



**Basingstoke
and Deane**

Equality Impact Assessment Validation Decision Notice

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| EIA Reference Number | 46/2010 |
| Service, policy, or strategy | Living Landscapes: Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Natural Environment Strategy |
| Element(s) assessed | Policy proposals and action plan |
| Names of Assessors | Mike Bird, Sarah Blohm and Carol Blackwell |

Consider:

Was discrimination or disadvantage identified?

| Yes | No |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Was the service promoting equality?

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Could the service be improved in promoting equality?

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Are the customers' needs understood and met?

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Is there good evidence and/or reasoning to support the decisions on whether groups are/aren't affected?

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Does the summary report properly reflect the key findings of the assessment?

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Is the summary report clear and easy to understand?

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

If improvements have been identified, do they reflect and deal with the key findings?

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

The decision is to: **Validate** **Not validate**

The reason/s for the decision are: *please give details below*

Validation given – information correct

Not validated – decision not to proceed as EIA incorrect

Not validated - screening error

Not validated – research/consultation error

Not validated – improvement error

Signed

Designation
Corporate Director

Name
W. Summerville

Date
9/12/11



Briefing Note

| | |
|--|---|
| Name of service, policy, or strategy being considered | Living Landscapes: Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Natural Environment Strategy |
| Element(s) being considered | Policy proposals and action plan |
| Date of meeting | 9 February 2010 and 13 December 2010 |
| Name of assessors | Mike Bird, Sarah Blohm and Carol Blackwell |

The Assessment

Give details of the service/policy etc under consideration.

Living Landscapes sets out council aims, objectives, policies and actions with respect to conserving the natural environment of the borough. The policies and actions are set out under the following themes, which relate to the key council services that influence the local natural environment:

- Parks and Open Spaces: Managing Biodiversity on Council Land
- Planning for Green Development
- Landscape and Biodiversity in the Countryside
- Working with the Community

The policies under these themes describe the council's long-term approaches. A separate action plan translates these into a three-year list of projects.

The initial assessment on 9 February considered the main document. Substantial changes to the action plan were pending at this time, as a result of public consultation. Therefore, it was agreed to assess the action plan as it was revised and finalised. A meeting to consider the action plan and the appropriate next steps, in terms of the equalities process was held on 13 December 2010.

Assessment Findings

Detail the key findings of the briefing discussion.

The aims, objectives and policies of the main strategy document collectively seek to conserve and improve the quality of the natural environment for all, in both urban and rural areas, and to improve access to natural green space and broaden community engagement. While some of the policies relate to land use planning, which could potentially have equality implications, the strategy itself does not introduce any new restrictions; these are already set out in separate planning policies and in legislation. The strategy, merely describes how the council will prioritise and apply these requirements to achieve the most cost effective results.

Briefing Note

No negative impacts were identified in the preparation of the action plan. Some of the actions were found to be neutral and others, likely to have positive impacts (e.g. "Undertake recruitment campaign to widen membership of conservation groups."). While equalities issues will certainly need to be addressed during the development of this campaign, there is nothing inherent in this relatively high level action that is deemed to have a negative impact.

Justification

Explain your decision not to proceed with either a scoping/screening or a full EIA.

The natural environment contributes to the quality of life of everybody, whether through the direct experience of nature and the positive effects of this on physical and mental wellbeing or through less tangible benefits such as the role natural green space plays in improving drainage and reducing flooding in the built environment. Therefore, the overall aim of conserving and improving the natural environment is of benefit to all groups. Nevertheless, natural environment policies and actions could potentially have negative equality impacts by restricting the access of some groups to the benefits of the natural environment (eg. rural communities by focusing on urban areas, failure to consider accessibility when designing / improving green spaces, or creating artificial barriers to the engagement of minority groups when seeking community engagement). Restrictive instruments for the protection of the natural environment could also potentially have a disproportionate effect on minority groups (eg. added expense of development projects on low income groups). However, insofar as this strategy favours improvements in particular geographic areas, this is influenced by the inherent physical characteristics of the borough i.e. where important areas of habitat are located and where the best opportunities exist to bring about biodiversity improvements (which contribute to overall borough, national and ultimately, global, environmental quality). The policies and actions for the development of green infrastructure provide a means to address any existing inequalities in terms of access to natural green space. The policies and actions for community engagement provide a means to improve engagement with minority groups. Further consideration of equalities issues will be required during the implementation of these actions but there is nothing inherent in the action itself that is likely to have a negative impact.

In terms of restrictive instruments for the protection of the natural environment, no new measures are being introduced through this strategy.