

Equality Impact Assessment

Reintroduce the planning pre-application service to support customers in progressing their applications

Section 1: Introduction and background

What is being assessed?	PreApplication Planning advice service
Business unit	Development Management and Planning Support
Job title of assessor	Executive Head of Service (Planning and Regulation)
Strategic Management Lead	Piers Mason
Date of assessment	29/11/2021
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New

Description of the function or policy, including:

- The aims and scope
- The main beneficiaries or users
- The main equality issues and barriers, and the protected characteristics¹ they relate to (not all assessments will encounter issues relating to every protected characteristic)

Reintroduce the planning pre-application service to support customers in progressing their applications

Pre-application engagement should lead to high quality and appropriate development schemes being granted planning permission more quickly. Early, collaborative discussions between developers, public sector agencies and the communities can help to shape better quality, more accepted schemes. These developments can be brought forward more quickly and deliver improved outcomes for the community. These discussions also avoid wasted effort and costs.

Users can be residents, developers and planning agents.

This assessment has found no impacts (positive or negative) for people with protected characteristics.

Description of how the function or policy fits into the Council's Corporate Priorities or other local, regional or national plans and priorities

Council Strategy 2019-2024

¹The protected characteristics are age, sex, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership (Source: Equality Act 2010)

The service is designed to meet the guiding principles of Putting People First (by ensuring that we engage at an early stage on planning matters for the benefit of all), Openness and Accessibility (by giving advice on planning matters to residents and business in a formal framework), Acting Sustainably (by ensuring that planning proposals meet the latest policy requirements), and Living within our Means (by ensuring that the Council recovers its costs from giving advice).

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 (to 2024/25)

The introduction of this service will also enable MVDC to deliver against the Financial Objective in the Medium Term Financial Strategy: “To ensure a balanced budget, without any budgeted use of reserves to support underlying spending, from April 2022, in order to: ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of MVDC; protect services to Mole Valley residents, communities and businesses; and recognise the needs of Council Tax payers.”

Section 2: Analysis and assessment

Indicate for each protected characteristic whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, a mixture of both or no impact – using a tick <input type="checkbox"/> in the appropriate columns				
Protected characteristics	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Age			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Sex			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Disability			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Race and ethnicity			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Religion and belief			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The

Indicate for each protected characteristic whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, a mixture of both or no impact – using a tick <input type="checkbox"/> in the appropriate columns				
Protected characteristics	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
				nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Gender reassignment			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Sexual orientation			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Marriage and civil partnership			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Other aspects to consider	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Carers			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.
Rural/urban access issues			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.

Indicate for each protected characteristic whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, a mixture of both or no impact – using a tick in the appropriate columns

Protected characteristics	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
HR issues (how will staff with protected characteristics be affected?)			✓	It is not compulsory to use the service, it is at the users' discretion. The service can be accessed through a variety of medium. The nature of the advice given is not affected by a protected characteristic.

What can be done to reduce the effects of any negative impacts?
Where negative impact cannot be completely diminished, can this be justified, and is it lawful?

N/A

Where there are positive impacts, what changes have been or will be made?
Who are the beneficiaries? How have they benefited?

N/A

Section 3: Evidence gathering and fact-finding

What evidence is available to support your views above?
Please include:

- A summary of the available evidence
- Identification of where there are gaps in the evidence (this may identify a need for more evidence in the action plan)
- What information is currently captured with respect to usage and take up of services.
- What the current situation is in relation to equality and diversity monitoring (where relevant)

This is the reintroduction of a previously provided service but within a different framework. There are no records of the previous service, which would have been similar, except for the pricing structure, having had a negative or positive impact on groups with protected characteristics. The Council is following best practice advice

provided by the Planning Advisory Service, which is funded through the Local Government Association.

How have stakeholders been involved in this assessment?
Who are they, and what is their view?

No, for the reasons set out above.

Recommendations

Summary of the main recommendations (if any) arising from the assessment

No recommendations.

Section 4: Action Plan

Actions needed to implement the EqlA recommendations (if any)

Issue	Action	Expected outcome	Who	Deadline for action
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a