

Equality Impact Assessment

2021

Altogether better



Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

NB: The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	Development and Housing
Lead Officer	Graham Wood
Title	Economic Development Manager
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	
Cabinet Date (if relevant)	10 February 2021
Start Date	21 July 2020, updated January 2021
Review Date	August 2021

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Towns and Villages Investment Plan – a refocused approach to regeneration

On 12 December 2018, Cabinet agreed an initial report that sought to address the issues that had been identified by local communities as most important to them. The issues ranged from the need to support local retail to problems with vacant buildings and land, the condition of the environment and the impact of private landlords and empty properties, with a range of pilot activity commenced to address some of these immediate priorities. The report acknowledged that the Towns and Villages programme should be aligned to existing regeneration activity, assist in accelerating the delivery of projects and tackle issues which were prioritised by communities.

This integrated approach to regeneration has led to a current operational investment programme of more than £750 million covering Town Centres, Employment, Transport infrastructure and Housing investment schemes across the County. Following this success, on 14 October 2020 the County Durham Towns and Villages Strategy was agreed together with a further £20million commitment. This is to provide the opportunity to enable the accelerated delivery of council strategies and priorities through a greater understanding of both the needs and opportunities that exist within our communities. This will be evidence led using a consistent people based evidence base; to align both Council and partner activity in what is planned; to realign activity to ensure that it meets the specific needs of the communities and

then use allocated funding to strengthen and maximise the outcomes particularly related to community resilience and increasing confidence in our most disadvantaged areas.

The Towns and Villages Strategy provides a mechanism for accelerating the delivery of established priorities and themes as set out with strategies such as the Council Vision and Housing Strategy and provides a particular focus on those areas of the county which are the most deprived. It also enables us to help address the Climate Change Emergency and respond to the impacts from the COVID 19 pandemic by supporting the County's recover and build long term resilience. In particular, the need to develop and strengthen community capacity and resilience going forward is a clear priority in ensuring a strong economic and healthy future.

The Coronavirus pandemic (COVID19), is one of the most profound challenges society has faced in more than a generation, has occurred and we now need to anticipate how society will be affected. During the pandemic the council has worked with national, regional and local partners to protect our communities. We will continue to support those most affected, through a refocused approach to place based regeneration. Addressing the inequalities our residents may face as a result of the discriminatory way COVID19 has affected some of our most vulnerable in going to have firm foundations in our communities: ensuring our residents have the right support at the right time within thriving neighbourhoods.

In order to ensure that focus is directed to the regeneration areas where the biggest impacts are possible, an evidence base has been developed which considers a range of indicators including, employment, housing, health and crime with data considered for all of our communities at the Middle Super Output Area (MSOA). Whilst the Towns and Villages programme will be focused on the most deprived areas, there is a recognition that there will be opportunities to improve all towns and villages across the county. An allocation of funding amounting to £300,000 will therefore be made available via each of the 14 AAPs to deliver localised environmental enhancements, improvements to connectivity and to ensure community resilience

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):

The general public will be consulted upon individual projects as appropriate.

Projects included within the Investment Plan will be identified across council services and other Partners in line with Towns and Villages Strategy.
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Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?
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Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	?	?
Disability	?	?
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	?	?
Pregnancy and maternity	?	?
Race (ethnicity)	?	?
Religion or Belief	?	?
Sex (gender)	?	?
Sexual orientation	?	?
Transgender	?	?

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact.
Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

We will continue to support those most affected, through a refocused approach to place based regeneration. Addressing the inequalities some residents may face as a result of the disproportionate impact COVID19 on different protected groups is going to have firm foundations in our approach: ensuring our residents have the right support at the right time within thriving neighbourhoods. It is uncertain to predict specific impacts on protected characteristics at this stage although negative impact is not anticipated and positive impacts will become apparent as individual projects begin to materialise.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

The Investment Plan is in conformity with the Towns and Villages Strategy which aims to advance equality of opportunity. In order to improve the economic and social wellbeing and health of our people, there is a robust and credible evidence base to develop our thinking from. There is a well-developed health gap between more affluent areas and the more deprived areas. Refocusing our approach to regeneration and service delivery can help to address these inequalities and reduce this unacceptable gap. By creating and providing safe, thriving and resilient communities with good quality housing and environments, good schools and access to more and better jobs opportunities all serve to improve the health and well-being of our people. Although beneficial to all,

positive impact of this investment plan is more likely in terms of disability, age (younger and older), ethnic minorities and sex (women and men). Tackling inequalities and applying this premise to our place base approach will improve outcomes for our towns and villages.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

An evidence base has been developed which considers a range of indicators including, employment, housing, health and crime with data considered for all of our communities at the Middle Super Output Area (MSOA). There are 66 MSOAs in County Durham and in developing the evidence base, the council has identified the MSOAs to focus on and the issues to tackle in each area.

The MSOAs that perform worst against the ten indices are: Horden; Shildon; Easington Colliery South and Eden Hill; Annfield Plain South and South Moor; Blackhalls; Bishop Auckland and South Church; Thornley, Deaf Hill and Wheatley Hill; Shotton Colliery; Spennymoor – Green Lane and Dean Bank; Coundon and Willington South; Dalton-le-Dale and Deneside; Newton Aycliffe Central; Cornforth and Ferryhill; Easington Colliery North; Henknowle and Woodhouse Close; and Craghead and South Stanley.

This place-based evidence at a MSOA level combined with population management data the council has developed with the NHS during the COVID19 response, enables us to understand aspects of people's lives and the most vulnerable in our communities. Focusing on more targeted interventions to reduce these inequality gaps allows us to be more efficient with our resources, combine partner activity, empower people to utilise the assets and opportunities by effectively directing regeneration efforts to the areas where it is most needed and being proactive with support at an earlier point to prevent the escalation of need.

Engagement Update (November 2020)

Between 20 October and 12 November 2020 14 Action Area Partnership (AAP) events were held. Area Action Partnerships (AAP's) include local elected members, members of the voluntary and community sector, business and the public. Sessions were generally positive with lots of suggestions being put forward. There were 626 attendees across the 14 partnerships. Events were held virtually (due to Covid) and a chat function was used for comments / questions.

Feedback included themes that were relevant to issues of equality and protected characteristics, specifically age, disability, pregnancy and maternity and sex. These were:

- a need for support for retailers and businesses which would especially benefit those who relied more on local services such as older persons, younger people, people with disabilities and young mothers;
- ensure good quality of design of our places and spaces which would be particularly relevant to the protected characteristics of older persons, people with disabilities, pregnancy and maternity and sex (women) who may feel more able to use places and spaces due to better design and accessibility.
- meeting the community's housing needs especially around bungalows and specialist accommodation, which would be particularly relevant the housing needs of older persons and including people with disabilities.
- Homes for veterans, which would be relevant to the protected characteristics of age and disability
- the identification of improved opportunities for healthy living which would especially relevant to and benefit those with the protected characteristics of disability, age, pregnancy and maternity and sex (women); who may be in more need of improved opportunities for healthy living or face barriers to opportunities for healthy living.
- improved connectivity through public transport, walk cycling and broadband connectivity, which would be particularly relevant to older persons and younger people who are more likely to rely on public transport;
- traffic and parking which would also be relevant to people with the protected characteristic of disability regarding disabled parking provision.
- investment in community facilities, which would be especially relevant to the protected characteristics of age (older persons, younger persons), people with disabilities, pregnancy and maternity, who may be more likely to benefit from community facilities.

The feedback was then considered by each of the AAP Boards and out of the suggestions put forwards, priorities for the AAPs were shared. This engagement has helped to shape many of the priorities for Towns and Villages based around the five themes: strategic investments; housing and community; environment and health; built environment and transport and connectivity. The priorities put forward were wide ranging and reflected the challenges within those areas including issues of rurality or deprivation. This engagement will continue as part of the further development of the Towns and Villages investment proposals and will be reflected in further updates to Cabinet.

Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/ all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Equality analysis will be undertaken for individual projects
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	

Sign off

Lead officer sign off: Spatial Policy Team Leader	Date:12/01/21
Service equality representative sign off: Equality and Diversity Officer	Date: 12/01/21

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to section two.

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

If you are unsure of potential impact please contact the corporate research and equalities team for further advice at equalities@durham.gov.uk