

Charnwood Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment 'Knowing the needs of your customers and employees'

Background

An Equality Impact Assessment is an improvement tool. It will assist you in ensuring that you have thought about the needs and impacts of your service/policy/function in relation to the protected characteristics. It enables a systematic approach to identifying and recording gaps and actions.

Legislation- Equality Duty

As a local authority that provides services to the public, Charnwood Borough Council has a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate having paid due regard to the need to:

- ✓ Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- ✓ Advance Equality of Opportunity
- ✓ Foster good relations

For the following protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion and belief
8. Sex (Gender)
9. Sexual orientation

What is prohibited?

1. Direct Discrimination
2. Indirect Discrimination
3. Harassment
4. Victimisation
5. Discrimination by association
6. Discrimination by perception
7. Pregnancy and maternity discrimination
8. Discrimination arising from disability
9. Failing to make reasonable adjustments

Note: Complete the action plan as you go through the questions

Step 1 – Introductory information

Title of the project	Bedford Square Gateway Project
Name of lead officer and others undertaking this assessment	Steve Dibnah
Date EIA started	October 2019
Date EIA completed	March 2020

Step 2 – Overview of the project being assessed:

Outline: What is the purpose of this project? (Specify aims and objectives)

The Bedford Square Gateway Project is seeking to improve pedestrian safety and comfort as well as the commercial appeal and business prospects of Bedford Square, Wards End and Devonshire Square in Loughborough town centre. The continued viability of the Bedford Square/Wards End/Devonshire Square area is dependent on the creation of a new role and function for this part of the town centre. A concept design for the public realm improvement scheme was produced in 2016 and this was subjected to public consultation. The Borough Council has appointed specialist highways consultants to prepare a detailed design for the scheme, which seeks to address the responses received during the consultation and enable the improvements to be carried out.

The overarching aim of the project is to help sustain Loughborough as a vital and vibrant town centre and play a role in achieving the 2018 Town Centre Masterplan's objective to deliver an enhanced "experiential" offer in the town centre by improving the public realm, connectivity and supporting infrastructure. The project will achieve this by making the Bedford Square/Wards End/Devonshire Square area a more attractive destination for shoppers through widening pavements, providing road crossing points, providing larger parking bays and making public areas more attractive and safer, thereby combating declining footfall, persistent shop vacancies and challenging trading conditions.

In seeking to move the project forward, the key objectives are:

- To improve comfort and safety for pedestrians.
- To improve connectivity between the pedestrianised core of the town (Market Place), the Granby Street Car Park (and Queen's Park) and the community resident to the south of the "Gateway."
- To balance the existing and future needs of all users of the public realm space.
- To retain as much "authorised" on street parking as possible.
- To ensure adequate provision for the servicing of businesses.
- To include only features of interest that will not attract anti-social behaviour.

What specific group/s is the project designed to affect/impact and what is the intended change or outcome for them?

The project is intended to benefit the whole community including local residents, visitors, general public, landowners and local retailers operating in this part of the town centre.

Which groups have been consulted as part of the creation or review of the project?

The general public and stakeholders (including local landowners, shops, businesses and business organisations including the 'Love Loughborough' BID) were consulted in 2016 on a concept design for the project. This included a series of workshops with key stakeholders and local people and a public exhibition. In September 2016 a 6 week public consultation was also held. An analysis of the responses received during this consultation period identified the key elements of

the concept design that should be incorporated into a final design, addressing the key concerns raised.

The project was put on hold while a review of the Town Centre Masterplan was undertaken in 2018. The review of the Masterplan include a public consultation exercise and as part of this exercise it also revisited this project and re-affirmed the objectives of this project.

Work on this project restarted in July 2019. A Task & Finish Group of the Loughborough Town Team was established to provide a focus for on-going stakeholder consultation. Consultants were appointed by the Borough Council to prepare a detailed design for the scheme. This work has been informed by the results of the 2016 consultation. A revised concept design was produced in December 2019 and endorsed by both the Loughborough Town Team and its Task & Finish Group. The concept design was also presented to the Loughborough Area Committee in January 2020.

A draft detailed design was produced in February 2020. A business engagement exercise was conducted in February and March 2020 to present the designs to local shops and businesses located within the project area and receive comments. A public exhibition was held on 6 and 7 March 2020 to enable the general public to view the proposed designs and make comments. Details of the design have also been provided on the Council's website and information on the scheme posted on the Council's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

Step 3 – What we already know and where there are gaps

List any existing information/data do you have/monitor about different diverse groups in relation to this project? Such as in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc.

Data/information such as:

- Consultation
- Previous Equality Impact Assessments
- Demographic information
- Anecdotal and other evidence

Public Consultation

A concept design for public realm improvements along Bedford Square, Wards End and Devonshire Square was produced in 2016 This was subjected to public consultation for 6 weeks in in September and October 2016. Branded as the "Bedford Square Gateway" the public consultation period was launched on 14 September 2016 and concluded on 26 October 2016. The scheme received prominent coverage in the Loughborough Echo (14 September) and was the subject of a meeting with local businesses held in John Storer House on that same evening. That event was promoted among all businesses located within the scheme area with the assistance of Love Loughborough Bid and attracted an audience representing approximately 30 businesses. An A0 sized poster illustrating the scheme was displayed within a permanent display case positioned in Bedford Square and a dedicated page was provided on the Council's web site. All publicity media directed prospective respondents to submit comment in writing or on line. One week before the closure of the consultation window a press release was issued inviting final submissions, which once again attracted prominent coverage through the Loughborough Echo.

A draft detailed design was presented to local shops and businesses and the general public during February and March 2020. The detailed design received prominent coverage in the Loughborough Echo and on BBC East Midlands Today, as well as through a dedicated page on the Council's website and Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. A 3D animation of the proposed scheme was also produced and shown to businesses and the general public and

uploaded on to the Council's website. These events were promoted among all businesses located within the scheme area with the assistance of Love Loughborough Bid. Exhibition Boards were also produced and displayed during the public exhibition. All publicity media directed prospective respondents to submit comments.

Demographic Information

Demographic information (based on Census 2011) is available which provides information on a range of the protected characteristics, in particular, age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex.

- Race – The White British population accounted for some 85% of the population. The largest ethnic groups are Indian 6% (10,225 people), Other White 2.5% (4,147 people) and Pakistani 1 % (2,022 people) (Charnwood Borough Council Demographic Profile document 2013).
- Religion - Some 56% of the population of Charnwood are Christian with some 29% having no religion. Hindus and Muslims are the next largest group with at 5% and 2% respectively. Buddhists, Jews and Sikhs combined make up just over 1% of the Charnwood population.
- Gender – The 2011 census records that the total population is some 166,100 split broadly 49.9% males (82,900) and 50.1% female (83,200) - although there are significantly more males than females within the 15 – 19 and 20 - 24 age brackets.
- Age - the Borough contains a large proportion of 20 to 24 year olds (especially males). The 25 to 29 years age group contains the lowest proportions. 14.9% of the population are aged 14 years or under (census 2011). 16.4% of the population are over 65.
- Disability. In Charnwood, it is estimated that there are 10,540 (6.4%) physically disabled people between the ages of 16-64 with a moderate or serious mobility disability. In Charnwood it is estimated that there are 21,675 adults with mild to moderate hearing loss and 5,100 people with sight impairment. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people will be affected by mental health issues at some time in their life. Anxiety and depression is the most common mental disorder in the UK. In Charnwood this equates to 33,220 people.
- Sexual Orientation. There are no accurate statistics available regarding the profile of the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) population within Charnwood or the UK as a whole. Sexuality is not incorporated into the census or other official statistics; however it is acknowledged that approximately 6-10% of any population will be LBG. In Charnwood this would be between 9,960 and 16,610 people.
- Gender Reassignment. There are no accurate statistics available regarding the profile of the transgendered population within Charnwood or the UK as a whole. Gender identity is not incorporated into the census or other official statistics.
- Marriage and Civil Partnership. Within Charnwood 64,729 people (46.9%) are married and 271 people (0.2%) are in a registered same- sex civil partnership

Road Safety Audit

A Road Safety Audit (Stages I and II) has been undertaken as part of the design process. The RSA checks the road safety implications of the proposed public realm improvement scheme in order to minimise future road collision occurrence and severity once the scheme has been completed. The RSA takes into account all road users, particularly vulnerable users such as pedestrians and pedal cyclists. Those practical recommendations for improvement that have arisen out of the RSA have been addressed by further revisions to the scheme design..

Non-Motorised User (NMU) Audit

A Non-Motorised User (NMU) Audit has been carried out as part of the design process to consider how the proposed scheme design affects pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users. Revisions to the design have been undertaken to address the findings of the audit.

What does this information / data tell you about diverse group? If you do not hold or have access to any data/information on diverse groups, what do you need to begin collating / monitoring? (Please list)

2016 Consultation

The 2016 consultation attracted a total of 79 responses. 58 (73%) were from individual members of the public, 17 (8%) from businesses, 2 (2.5%) from landlords and one each from "leading consultees", namely Love Loughborough BID and Leicestershire County Council Highways Authority.

No responses were received during the consultation period from any specific interest groups representing disadvantaged individuals, groups or communities.

An analysis of the consultation responses revealed 63% of respondents supported the principle of intervention in some form to improve the quality of the public realm, although they expressed a range of priorities and preferences. This included 19% who expressed overall support for the scheme and 44% who expressed qualified support. 19% opposed the scheme, while 7.5% remained neutral.

Looking at the detailed proposals, 35% supported the proposition of widening the pavements, particularly within Wards End and, to a lesser extent, within Devonshire Square. 24% opposed the loss of on street parking in Bedford Square, particularly because that parking provided the ability to "drop in" for short stay visits to the nearby shops. Those opposed were individual members of the public and local businesses. Local businesses also criticised the concept design for its failure to make adequate provision for loading and unloading on Wards End.

The consultation did result in a number of concerns being submitted by the Highways Authority on safety grounds concerning the proposed road alignment of the main vehicular entry point to Wards End and the reversing out of vehicles from the proposed 'herringbone' parking in Bedford Square and Devonshire Square.

It was anticipated that the proposal to narrow the carriageway along Wards End, which will require the prohibition of the existing ability for Blue Badge holders to park on the yellow lines along the west side of the road, would generate a number of objections during the consultation. However, no such objections were received. In fact, there was significant support registered for the removal of the ability for Blue Badge holders to park on the yellow lines on the grounds of safety, constraining pedestrian flows, causing an obstruction to other road traffic and contributing to the overall perception of congestion in the area. 14% of respondents believed this matter required attention, including enforcing TROs more rigorously and extending controls to restrict the ability of Blue Badge holders to park on the yellow lines along Wards End. Others said there was a plentiful supply of alternative disabled parking spaces nearby. Only one respondent, a local trader, highlighted the value of spending by those with a Blue Badge, implicitly supporting the current ability to park on the yellow lines.

Anecdotally, it is apparent that the current ability for Blue Badge holders to park on the double yellow lines on the west side of Wards End is viewed as a convenient facility by some with a Blue Badge. The needs of Blue Badge holders will be considered and the loss of the ability to park on the yellow lines along Wards End will be addressed as part of the project.

2020 Business Engagement and Public Exhibition

A full report on the business engagement and public exhibition exercises has been produced. A summary of the key findings is outlined below:

1. Public Exhibition, 6 & 7 March 2020, John Storer House:
 - 116 people attended the exhibition

- Overwhelming majority in favour of the proposals
 - Only four people overly negative about the proposals
2. One-to-One Meetings with local shops and businesses in Devonshire Square, Ward's End and Bedford Square (24 February – 16 March 2020):
 - 24 face-to-face meetings
 - 21 shops supportive of whole scheme
 - 3 shops with concerns over reduction in parking in Devonshire Square
 3. Business Engagement Event, 27 February 2020, John Storer House:
 - 15 businesses from project area represented
 - Small number spoke out in favour of the proposals and a small number with concerns
 - Acknowledgement the Borough Council has listened and changed the designs where possible.
 4. Meeting with Market Traders (16 March 2020)
 - A meeting with representatives of market traders provided an opportunity to present the detailed designs for the scheme and this was unanimously approved by those represented at the meeting.

The revised concept design for the scheme will be submitted to the Highways Authority (Leicestershire County Council) for approval. As part of this process, changes will be made to Traffic Regulation Orders. The proposed changes to TROs will be advertised, allowing stakeholders and the general public to have a further opportunity to comment on the proposed public realm improvement works.

Demographic Information

The demographic information available confirms that Charnwood is a diverse borough with a range of differing needs from individuals and community groups, which will be considered and addressed as part of the project.

Step 4 – Do we need to seek the views of others? If so, who?

In light of the answers you have given in Step 2, do you need to consult with specific groups to identify needs / issues? If not please explain why.

There is no need to consult further with specific groups to identify needs and issues, beyond that already planned.

Widespread consultation was undertaken both in 2016 and 2020 regarding the original 2016 concept design and the 2020 detailed design for the scheme, allowing input from local shops and businesses, stakeholder groups and individuals. The responses from the 2016 consultation informed the 2020 detailed design. The responses from the 2020 engagement have been analysed and a number of changes to the detailed design have been made as a result.

A Task and Finish Group reporting to the Loughborough Town Team has been established and provides a mechanism for detailed engagement and consultation on this project with key local stakeholders. The revised concept design for the scheme will be submitted to the Highways Authority (Leicestershire County Council) for approval. As part of this process, changes will be made to Traffic Regulation Orders. The proposed changes to TROs will be advertised, allowing stakeholders and the general public to have a further opportunity to comment on the proposed public realm improvement works.

Step 5 – Assessing the impact

<p>In light of any data/consultation/information and your own knowledge and awareness, please identify whether the project has a positive or negative impact on the individual or community groups (including what barriers these individuals or groups may face) who identify with any 'protected characteristics' and provide an explanation for your decision (please refer to the general duties on the front page).</p>	
	<p>Comments</p>
<p>Age</p>	<p>Positive - Design of the public realm can impact on the ability of older people to use it as they are more likely to experience long-term ill health and physical impairments such as mobility difficulties and impaired vision and hearing. The proposed public realm improvements, in particular the widening of pavements, level surfaces and provision of road crossing points, will assist in their use of this key area of the town centre. Improvements to the pavements and lighting along Devonshire Lane will improve safety for those exiting on foot from the Granby Street car park.</p> <p>The RSA and NMU audits have considered the needs and priorities of this group and changes have been made to the scheme design to address areas identified where improvements have been recommended.</p> <p>The changes to the movement network and parking will also assist accessibility to the town centre for older people improving the services and facilities available to them.</p>
<p>Disability (Physical, visual, hearing, learning disabilities, mental health)</p>	<p>Positive –</p> <p>The RSA and NMU audits have considered the needs and priorities of this group and changes have been made to the scheme design to address areas identified where improvements have been recommended.</p> <p>The proposed public realm improvements will assist those with disabilities in their use of this part of the town centre and the access to services and facilities. This includes the proposals to widen pavements, create level surfaces and provision of road crossing points, will assist in their use of this key area of the town centre. Tactile paving and dropped curbs will be used to signify safer crossing points to assist people with impaired sight. Any adverse impact on those people who would benefit from a smooth surface are outweighed on balance by the prevention of more serious impacts for people with sight impairments than those with mobility difficulties.</p> <p>Some of the proposed changes to the movement network and parking will also assist accessibility to the town centre for those with a disability, improving the services and facilities available to them.</p>

	<p>Negative – the proposed narrowing of the carriageway along Wards End will result in Blue Badge holders no longer being permitted to park on double yellow lines on the west side of Ward’s End. This could impact on some Blue Badge holders who are seeking to park immediately in front of a specific shop they wish to visit. In response, the scheme design has ensured all authorised parking spaces are larger than those current in the area and are suitable for use by Blue Badge holders.</p>
<p>Gender Reassignment (Transgender)</p>	<p>Positive - Personal safety in public spaces may be an issue for this group and the improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making users feel safer and less intimidated.</p>
<p>Race</p>	<p>No significant positive or negative impacts.</p>
<p>Religion or Belief (Includes no belief)</p>	<p>No significant positive or negative impacts.</p>
<p>Sex (Gender)</p>	<p>No significant positive or negative impacts.</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p>Positive – Personal safety in public spaces may be an issue for this group and the improvements to the public realm and the small interventions proposed will create a vibrant, inclusive environment making users feel safer and less intimidated.</p>
<p>Other protected groups (Pregnancy & maternity, marriage & civil partnership)</p>	<p>Positive – Improving the public realm will help those with pushchairs and small children or who are pregnant gain better access to services and facilities in this part of the town centre.</p> <p>The RSA and NMU audits have considered the needs and priorities of key elements within this group and changes have been made to the scheme design to address areas identified where improvements have been recommended.</p> <p>The changes to the movement network and parking would also assist accessibility to the town centre for those with pushchairs and small children or who are pregnant, improving the services and facilities available to them.</p>
<p>Other socially excluded groups (carers, low literacy, priority neighbourhoods, health inequalities, rural isolation, asylum seeker and refugee communities etc.)</p>	<p>No significant positive or negative impacts.</p>

Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/ or barriers or impacts are

unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise all negative impact or discrimination.

Please note:

- a) If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.
- b) Additionally, if you have identified adverse impact that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people.

The proposal to widen the pavements along Ward's End will mean the carriageway is no longer wide enough to accommodate informal parking by Blue Badge holders on the double yellow lines along Ward's End. As a result, parking by Blue Badge holders will not be permitted on the double yellow lines once the scheme has been completed. While the current ability of Blue Badge holders to be able to park on the double yellow lines along Ward's End is perceived benefit for these users, the overwhelming consensus from the 2016 public consultation and subsequent reports is that this practice causes serious problems on the grounds of pedestrian and road safety, constraining pedestrian flows and causing an obstruction to other road traffic. It also contributes to the overall perception of congestion in the area.

As a result of the proposed rationalisation of the carriageway and creation of an enlarged public open space in Devonshire Square, four parking spaces designated for Blue Badge holders will be lost. There will still be 9 Blue badge spaces provided in Devonshire Square.

In response to these negative impacts, the scheme design has ensured all the authorised parking spaces in the project area are to be larger than the size of the current parking bays in the area. This means effectively that all of the parking bays are effectively of a size normally suitable for Blue Badge users. This means that Blue Badge holders will have the ability to use all non-designated spaces in the project area as well as those specifically designated for Blue Badge holders. Furthermore, as part of the design process a survey of parking usage was undertaken. It is clear that at most times there are vacant Blue Badge spaces in both the Granby Street car park and the Bee Hive Lane car park. As part of the scheme design improvements to Devonshire Lane will improve disabled access from the Granby Street car park to the shops on Devonshire Square and Ward's End.

The 2016 concept design attracted some concerns over potentially increasing anti-social behaviour through the provision of a water fountain feature in Bedford Square. These concerns were taken on board and the 2019 detailed design does not include a water fountain feature.

Summarise your findings and give an overview as to whether the policy will meet Charnwood Borough Council's responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

The project will benefit the community as a whole by contributing towards improving the town centre, with particular groups experiencing a positive impact through a more inviting public realm, improved accessibility to services and facilities, improved movement networks and improved designated parking and loading/unloading.

Step 6- Monitoring, evaluation and review

Are there processes in place to review the findings of this Assessment and make appropriate changes? In particular, how will you monitor potential barriers and any positive/ negative impact?

A Project Plan has been produced to deliver the various aspects of the public realm improvement scheme. The Project Plan is regularly monitored by the Task and Finish Group established by the Loughborough Town Team. This will provide a framework for regular monitoring the impact of this

project and the resolution of potential barriers / adverse impacts.

How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes?

e.g. policy reviews, annual plans and use of performance management systems.

The Bedford Square Gateway Project is already factored into the service plan and performance management frameworks.

Step 7- Action Plan

Please include any identified concerns/actions/issues in this action plan:


The issues identified should inform your Service Plan and, if appropriate, your Consultation Plan

Reference Number	Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date
1	Undertake Road Safety Audit and make any recommended changes to the scheme design	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
2	Undertake a Non-Motorised Users Audit and make any recommended changes to the scheme design	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
3	Wards End - Width of carriageway – 3.0m considered too narrow with 2.0m parking bays – we have widened this to 3.5m	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
4	Addition of raised table on South Street to slow traffic – a raised table has been added across South Street entrance to slow traffic and provide a step free crossing for pedestrians	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
5	Addition of bollards with reflective banding should be installed at all build outs on Ward's End/ narrowed crossing points	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
6	'Road humps ahead' warning sign to be installed prior to Wards End and the on/off ramp gradient be reduced in line with DfT guidance for traffic calming features	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
7	Junction of Bedford Sq with Wood Gate & Southfields Road, add dropped kerb crossing points with tactile paving to allow pedestrian to cross Bedford Square	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
8	Addition of textured warning paving (tramline tactiles in granite material) across Bleach Yard & Mills Yard accesses, to highlight the transition of pedestrians to shared space at access points	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
9	Addition of tactile paving at New Street	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
10	Addition of pedestrian table at Granby Street end of Devonshire Square	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020
11	Changing barrier at end of Devonshire Lane for removable bollards	Steve Dibnah	9 April 2020

Step 8- Who needs to know about the outcomes of this assessment and how will they be informed?

	Who needs to know (Please tick)	How they will be informed (we have a legal duty to publish EIA's)
Employees	Yes	Published report
Service users	Yes	Published report
Partners and stakeholders	Yes	Published report
Others		
To ensure ease of access, what other communication needs/concerns are there?		

Step 9- Conclusion (to be completed and signed by the [Service Head](#))

Please delete as appropriate
I agree / disagree with this assessment / action plan
If <i>disagree</i>, state action/s required, reasons and details of who is to carry them out with timescales:

Signed (Service Head):
Date: 15 April 2020

[Please send completed & signed assessment to Suzanne Kinder for publishing.](#)

