

## **PLAN: MK AND SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN EqIA**

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This is an Equality Impact Assessment to inform the development of Supported and Community Transport. Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

The duty to pay 'due regard' is required to be demonstrated in the decision making and the implementation process. Assessing the potential equality impact of proposed projects that are part of the programme is the means by which we show 'due regard'.

### **1. Introduction**

In large programmes such as this, the council has found it useful to have an EqIA that outlines some of the key equality issues. The aim is to have a brief, useful document that spotlights relevant issues and the particular groups of people who will need particular regard.

### **2. People affected**

The Site Allocations Plan is being prepared to support the delivery of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy (adopted July 2013), to maintain a five year land supply of deliverable housing sites. Cabinet is recommended to approve the Site Allocations Plan: Issues and Options document for an eight-week consultation period.

When adopted, Plan: MK will be the new Local Plan for Milton Keynes, reviewing and replacing the Core Strategy and the saved policies of the existing Milton Keynes Local Plan. It will include an overarching development strategy for the Borough, development management policies to be used in the determination of planning applications and site allocations for various sorts of land uses.

### **3. The topics assessed**

#### **3.1 Site Allocation Plan**

The Site Allocation Plan contains a vision and objectives. The key aim in terms of advancing equality will be that site allocation is linked to good transport links and employment opportunities.

There is a marked passive approach to equality in these plans. For example, while environmental issues are noted the effects on people are rarely mentioned. However, there is reason to believe that the plan has positive aspects, but these need to be better reviewed within the plan. By virtue of their close proximity to key public transport routes, new homes will also have contributed to maximising access to travel and employment, yet this is not specifically mentioned.

Recommendation: that the relevant people factors are included in the site allocation assessment framework.

#### **3.2 Issues Consultation**

In general, there is a lack of real consideration of the diversity and needs of the people of Milton Keynes. This is typified by a passive approach to equalities. The vision and strategy is not explicit about building an accessible borough, nor does it mention lifetime homes standard and other similar people-based issues. How is Milton Keynes to build a mixed vibrant community in the future and be flexible enough to meet their needs for accommodation?

There are twelve Topic Papers. Presented below are the immediate issues that will need to be considered:

- Vision and Aims and the Development Strategy: there is so much in the vision and aims that will advance equality of opportunity. However, a sustainable and thriving community is one, which has good design, is accessible, and fosters good community relations.
- The Duty to Cooperate: this issue is only beneficial to equality
- Growth in Housing: The evidence base for the number of specialist houses is questionable. For example, is it seriously saying that there will only be a need for 12 houses for those with physical disabilities before 2031 and 12 houses for people with a mental impairment? The Gypsy and Traveller community had a citizen's jury, which will feed into this topic.
- Employment and Economic Development: At the centre of producing equality for people is providing sustainable economic growth for all. MK has more jobs than working-age people living within its boundaries.

- Town Centres and Retail; this issue is only beneficial to equality
- Transport and Travel: Accessible transport is a key to equality in Milton Keynes. In the past people with disabilities and older people have been the last people to be considered. Can an accessible transport system for all be a central aim of the transport strategy?
- Rural Issues; this issue is only beneficial to equality
- Provision of Physical and Social Infrastructure; this section includes so many aspects that promote equality it is important we more closely outline the benefits. Further consideration of faith communities, building on past work is required.
- Quality of Place; Quality of Place is about more than just the design and quality of buildings; it is also about the spaces between them and our enjoyment of the environment. The design of a place is integral to the way it works; the way people use an area or travel around it; the way that people feel about it, and whether they enjoy spending time there; how easy it is to understand or interpret the space, what it is used for and how to move through it. Again, there is very little about how the diversity of people in terms of age, disability, or community relations is influencing design. How barriers are placed in the environment. Can we adopt inclusiveness by design principals?
- Culture and Recreation; this issue is only beneficial to equality
- Open Space and the Natural Environment; this issue is only beneficial to equality
- Climate Change and Sustainability; this issue is only beneficial to equality

#### **4. Recommendation**

This assessment has reviewed the issues that arise from the topic papers and suggests that the traditional approach to equality in previous Plans and/or Frameworks could be described as a passive.

Whilst many areas of the Plan: MK are not relevant to equality, there are key areas where there is a need to question the evidence base and have due regard to how people are affected. The assessment has raised key questions in the areas of disability, religious organisations, and the creation of diversity of housing to meet preferences of a diverse community – this includes issues of overcrowding and the needs of gypsy and travellers. After the consultation periods, a further EqIA will support a more active consideration of these issues.