

The Planning Investigation and Enforcement Team works in partnership with the Highway Authority (West Sussex County Council) seeking the removal of street clutter such as 'A' boards for visually impaired people, wheelchair users, mobility scooters and parents with prams etc.

**1.4 What does this information tell us about the equality issues associated with the service and implications for the protected groups?**

Planning application information is now easily available via the internet. A duty planning officer is available every morning however, to provide help where required. Planning Officers are also able to visit those persons who have difficulty accessing our services on an appointment basis in their own homes.

Access to the Council Chamber for committee meetings and planning appeals for those persons with mobility problems is available via the chair lift. Hearing loops are also available.

Planning applications for extensions to homes to provide improved facilities for disabled persons are free of charge.

**1.5 Are contractors or partnerships used to deliver the service? Y/N**

If No go to section 2.

If yes, please refer to the guidance notes, particularly Appendix One of the MSDC Guidance "Integrating Equality and Diversity into Procurement", and complete the next three questions.

**Identify the contractors/partnerships used to deliver the service.**

An external planning consultant and barrister are occasionally used in the appeals process. These work from their own offices/chambers.

**What is their contribution to equality in service delivery and the promotion of equality?**

They tend not to meet the general public other than in pre-arranged meetings in the Council offices.

**How are equality issues addressed through contractual arrangements and service level agreements?**

As above, these are one off arrangements not involving the general public.

## 2. Assessment of Impact; Analysis and Action Planning

Any gaps in information or provision, opportunities to promote equalities and good relations identified above need to be translated into SMART actions and recorded here. These actions need to be delivered and monitored through the service planning process.

Opportunity to promote equality, good relations and/or address barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of different ethnic groups including white minorities, but also established white communities				
Language.	All planning policies are available on the council's website and a translation service is advertised on the front page. Customers can be referred to planning agents			
The needs of men and women including taking account of pregnancy and maternity.				
None identified.	N/A			
The needs of disabled people				
<p>Accessibility to council buildings and planning meetings</p> <p>Interaction with officers by blind or deaf people.</p>	<p>The new combined reception is fully accessible to and within for wheelchair users. Hearing loops and access ramp have been provided for committee meetings in the Council Chamber.</p> <p>Access to planning application information and the opportunity for comment are enabled through the website and main online planning register.</p> <p>Use of telephone and personal meetings are important with blind people but written communications (particularly computer-based emails) may be appropriate where accessed by carer/partner – individual customer to advise what is most appropriate.</p>	<p>Further improvements to the accessibility of the Council Chamber and reception area are being implemented through the Council's Capital programme in the current and next financial year.</p>	<p>Emma Grundy</p>	

<p>Positive engagement with East Grinstead Access Group.</p> <p>Addressing accessibility issues in new developments</p>	<p>Continued engagement with East Grinstead Disability Access Group and incorporation of comments into relevant planning applications</p> <p>Application of Supplementary Planning Document on Dwelling Space Standards, which ensures homes are more flexibly designed by providing more space – used as a material consideration in determining relevant planning applications. Has assisted Development Management officers in securing a suitable mix of housing sizes and types for all members of the community and been used to successfully defend relevant appeal decisions.</p> <p>There is an “Accessibility issues in new developments” page of the Council’s website <a href="http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/8348.htm">http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/8348.htm</a> , which includes Advice for Developers on accessibility requirements in Planning and Building Control Regulations</p>	<p>Review and update the information contained in the Accessibility issues in new developments webpage.</p>	<p>Andy Watt</p>	
<p>The needs of people with a religion or belief</p>				
<p>Lack of understanding of specific religious requirements/holidays.</p>	<p>Ensure no visits to relevant sites are carried out on religious holidays and officers are suitably, but realistically dressed.</p>			

Opportunity to promote equality and/or barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexual people				
None identified.	N/A			
Issues from marriage and civil partnership				
None identified.	N/A			
The needs of different age groups, for example older and younger people				
<p>Lack of internet access for older people in order to view plans online</p> <p>Pro-actively supporting appropriate planning applications for older persons' housing in the District</p>	<p>Suggest using facilities for free at libraries, which includes training or in the Council offices. We currently offer to send hard copies of plans on request, subject to an appropriate payment</p> <p>Planning applications at Osbourne House and The Brow in Burgess Hill, Buxshalls in Lindfield and Butlers Green Road Haywards Heath have been supported by the Development Management service.</p> <p>Developing positive District Plan policies where appropriate in consultation with Planning Policy section.</p>			
The needs of transgender communities				
None identified.	N/A			
The needs of people who are disadvantaged by socio-economic factors such as low incomes, skill or living in a deprived area				
Lack of knowledge of the process of planning permission by developers and neighbouring residents	Availability of duty planning officers and/or technical officers on demand in the mornings or by appointment. Officers are also available by telephone to provide advice.			

<p>Some difficulty in paying application or architect fees</p>	<p>Pre-application service for developers for specific schemes (subject to fee).</p> <p>Duty officer service for “householder” applicants without appointment or fee.</p> <p>Information on website and consultation letters.</p> <p>Planning fees are set by central government. Can advise customers to employ cheaper architectural technicians or surveyors, or to carry out the work themselves. Planning staff are available to assist when required.</p> <p>Pre-application charging scheme does not apply to voluntary organisations and Housing Associations</p>			
<p>The needs of people who live in a rural area</p>				
<p>Planning office located in Haywards Heath</p> <p>Planning committees held in Haywards Heath Council Chamber</p> <p>Planning policies distinguish between Rural and Urban locations</p>	<p>Developers, customers and agents are able to travel by bus, train and car, and park nearby.</p> <p>Application details available to view on website and at town/parish council offices.</p> <p>Car parking freely available</p> <p>Local planning policies reflect central government guidance and as long as the decision-making process is transparent and fully</p>			

	justified, then it can be demonstrated that applicants are being treated the same.			
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### 3. Mid Sussex District Council Equality Impact Assessment Summary

Key Findings	Future Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development Management is one of the Council’s main frontline services and interacts with a variety of customers.</li> <li>• Recent improvements to accessibility have been achieved at the Oaklands offices in Haywards Heath through the movement of the former separate planning reception into a new combined reception in the main building.</li> <li>• All of the Planning Committee meetings are held at the Council Chamber in Haywards Heath, which is an accessible venue in terms of offering a chair lift and hearing loop.</li> <li>• The Development Management Team work with the Disability Access East Grinstead Area Group to get their input to planning applications for public buildings where there are access issues.</li> <li>• The Team have input to the development of District Plan policies that they implement and which have implications for the protected groups. For example housing mix.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further work is planned from the Council’s capital programme to deliver improvements to the accessibility of the reception area and the Council Chamber.</li> <li>• Review and update the information contained in the Accessibility issues in New Developments page of the website.</li> </ul>

### 4. Signing off this assessment and action plan



Signature .....  
 Person undertaking the assessment

Date .....27 November 2014.....



Signature .....  
 Head of Service

Date ...27 November 2014.....

Please send your completed impact assessment to Neal Barton for publication on the website.