

**Hook Neighbourhood Development Plan
2018-2032**

Equalities Impact Assessment

February 2019

Prepared by

Hook Parish Council and



1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not.
- 1.2. “Protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 1.3. This report assesses the Submission Hook Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) to ensure that Hook Parish Council (as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the Hook NDP) is satisfying its statutory duties in this regard. Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is a systematic analysis of a policy or policies, in order to explore the potential for an adverse impact on a particular group or community. It is a method of assessing and recording the likely differential and/or adverse impact of a policy on people from different groups. If a policy results in unfairness or discrimination then changes to eliminate or lessen the impact should be considered.
- 1.4. The purpose of the analysis is to increase participation and inclusion, to change the culture of public decision-making and to place a more proactive approach to the promotion of equality and fairness at the heart of public policy. The processes involved in conducting the analysis should not be looked on as an end in themselves. Instead, it should be borne in mind that the aim is the promotion of fairness and equality of opportunity and thus it is the outcomes that are of primary concern. In undertaking the EqIA, it is important to keep in mind why the Hook NDP is needed, what the intended outcomes are, and how it will be ensured that the policies will work as intended.

2. Methodology

- 2.1. An assessment has been made on whether the Hook NDP has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics (in so far as data is available). The vision and objectives of the NDP have been assessed, and individual policies are highlighted where they are considered likely to have a negative impact.

3. Baseline data

- 3.1. Data for the Parish of Hook is available from the 2011 Census for the following protected characteristics: age, sex, race, disability, marriage and civil partnership and religious belief.
- 3.2. No data is available for the following protected characteristics: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.

Hook neighbourhood area – population characteristics

Total Population – 7,770

Age: 21.5% of the population are children aged under 16 years; 65.5% are aged 16 – 64; and 13% of the population are in the older age groups.

Sex: 3,842 (49.4%) males, 3,928 (50.6%) females

Main language: English is the main language for 95.9% of residents

Country of birth: 90.7% of residents were born in the UK. 2.8% were born in the EU and 5.9% were born elsewhere.

Ethnic group: 95.3% of residents are White. 2.2% of Hook residents are Asian/Asian British and 1.8% of residents are Mixed/multiple ethnic groups. The remainder of residents are Black/African/Caribbean/Black British or other ethnic group.

Religion: 64.9% of residents are Christian. 25.9% of residents do not have a religion whilst 7.2% of residents did not state their religion in the 2011 Census.

Marital and Civil Partnerships: 58.9% of the population are married, and 0.3% of the population are registered in a same-sex civil partnership. Those who have never married or never registered a same-sex civil partnership (single) represent 24.3% of Hook Parish.

Health: The local community is generally healthy, with the great majority reporting “very good” or “good” health at the time of the 2011 Census. Only 11% of the Parish reported “fair” to “very bad” health. 1% of residents have a long-term sickness or are disabled.

4. Process of Community Consultation

- 4.1. All written communications were in English and it was not considered necessary to translate them into any other language as English is the main language for 96% of residents.
- 4.2. Throughout the preparation of the Hook Neighbourhood Development Plan, Hook Parish Council has tried to promote the widest possible engagement of the local community in planning for the future development of the parish.
- 4.3. Hook Parish Council have undertaken a variety of public consultation periods during the preparation of the NDP. During each of these consultations, drop-in sessions have been held at various locations. The events and updates have been publicised through leaflets, posters in local shops, notices in local monthly magazines and by having a stall at the Hart Local Plan consultations. The Parish Council have also set up a dedicated website which provides updates and links to evidence and supporting documentation. In addition, a dedicated email address provided those who could not attend consultations to make comment. Surveys of the residents, employees were also undertaken. At each consultation, people have been invited to comment using a questionnaire which has been available both online and in hard copy.

5. Impact on Groups with Protected Characteristics

5.1. The Vision of Hook NDP states that:

“The village centre is the focus for activities and services; it has been revitalised and redeveloped to serve the growing needs and expectations of the community.

The local facilities, leisure opportunities, services and transport infrastructure in the village have been improved and augmented in order to successfully absorb the additional needs stemming from the housing built in this Parish.

The village is a popular place to live with an attractive mix of property type set within a patchwork of greens and open spaces. Opportunities are taken to protect and enhance biodiversity.

Residents in every part of the village have safe and convenient access into the village centre and beyond to the surrounding countryside by foot or bicycle.

Its social cohesion and community spirit remain vibrant, and there are opportunities for residents of all ages to lead a happy and fulfilling life.

It remains distinct and separate from other settlements, with its own identity and character.

Employment opportunities have been broadened with the introduction of new employment opportunities and the retention of established companies”

5.2. Hook NDP contains a series of key objectives, which set out how the Parish proposes to deliver its Vision for Hook up to 2032. Delivery of the vision will be both through the NDP objectives and planning policies. Each objective is reviewed to assess whether it is likely to have an impact on groups within the parish with protected characteristics:

Neighbourhood Plan Objective	Likely impact	Commentary
<p>Hook Village Centre</p> <p>Provide an attractive and enjoyable environment which is safe and accessible for all.</p> <p>Create a Village Square that becomes a destination and focal point for the community</p> <p>Enhance the retail and services offer in the village centre.</p> <p>Support developments that provide active ground floor uses.</p> <p>Provide parking with easy access to and from the village centre.</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The key objectives for Hook Village Centre seek to ensure the village square becomes a focal point and is accessible for all. Retail will be enhanced and ground floor shops should be retained. These principles are expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community but particularly those without access to a private vehicle or with limited mobility or other disability.</p>

<p>Environment and Landscape</p> <p>Designate Local Green Space where this will preserve the character and sense of place of the Parish, be of recreational or historic value; or support wildlife and the environment.</p> <p>Protect local areas of open space, which are not suitable for formal designation, but which are important to the community and are to be protected from inappropriate development.</p> <p>Seek new areas of multi-functional green space as part of future developments particularly where they will provide new, or consolidate, connections between existing areas.</p> <p>Safeguard key views.</p> <p>Create, protect and restore flora, wildlife habitats and biodiversity across all parts of the Parish, from back gardens to the woodland, meadows, grass and heathlands.</p> <p>Maintain, enhance and expand the areas of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs), including Bassetts Mead Country Park, in order to mitigate the impacts on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.</p> <p>Protect natural water sources, including the River Whitewater, from pollution. Maintain a gap ensure a sense of separation between Hook and Newnham.</p> <p>Balance the need for security with unnecessary light pollution and wasted energy particularly on the edge of the village and in proximity to the heaths.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The key objectives of the Environment and Landscape seek to preserve the landscape setting, wildlife habitats and views of Hook Parish which can be enjoyed by all but is deemed to have a neutral impact on groups within the community with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>Transport and Infrastructure</p> <p>Safeguard existing and provide new convenient, enjoyable and safe routes for both pedestrians and cyclists, from all parts of Hook to the centre, the countryside and to neighbouring communities.</p> <p>Provide adequate, convenient parking in key locations to meet the needs of residents, shoppers, school attendees, workers, commuters and other visitors, in particular within Hook Village Centre and at all community and commercial centres.</p> <p>Ensure all new development is provided with sufficient parking spaces for the likely number of residents and visitors.</p> <p>Ensure that all new developments are fully integrated with the existing community in regard to proximity, character and provision of safe and convenient access by sustainable modes of travel to all parts of the Village and its facilities.</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The objective of enhancing pedestrian and cyclist safety is expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community. In addition, adequate parking space provide benefit for all in terms of access to local amenities, however will have a particularly positive impact for older residents, those with very young children and those with restricted mobility or other disability.</p>

<p>Ensure that major new development has good direct linkages to the A30 or B3349 main roads to avoid any additional volumes of traffic on existing residential roads or narrow lanes with the associated safety issues and increased pollution.</p>		
<p>Development, Design and heritage</p> <p>Protect the good quality and distinctive features of Hook’s built environment and especially those buildings that are identified in this Plan as having heritage value.</p> <p>Ensure all new development is of high quality design, creates a sense of place and identity, is in keeping with its surroundings and supports inclusivity and cohesion.</p> <p>Encourage new development to incorporate sustainable design features and building materials such as energy and water efficiency measures, renewable energy schemes.</p> <p>Provide an appropriate mix of housing which meets the needs of the community, in particular good quality smaller homes for the young and the increasingly aging population allowing them the opportunity to downsize.</p> <p>Encourage the development of suitable brownfield sites before greenfield, through their identification in the NHP.</p>	<p>Positive/ Neutral</p>	<p>These objectives act to retain the best parts of Hook’s built environment, and promote good design which can be enjoyed by all. The objectives or resulting policies do not specifically make provision for any protected groups. However, the aim to provide appropriate housing mixes, including smaller homes, benefit both young and older people wishing to downsize.</p>
<p>Education, wellbeing, sport and leisure</p> <p>Ensure new developments provide or contribute financially to local sports, leisure, cultural and community facilities.</p> <p>Maintain the existing infant and junior schools on a single site for at least the period of this Plan.</p> <p>Support the provision of further facilities suitable for pre-schoolers.</p> <p>Enable more people to participate in sport throughout the year by providing a wider range of indoor mixed–use sports facilities or all–weather pitches plus appropriate supporting infrastructure such as changing rooms.</p> <p>Retain or increase levels of sports, recreation and community facilities.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The principles of supporting cultural and community and leisure facilities has positive benefits for all. These principles are expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community regardless of protected characteristics but particularly benefits those who struggle to travel. In addition, newer facilities are generally more accessible (in terms of physical accessibility, disabled toilets, ramps etc) than older and sometimes historic resources and are therefore able to cater for a much more diverse community.</p>
<p>Business and Economy</p> <p>Maintain and improve Hook’s role as an employment centre, a driver for local economic development and incubator for SMEs and new enterprises.</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The aim to ensure Hook provides employment opportunities within the local area benefits all, especially those with limited access to a car and restricted mobility.</p>

<p>Manage any changes in use of employment land so as to deliver the best overall result for the community taking into account amenity value of site, adequacy of the infrastructure and the built form that is proposed.</p>		
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5.3. All of the Hook NDP objectives are considered to have a positive or neutral impact. No policies were identified within the plan as having a negative impact.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The Hook NDP provides a suite of principles and policies to respond to the vision for the benefit of the local community as a whole including those with protected characteristics but perhaps most particularly older people, children and their parents, people with a disability and those with limited mobility.
- 6.2. In preparing the Hook NDP, Hook Parish Council and the NDP Steering Group have sought to engage widely with the all of the local community. They have gone beyond minimum consultation requirements to gather the views of the community.
- 6.3. In conclusion, the assessment finds the Hook NDP to be appropriate and that the duty of care prescribed by the Equalities Act 2010 is met.