

The New Plan for North Dorset

Draft Equality Impact Assessment on the Consultation Process

November 2009



North Dorset District Council

**Core Strategy and
Development Management Policies
Development Plan Document**

**Draft Equality Impact Assessment
on the consultation process**

November 2009

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background to the Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is a systematic way of examining whether a new or existing function, policy or process differentially affects any person or group of persons. Functions, policies and processes do not affect everyone in the same way. People from different ethnic backgrounds, disabled people, men and women (including transgender), older people, younger people, people of different faiths, gay men, lesbians, bisexual and heterosexual people may need and experience different things from the built environment. They may also encounter different barriers when it comes to accessing planning services or participating in consultation exercises.
- 1.2. In order to provide accessible services and create inclusive environments, we need to understand the needs and aspirations of the diverse communities within the District. An EqIA enables the potential and actual processes and effects of policy to be examined, and improvements or changes introduced, to ensure fairness and encourage diversity. In this instance, the Council is consulting on the Draft Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (draft DPD) and is assessing whether the consultation process has the potential to be discriminatory and to ensure that the way in which we communicate and the events we organise are available and accessible to everyone in the District.
- 1.3. By building an EqIA into the consultation process it will help to avoid inappropriate core strategies and policies being developed. A second EqIA will assess the strategy and policies prior to submission of the DPD to the Secretary of State in 2010. It will be in a simple accessible language that will help communities understand how the policies will impact on them.

Legal requirements on equality and diversity

- 1.4. An EqIA is a statutory requirement under legislation¹ and are recognised as good practice nationally in the Equality Standard for Local Government (that has taken over from Best Value). On 27 April 2009 the government published the Equality Bill², which is expected to come into force from autumn 2010. The purpose of the Equality Bill is to consolidate existing legislation. It contains new measures, which are intended to strengthen protection against discrimination. The Equality Duty is a key part of this bill that requires public bodies to consider the needs of diverse groups in the community when designing and delivering

¹ Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and Sex Discrimination Act 2007

² http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/NEWGEO_FairerFuture_may09_acc.pdf

public services so that people can get fairer opportunities and better public services.

- 1.5. The diverse groups in the community have been divided into six equality strands. They are:

Age

Disability

Gender

Race

Religion/Belief

Sexual Orientation

- 1.6. Building on the current legal requirements the Council adopted its own Equality Scheme³ in August 2009. In North Dorset we value the increasing diversity in our rural communities and want to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged unfairly by their age, gender, race, faith, disability or sexual orientation. However, the corporate scheme introduced a seventh strand - **vulnerable people**. These are those people where support is required to enable or promote independent living and safe and active participation in the community.
- 1.7. The equality strands are not homogenous as people within these groups have different needs and some will be members of several groups, but by incorporating an EqIA into our consultation exercise it is hoped that issues relevant in our communities will be embedded as desired outcomes in our strategic plans. For example where population densities are low and transport links are relatively poor, rurality can cause multiple disadvantages in relation to isolation, distance and access to services, a lack of shared community perspective and transport difficulties.
- 1.8. A separate Planning EqIA is being prepared that covers the wider service delivery issues for Development Control, Planning Policy, Environment and Building Control.
- 1.9. The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West⁴, in Section 10 also seeks to ensure that people are treated fairly and can participate in society and this is reinforced in Policy SI1 that requires Local Authorities to undertake EqIAs and to take steps to mitigate any negative effects.

³ The North Dorset Corporate Equality Scheme (August 2009)

⁴ The Draft Revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West, incorporating the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes (July 2008)

National & regional consultation requirements

- 1.10. In terms of the consultation process and procedures for development plan documents planning regulations⁵ outline what is required legally. National policy in the form of PPS12 sets out further advice on the production of core strategies and the principles for community engagement in the planning process. It states that involvement should be:
- Appropriate to the level of planning;
 - From the outset – leading to a sense of ownership of local policy decisions;
 - Continuous – part of an ongoing programme, not a one-off event, with clearly articulated opportunities for continuing involvement;
 - Transparent and accessible – using methods appropriate to the communities concerned; and
 - Planned as an integral part of the process for making plans.
- 1.11. With respect to core strategies, PPS 12 provides more guidance on what ‘appropriate to the level of planning’ means. The Government’s view is that when preparing a core strategy, it is ‘appropriate to involve the community in considering the options for the strategy before the final document is produced’. In effect, this means that the Council needs to prepare a ‘preferred options-type’ document (that used to be required under ‘old’ Regulation 26) and this is the draft DPD we are consulting on now.
- 1.12. Community involvement is an essential element in delivering sustainable development. PPS1 paragraph 13 states that ‘planning authorities should ensure that communities are able to contribute to ideas about how that vision can be achieved, have the opportunity to participate in the process of drawing up the vision, strategy and specific plan policies, and to be involved in development proposals.’ Paragraph 40 explains that ‘the outcomes from planning affect everyone, and everyone must therefore have the opportunity to play a role in delivering effective and inclusive planning.’
- 1.13. For everyone to play an active role in the process we need to build a clear understanding of the make-up, interests and needs of the communities in the District. Some groups may be less well equipped to engage with the planning system so an inclusive approach needs to be taken to ensure that different groups have the opportunity to participate and are not disadvantaged in the process. Identifying and understanding the needs of these groups who find it difficult to engage with the planning system is critical to achieving sustainable development objectives.

⁵ The Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004 (As amended 2008)

2.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

2.1. The Council's approach to community involvement in preparing the Local Development Framework, of which this draft DPD is one element, is outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that was adopted in July 2006. The SCI advances corporate priorities identified by the Council. The corporate priorities are:

A - Access and Affordable Housing Improving access to services and the supply of and access to affordable housing

B - Building Corporate Capacity Making the best use of resources

C – Community Supporting active and inclusive communities

2.2. The SCI advances priorities "A" and "C" in particular. It does this by involving the community more closely in the preparation of planning policy and confirms that during the planning process the Council will:

- Respects the public's views
- Be understanding
- Listen and learn
- Be open and accessible in reporting and decision making
- Be inclusive
- Nurture self belief

2.3. It is the Council's belief that everyone should live, learn, work and visit the District free from discrimination, harassment and prejudice. The Council has a clear commitment to support the development of strong, secure, self reliant communities and recognises that the nature of its rural and sparsely populated area can lead to isolation, and that this isolation can be a double disadvantage to groups of people who may already be suffering from social and institutional discrimination.

2.4. The SCI outlines how the community will be involved in the DPD process, the role of the Community Partnerships, when the community will be consulted, who will be consulted, how they will be consulted and what methods will be used. The SCI was based on the procedures outlined in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. However, in 2008 the Government streamlined the LDF process and amended the above regulations. Under the new requirements the procedures associated with preparing a DPD have been amended and this has resulted in the SCI no longer directly relating to the new stages of the process.

- 2.5. One of the key legal compliance tests at examination is whether a DPD has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Since the current SCI refers to the consultation arrangements under the old Regulations, it will need to be revised to reflect the procedural arrangements in the 'new' Regulations and this will be completed at a later date. In the meantime by undertaking an EqIA of the consultation process will ensure that even if the letter of the adopted SCI cannot sensibly be adhered, to due to changes to the regulations, the intentions in terms of appropriate community involvement throughout the plan preparation period, are.
- 2.6. In a report to Cabinet on 20 April 2009 the Planning Policy Manager outlined the new approach to public participation on the draft DPD. Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended) requires a Council to: (a) notify organisations and people in the District of the subject of a DPD they propose to prepare; and (b) invite organisations and people in the District to make representations about what a DPD ought to contain. The revised approach for community involvement was outlined in a letter to all residents on 24 April 2009. The letter identified the following three strands of public participation for the draft DPD.
- 2.7. **Strand 1** – inviting comments on what the DPD ought to contain. The Council has already undertaken two rounds of consultation on the issues that the Core Strategy ought to address. These were: a series of focus group meetings in July 2005; and consultation on Issues and Alternative Options in June / July 2007. The Council had regard to the results of these consultation exercises in taking forward the draft DPD. However, a further opportunity to make comments has been given in the light of the Council's new approach and a further opportunity to comment on the draft DPD will be given in Strand 3 below.
- 2.8. **Strand 2** – the production of a series of 'topic papers'. The first set of topic papers were published in August 2009 to enable informed debate to take place with organisations, landowners, developers and individuals about how the Council is taking forward its planning policy. They were made available on the Council's website and letters were sent to everyone on the consultation database. The papers covered the spatial strategy for the District, housing, economy, environment and transport. This debate will be able to take place throughout the preparation of the DPD as topic papers will be updated as evidence based studies are concluded.
- 2.9. **Strand 3** – consultation on the draft DPD. This more formal and time-limited exercise will allow the public and statutory bodies to comment on policy options in the draft DPD. The Council will consider all representations prior to preparing a final version of the DPD which will be published in the summer 2010 prior to submission to the Secretary of State in the autumn.

- 2.10. The planned consultation exercise it is hoped will take place in the period from 15 March 2010 to 26 April 2010. Under the new regulations a local planning authority needs to consider which of the 'specific consultation bodies' and 'general consultation bodies' it should consult and whether it is appropriate to invite representations from 'persons who are resident or carrying on business' in the area. Since the DPD relates to the whole District it is intended to consult widely on it. A number of the general consultation bodies have a specific interest in diversity and equality and they are summarised in Appendix 1.
- 2.11. Meetings and additional support will be offered to all these identified target **groups**. Some of these groups, in particular the Older Persons Forum, Treads and Toby's, are in fact the focus groups identified in the Corporate Equality Scheme. Their views and participation of will actively be sought.
- 2.12. Consultation on the draft DPD will not be restricted to those that the Council writes to. In addition the draft DPD will:
- 2.13. Be promoted in the **local media** and advice on how to comment or participate will be explained. A short article has been placed in the December 2009 edition of the Open Line magazine which is produced by the Council and sent to all households in the District. The article gives a summary of progress on the Core Strategy to date and confirms that public consultation is to take place in the New Year. This magazine is available in alternative formats and languages on request;
- 2.14. Be placed on the Council **website** together with other supporting information, reports and assessments under the Planning Policy Section and promoted specifically on the home page of the website under 'Latest Council News';
- 2.15. Be made available in **hard copy** format at local libraries, at council offices and on request free of charge. All documents will be made available in a variety of formats and languages on request. Where possible technical jargon will be avoided and a glossary of special terms will be included;
- 2.16. Be promoted at **public exhibitions** throughout the District where planning policy officers will be available to answer questions and explain policies. The exhibitions will take place in the four main towns as they are seen as the most accessible to residents in both the urban and rural parts of the District on a variety of days (ideally on market days when people usually come to town). The buildings used will be accessible to all residents, but especially those with disabilities. The exhibitions will be open all day and into the evening in a family friendly environment to encourage participation. Following the last exhibition the display boards will be erected in the main reception area at the Council office in Blandford Forum;

- 2.17. Existing **networks** will also be utilised, in particular Community Partnerships and town and parish councils. They will also be sent posters to place on the community notice boards explaining how people can take part in the consultation process.
- 2.18. In addition, officers will be available to take calls, e-mail or meet individuals on a one to one basis where appropriate. All people will be treated fairly and advised of different forms of material suitable to their needs regardless of ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief.
- 2.19. Comments on the draft DPD can be made through a variety of means including using a standard comment form that can be downloaded from our website or will be available at the exhibitions, by letter or e-mail. The standard form also includes equalities monitoring questions that will enable us to fill in any gaps in our knowledge in relation to the equality strands. In certain circumstances verbal comments will be noted if those involved are unable to respond in writing.

3.0. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 3.1. This EqlA has been based largely on the guidance from the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (IDeA), but also takes into consideration the advice of the Planning Advisory Service⁶ and uses the toolkit⁷ prepared by South West Regional Assembly which also suggests that EqlA's are built into the information gathering and community involvement phases of the LDF process to avoid inappropriate strategies being put in place.
- 3.2. In preparing an EqlA the IDeA recommend that a six step process is followed. The six steps are:
- 1 Initial screening
 - 2 Scoping and defining
 - 3 Information gathering
 - 4 Making a judgement
 - 5 Action planning
 - 6 Publication and review

Step 1 – Initial screening

- 3.3. The IDeA recommends that an initial screening takes place for all new and revised policies, strategies, procedures and functions to determine whether or not it is necessary to carry out a full EqlA for this area of activity.
- 3.4. As new equality legislation has been introduced since the SCI was adopted and the fact that new regulations require a different approach to consultation procedures than those outlined in the SCI it seems appropriate to carry out an EqlA at this time. By completing an EqlA of the consultation process we can ensure that intentions of the SCI in terms of appropriate community involvement throughout the plan preparation period are met.
- 3.5. As mentioned previously a second EqlA will be completed for the policies within the DPD prior to submission.

⁶ Equality and Diversity: Improving planning outcomes for the whole community (September 2008)

⁷ Equality Impact Assessment of Local Development Frameworks – A Toolkit for local authorities in the South West

Step 2 – Scoping and defining

- 3.6. In scoping and defining this EqlA it is important to understand the aim of the consultation exercise that is to enable as many residents, businesses and others with an interest in the District as possible, including the traditionally hard to reach groups, and to take an active part in developing the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies. In order to do this the draft DPD needs to be presented and available in a variety of accessible forms.
- 3.7. This EqlA will focus mainly on Strand 3 of the consultation process, however, Strand 2 and 1 have played an important role in shaping the draft DPD to date. Strand 1 invited comments on what the DPD ought to contain and was completed in accordance with the SCI and legislation at the time. Strand 2 produced a range of topic papers that have enabled debate and prompted comment. The papers will continue keep everyone informed and will be updated as evidence based studies conclude.
- 3.8. The IDeA recommends that the different perspectives, experiences and challenges are made use of when completing an EqlA. The idea is that those responsible for delivering the strategy are involved and others with technical expertise or with specialist knowledge are involved where appropriate.
- 3.9. This EqlA has been led by Trevor Warrick (Planning Policy Manager) the report has been prepared by Sarah Jennings (Planning Policy Officer) who together with the Planning Policy Team have been responsible for preparing the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies. The technical expertise and specialist knowledge of Mark Williams (Reputation and Improvement Manager) have also been utilised together with members of the Council's Customer Access and Equalities Group who have acted as a critical friends on particular equality strands.

Step 3 – Information gathering

3.10. Step 3 of the EqIA is to identify sources of information that can be used to assist in the determination of whether the consultation process is likely to have an adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community. IDeA recommends using Census data and national and local statistics. Guidance from the PAS however, recognises that local authorities need to go beyond this in order to capture recent demographic changes and to the needs, experiences and aspirations of local groups.

3.11. In undertaking this assessment the following sources of information have been used:

- Census data
- National and local statistics
- NDDC Corporate Equality Scheme 2009-2012
- Dorset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, Anglia Ruskin University (March 2007)
- Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand, Fordham Research 2008
- Gurkhas in Blandford - Dorset Race Equalities Council Group 2009
- Officer's experience and knowledge in particular from the staff on the Customer Access and Equalities Group.

3.12. Table 1 below gives a summary of data for each equality strand in North Dorset

Table 1 - Summary of data for each equality strand in North Dorset

Equality Group	North Dorset Summary																												
Age	<p>The 2007⁸ population figure for North Dorset was 67, 600 with an age structure as follows:</p> <p>Age 0-15 (19.2%) Age 16-RA (56.8%) Age RA+ (24.1%) (RA = Retirement age 60 (Females)/65 (Males))</p> <p>The proportion of younger people is greater than elsewhere in the County due to the number of communal establishments, such as Blandford Camp and the presence of several large boarding schools in the District. The percentage of young children between the ages of 0 and 15 in the County is 16.8%.</p> <p>Older people make up a higher proportion of the District's population than is found nationally. In North Dorset 24.1% of the population is of retirement age compared to 19% in England and Wales.</p> <p>48% of the population live in the four main settlements of: Blandford Forum (9,490) Gillingham (11,480) Shaftesbury (7,110) Sturminster Newton (3,970)</p>																												
Disability	<p>Gathering accurate information on disability is difficult, not least because it is often personal perception that dictates whether an individual regards themselves as disabled or not.</p> <p>One indicator of the prevalence of disability amongst the population is the level of people claiming disability related state benefits. In February 2009⁹ there were 2365 people in the District claiming Disability Living Allowance and 1920 claiming Attendance Allowance (over 65s). The spatial distribution of those claiming these benefits is similar to the distribution of the population in general.</p> <p>A second indicator is the figures released by Dorset County Council¹⁰ that currently show that there are 3,200 people in North Dorset with a registered disability.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="534 1489 1356 1702"> <thead> <tr> <th>Disability</th> <th>Over 18</th> <th>Under 18</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Blind</td> <td>331</td> <td>4</td> <td>335</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Partially sighted</td> <td>420</td> <td>1</td> <td>421</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deaf with speech</td> <td>146</td> <td>3</td> <td>149</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deaf without speech</td> <td>15</td> <td>0</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hard of hearing</td> <td>798</td> <td>1</td> <td>799</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Severely or appreciably disabled</td> <td>1390</td> <td>9</td> <td>1399</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Disability	Over 18	Under 18	Total	Blind	331	4	335	Partially sighted	420	1	421	Deaf with speech	146	3	149	Deaf without speech	15	0	15	Hard of hearing	798	1	799	Severely or appreciably disabled	1390	9	1399
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⁸ ONS: Mid Year Estimates Population

⁹ DWP: Information Directorate

¹⁰ Corporate Equality Scheme 2009-2012 – North Dorset District Council

Equality Group	North Dorset Summary
Gender	<p>The 2007¹¹ figures show that the population within the District is almost balanced equally between males and females.</p> <p>34,064 (50.4%) females 33,562 (49.6%) males</p> <p>Nationally there are 104 females for every 100 males.</p> <p>Gender roles and relationships are more flexible than they used to be. Historically women can be disadvantaged by policies and practices that may not recognise their greater caring responsibilities, differences in the patterns of their working lives and their potentially greater vulnerability to domestic violence and sexual assault. Men, similarly can also be disadvantaged in some circumstances due to workplace cultures and access to some services.</p>
Race	<p>In the 2001 Census 3.4% of the Districts population classed themselves as not being “White British” (i.e. from a black and minority ethnic (BME) group) which is lower than the proportion for England (13%). However, 1.49% described themselves as White Other and 0.5% as White Irish reflecting the number of gypsies and travellers in the District.</p> <p>A further survey into gypsies and travellers In a 2007¹² found literacy levels of respondents poor with 62% claiming difficulty in completing forms, 55% with writing letters, and 53% with reading newspapers. By their very nature gypsy and travellers are transient. Of those responding to the survey, 22% claimed to travel only in Dorset (26% said they had not been outside Dorset in the past year), and a further 20% only in the South-West; 13% said that they travelled outside the UK.</p> <p>The remaining 1.38% of the Districts population described themselves as Mixed (0.47%), Asian or Asian British (0.4%), Black or Black British (0.12%) or Chinese or Other (0.38%).</p> <p>Migrant workers are increasingly playing an important role in the local economy. Data from the DWP recording the number of national insurance (NINO) registrations allocated to non-UK national gives an indication of the numbers of migrant workers coming to North Dorset to work and live. In 2007/08 the number of new registrations was 290, although this has dropped down from the 370 in 2006/07. The largest proportions (69%) are from the Accession Countries with Poland being the most common country of origin. In terms of distribution, NINO data is gathered at a Ward level. Higher numbers of registration are recorded for the market towns of Gillingham and Sturminster Newton.</p> <p>Recent research by the Dorset Race Equality Council into the Nepalese families at Blandford Camp identified language problems, poor public transport links, no Post Office facility at the Camp, inadequate Nepali food products in local stores, racism, poor understanding of cultural differences in the classroom and lack of children’s and teenage facilities in Blandford. Ghurkha wives faced several barriers to employment including educational underachievement, discrimination, and lack of affordable and appropriate childcare, training and travel costs.</p>

¹¹ ONS: Mid Year Estimates Population

¹² Dorset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment – Anglia Ruskin University (March 2007)

Equality Group	North Dorset Summary
Religion or Belief	<p>The 2001 Census again provides the best source of information on religious affiliation. England is largely a Christian country with a majority (71%) of respondents stating that they follow that religion. In North Dorset 78% of the population described themselves as Christian. Within the District 21% either refused to give an answer or expressed no religious belief. Less than 1% of the Districts residents expressed an affiliation to a non-Christian religion (the figure for England was 5.7%).</p> <p>Of the non-Christian religions in North Dorset Buddhist formed the largest proportion (25%), followed by Muslims (18%) and Hindu (15%). This is in contrast to the national figures of 4.8%, 51.8% and 18.5% respectively. The Hindu population in North Dorset is influenced by the number of Nepalese families based at Blandford Camp.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>Of all strands of diversity sexual preference is the hardest to measure as there is a lack of information at both local and national level on the size of these communities.</p> <p>The 2001 Census asked a question regarding the relationship between adults living in the same sex household. In North Dorset 0.12% of all respondents said they lived as a same sex couple which is lower than the national average of 0.19%.</p> <p>As there is no local or national data for Lesbians and Gay men the Government use a figure between 5 and 7% of the population which is seen by most national lesbian and gay organisations as reasonably accurate. This would suggest, based on the 2007¹³ population figure for North Dorset, that between 3,330 and 4,662 people living in North Dorset are either Gay or Lesbian.</p>
Vulnerable People	<p>In survey of housing need¹⁴ in 2007 special needs groups were identified. It was estimated that there are 5,390 households in the District with one or more members in an identified special need group. This represents 19.2% of all households which is greater than the average Fordham Research has found nationally (13-14%). The number of households in each category exceeds the total number of special needs households because people can have more than one category of special need.</p> <p>The number of households in the District with residents who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are frail elderly 2,387 (8.5%) Have physical disability 2,480 (8.9%) Have learning difficulties 572 (2.0%) Suffer from mental health problems 840 (3.0%) Have severe sensory disability 569 (2.0%) Have a medical condition 2,890 (10.3%) Or have other needs 295 (1.1%) <p>The proportion of households with special needs does not vary significantly across the District and ranges from 18.3% in Sturminster/Stalbridge to 20.9% in Shaftesbury.</p>

¹³ ONS: Mid Year Estimates Population941

¹⁴ Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand, Fordham June 2008.

Step 4 – Making a judgement

3.13. This is the most important element of the EqIA which is based on the information gathered in the earlier stages. It assesses if the consultation exercise could potentially result in a less favourable outcome on any one group within the community or whether the consultation process discriminates against any equality group.

3.14. The seven identified equality target groups for this EqIA are:

Age

Disability

Gender

Race/ethnicity (including gypsies and travellers)

Religion and/or Belief

Sexual Orientation

Vulnerable People

3.15. Table 2 below looks at each equality strand in turn and assesses if there is the potential for the consultation exercise to result in a less favourable outcome, or for it to discriminate, against any one group within the community. It then considers how the proposed consultation arrangements meet those needs or overcomes the identified issues and suggests if any actions need to be taken.

Table 2 – Equality issues and the consultation process leading to action points

Equality Group	Issues	Community Involvement in the consultation process	Actions
Age	<p>a) Different age groups have different availability to attend meetings and events.</p> <p>b) Distribution of the population and the lack of public transport could impact on both the young and the elderly in attending meetings and events.</p> <p>c) Different ages prefer to access information in different formats. For example young people are generally more familiar with accessing documents electronically.</p>	<p>To overcome the identified age related issues there are a range of ways in which people of all ages can get involved in the planning process. The main focus of the consultation exercise will be public exhibitions in the four main towns in the District. These will be arranged ideally on a market day when people of all ages historically come to town. They will be all day events that carry on into the evening so young people and those working full time are not excluded from the planning process. Every effort will be made to make the exhibitions child friendly and participation will be encouraged through the provision of refreshments where possible.</p> <p>People of all ages will be able keep up to date with the consultation process through advertisements and updates in the local media and notices placed on community notice boards by the local councils. For those people with poor access to transport or who prefer to communicate electronically all documents will be available on the Council's website. Hard copies of the draft DPD will also be placed in local libraries (including the mobile library) and a copy will be available to view at the Council offices in Blandford. Library late night and weekend opening hours will allow people of all ages to select a time that suits them to take part in the consultation exercise.</p> <p>As part of the consultation exercise letters will also be sent to those age related groups identified in Appendix 1 and meetings can be arranged if required.</p>	<p>Investigate using the council Intranet as part of the consultation exercise as many council employees, who cover a range of ages, are also local residents.</p>

Table 2 – Equality issues and the consultation process leading to action points (continued)

Equality Group	Issues	Community Involvement in the consultation process	Actions
Disability	<p>a) May have difficulty accessing documents due to sensory impairment, learning difficulties or suffer from mental health problems.</p> <p>b) May have difficulty attending events due to lack of mobility.</p> <p>c) May have specific requirements within the home or public environment that could lead to them being disadvantaged.</p>	<p>To address the issues that affect those people with disabilities in the District all hard copy documents can be made available in other formats on request. For those people that due to disability have difficulty in attending events all documents will be placed on the council website and hard copies will be available free of charge on request.</p> <p>The venues for the public exhibitions will be accessible to people with disabilities and will be manned by planning policy officers who will be able to explain policies and answer any questions on a one to one basis if required. Display material will be clear and easy to read with diagrams and photographs to aid understanding of issues and objectives. Copies of the draft DPD will also be placed in the local libraries where arrangements have been made for disabled access.</p> <p>As part of the consultation exercise letters will also be sent to those disability related groups identified in Appendix 1 and meetings can be arranged if required.</p>	<p>To help those people with various sensory impairments or other disabilities:</p> <p>a) Investigate using other media forms. E.g. local radio to promote awareness and events.</p> <p>b) Include descriptions of images in text for those unable to discern the images.</p> <p>c) Ensure diagrams are developed using symbols as well as colours to illustrate information to aid those people who are colour blind.</p> <p>d) Investigate the role the talking newspaper could play in the consultation process.</p>

Table 2 – Equality issues and the consultation process leading to action points (continued)

Equality Group	Issues	Community Involvement in the consultation process	Actions
Gender	<p>a) There is the potential for both men and women with caring responsibilities to have less time to get involved with the planning process.</p> <p>b) Both men and women in the structure of their working lives may find it hard to attend events.</p> <p>c) Men and women find it difficult to express an opinion to members of the opposite sex.</p>	<p>The issues identified that relate to gender equality are similar to those identified for age equality. Again the main focus of the consultation exercise will be public exhibitions where all day events that carry on into the evening will enable young people and those working full time to take an active part in the planning process. Every effort will be made to make the exhibitions child friendly for those with caring responsibilities and both male and female planning officers will be available to answer any questions.</p> <p>Everyone irrespective of gender will be able keep up to date with the consultation process through press releases in the local media. Notices will also be placed on community notice boards by the local councils. For those people who find it difficult to express an opinion in public or due to their working lives may find it difficult to attend events all documents will be available on the Council's website. Hard copies of the draft DPD will also be placed in local libraries (including the mobile library) and a copy will be available to view at the Council offices in Blandford. Library late night and weekend opening hours will allow people with different work structures to take part in the consultation exercise.</p>	No further action required

Table 2 – Equality issues and the consultation process leading to action points (continued)

Equality Group	Issues	Community Involvement in the consultation process	Actions
Race	<p>a) People from ethnic minorities may be unsure of how to play their part in community affairs.</p> <p>b) Low literacy levels or language problems could mean some groups may have difficulties in reading documents or making comments.</p> <p>c) Transient nature of certain groups.</p>	<p>To help those people from ethnic minorities to take an active role in community affairs the Community Partnership network is vital. Each Community Development Officer should have an in depth knowledge of their local community so it is hoped that through them these minority groups can be made aware of the importance of planning policy and encourage to take an active part in the consultation process.</p> <p>To help those with language problems all hard copy documents can on request be made available in other languages and the services of a translator can be arranged. At public exhibitions to address the needs of those with literacy problems and those where English is a second language planning policy officers will be able to explain in plain English the proposed strategy. In certain circumstances officers may make a note of comments made on their behalf.</p> <p>To encourage people from the ethnic minorities to play a part in community affairs meetings will be offered to target groups.</p>	<p>Contact the Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Officer and suggest visiting the permanent sites within the District to explain the consultation process and how they can become involved.</p>
Religion or Belief	<p>a) Need a wider understanding of the minority faiths and beliefs.</p>		<p>Find out more about the minority faiths and beliefs in the District.</p>

Table 2 – Equality issues and the consultation process leading to action points (continued)

Equality Group	Issues	Community Involvement in the consultation process	Actions
Sexual Orientation	<p>a) Verbal and physical harassment could deter gays and lesbians from participating in public events.</p> <p>b) Gays and lesbians may be unwilling to participate in the consultation process overall for fear of discrimination.</p>	<p>To overcome the issues identified in relation to sexual orientation the consultation exercise allows people to take part by a variety of means which have little or no public contact. For people who fear verbal or physical harassment the website is an ideal way to participate in the planning process. All documents will be available to view on-line and comments can be made electronically. Hard copies of the draft DPD will also be placed in local libraries and a copy will be available to view at the Council offices in Blandford.</p> <p>Everyone is welcome to public exhibitions where officers will make every effort to ensure that nobody is verbally or physically harassed.</p>	No further action required
Vulnerable People	<p>a) May have difficulty attending events due to lack of mobility or public transport.</p> <p>b) May have a medical condition or other needs preventing them from taking part</p>	<p>To help those vulnerable people who require support and who are disadvantaged due to rural isolation press releases in the local media and posters on community notice boards erected by local councils will highlight the consultation exercise and how they can take part. The posters and press releases will provide information on the dates of exhibitions, but they will also outline the other ways in which people can comment. For those with particular special needs contacting the planning policy team directly by either telephone or in writing would be recommended.</p> <p>The public exhibitions are to be held in the four main towns in the District and ideally will take place on a market day when people may be coming to town for other reasons. All documents will also be made available on the Council's website and hard copies of the draft DPD will be placed in the mobile library local as well as the local libraries including.</p>	No further action required

Step 5 – Action planning

- 3.16. The real value of completing an EqIA not only comes from seeing how the consultation exercise meets the needs of the local diverse community, but in the identification of additional actions to remove or alleviate the potential for the consultation process to discriminate or impact less favourably on one or more of the equality groups. The EqIA also identifies where further information is required on any particular group.
- 3.17. To ensure that the actions identified in Table 2 above are more than just a list of proposals and good intentions in Table 3 below each action has been attributed to a key person who is ultimately responsible for its completion with an associated achievable timescale.

Table 3 – Action Plan

Equality Group		Action	Key person responsible for action	Timescale
Age	1	Investigate using the council Intranet as part of the consultation exercise as many council employees, who cover a range of ages, are also local residents.	Sarah Jennings	Mar 10
Disability	2	Investigate using other media forms. E.g. local radio to promote awareness and events.	Sarah Jennings	Mar 10
	3	Include descriptions of images in text for those unable to discern the images.	Planning Policy Team	Mar 10
	4	Ensure diagrams are developed using symbols as well as colours to illustrate information to aid those people who are colour blind.	Planning Policy Team	Mar 10
	5	Investigate the role the talking newspaper could play in the consultation process.	Sarah Jennings	Mar 10
Gender		No action identified.		
Race	6	Contact the Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Officer and suggest visiting the permanent sites within the District to explain the consultation process and how they can become involved.	Trevor Warrick	Dec 09 - Mar 10
Religion or Belief	7	Find out more about the minority faiths and beliefs in the District.	Sarah Jennings	Dec 09 - Mar 10
Sexual Orientation		No action identified.		
Vulnerable People		No action identified.		

Step 6 - Publication and review

- 3.18. It is a legal requirement to publish an EqIA; however, before one can be published it is required to be considered by the appropriate body within the Council. At NDDC all EqIA are considered by the Service Review Committee.
- 3.19. It is also a legal requirement to publish an EqIA in a manner that meets the needs of the community. As such this EqIA will be placed on the Council's website and will be made available in a hard copy and in different formats on request.
- 3.20. As part of the review it is also important to monitor access to, experience of and outcomes from the various consultation activities for the different equality groups. This information gained through customer feedback will enable us to improve our approach to consultation and make any changes to process or procedures prior to the pre-submission publication stage of the DPD later in the summer of 2010.
- 3.21. As mentioned previously the consultation comment form will include equality questions so we are constantly updating our knowledge of the local community, but it will also include questions that will allow us to improve the consultation process itself. For example:
- How did you hear about our consultation exercise?
 - Were documents and exhibition material easy to understand?
 - Were the officers able to answer questions clearly?
 - Were documents easy to access via libraries/council offices/website?
 - Any other comments or suggestions
- 3.22. In addition to reviewing the consultation process we will also monitor the progress of reports and studies that are currently being prepared and the status of the various locally based focus groups that were identified in the Corporate Equality Scheme.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1. The aim of this EqIA has been to determine if the consultation process for the draft DPD has the potential to be discriminatory and to ensure that the way in which we communicate and the events that we organise are available and accessible to everyone in the District.
- 4.2. Following guidance from the IDeA and other bodies and completing the six steps in the EqIA process it has shown that some groups in the District are less well equipped to engage in the planning process than others and in some cases specific actions need to be taken to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to play a role in delivering an effective and inclusive policy.
- 4.3. By building an EqIA from the outset into the consultation process focus has been on equality. The data and experience gathered together with the relationships developed at this stage will prove invaluable when completing the second EqIA on the policies themselves. By ensuring everyone has a fair chance to participate in the consultation process it is hoped that the policies themselves will meet the diverse needs of the communities.

Appendix 1 – Equality consultation bodies

Equality Group	Consultation Bodies
Age	<p><u>Youth</u> Gillingham’s Youth and Community Centre Dorset Youth Association Early Years Development Unit HM Young Offenders Unit Connexions Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership Youth and Community Services, DCC Children’s Services, DCC Treads (Blandford Young People’s Project)* Toby’s (Shaftesbury Young People’s Project)* Sturminster Newton Area Youth and Community Centre Blandford Area Youth Centre</p> <p><u>Older People</u> Age Concern North Dorset Older People’s Forum* Knees Up Healthy Living for Mature People</p>
Disability	Equality South West Dorset Disability Forum Dorset Learning Disability Partnership Board North Dorset Disability Action Group Shaftesbury Area Talking Newspaper
Gender	Dorset Federation of Women’s Institutes
Race	Dorset Racial Equality Council Gypsy Council Gypsy and Traveller Liaison
Religion	Churches Together Salisbury Diocesan Board
Sexual Orientation	None
Vulnerable People	Adult and Community Services
General Groups	Citizens Advice Bureau Dorset Community Action Dorset Forum for Equality and Diversity

* **Focus groups** as identified in the Corporate Equality Scheme



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