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HDC Due Regard (Equality Analysis) Template

Due Regard (Equality Analysis) is an on-going proactive process which requires us to consider the effect our decisions are likely to have on local communities, service users and employees, particularly those most vulnerable and at risk of disadvantage.

This template has been designed to assist in the collation of information and evidence required to support the 'Due Regard' process when introducing new policies/procedures/functions and services or reviewing existing ones.

For help with this template please view the guidance document, which contains advice to assist you when you are considering the impact (both positive and negative) of the proposed actions on each of the protected equality characteristics.

Name of policy/procedure/function/service being analysed: Open Spaces Strategy 2021

Department and section: Planning Services, Strategic Planning and Housing

Name of lead officer: Matthew Bills

Other people involved (assisting or reviewing - including any service users or stakeholder groups etc.):

Date assessment completed: February 2021

Step 1: Defining the policy/procedure/function/service

Is this a new, amended or reviewed policy? What are the aims, objectives and purpose and how will they be achieved? What are the main activities and which communities are likely to be affected by these activities? What are the expected outcomes?

The Open Spaces Strategy 2021 is replacing the Open Spaces Strategy 2016 to 2021. All users of open space could be affected by the outcomes from the Open Spaces Strategy.

Open space is important because of its valuable contribution to quality of life, health and the local economy. The provision of a range of open space facilities in our towns and villages is very important in planning for a sustainable future and is embedded in national planning policy

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The open space strategy seeks to set provision standards, quality standards and accessibility standards and identify where open space is of low value to communities. It uses nationally recognised criteria from Green Flag to assess open space which takes into account the requirements of protected groups.

Green Flag Award Criteria	Description
Welcoming Place	Signage
	Entrances
	Safe Access
	Access for All Abilities
	Boundaries
	Car parking/Cycling Provision
Healthy, Safe and Secure	Facilities and Activities
	Clear Sightlines
	Shelter
	Lighting
Well Maintained and Clean	Bins, Dog Bins and Recycling
	Overall Site Cleanliness
	Hard Landscape Features

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	Buildings	
	Soft Landscape Features	
	Site Furniture	

Step 2: Data collection & evidence

What relevant evidence, research, data and other information do you have and is there any further research, data or evidence you need to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known affects of the policy on different communities? Include quantitative data as well as qualitative intelligence such as community input and advice.

Consultation with communities has taken place during 2020, to determine the issues that the Open Spaces Strategy needs to address. A series of questions were asked to allow communities to make representations about areas of concern or suggest the extent and scope of the Open Spaces Strategy. The consultation was available online, and as a hard copy document on request. A focus group of residents was used to identify specific issues.

The aims of the Open Space Strategy consultation were to:

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- Provide key stakeholders across the District with information about the Open Space Study;
- Allow key stakeholders and the local community to comment on the vision and approach to managing and developing open spaces within the District;
- Understand key opportunities and challenges faced by developers; and
- Consider feedback received as a result of the consultation process.

27 responses were received for the Key Stakeholder questionnaire, 200 responses were submitted by the community and 5 responses were received by developers.

Key Stakeholders and Community

Key stakeholders included Parish Councillors, Elected Members, local conservation groups and community interest groups from across the District to ensure diversity in results.

Key stakeholders were asked to complete 12 questions and the community were asked 11 questions as an online questionnaire which covered usage, accessibility, quality, quantity, play space and open space improvement.

Usage

What type(s) of Open Space do you and/or your organisation frequently use?

Key stakeholders use and/or managed Provision for Children and Young People (56%), Parks and Gardens (48%) and Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace (48%) most frequently. The least used and/or managed is Educational Grounds (4%) and Civic Spaces (19%).

The community scored Parks and Gardens the most frequently used (93%) followed by Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace second most frequently (77%). The least used was Civic Spaces (24.50%), Education Grounds (20.50%) and Allotments and Community Gardens (19.50%). These results are in line with the frequency of visits, with participants visiting Parks and Gardens (97) and Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace (88) weekly. However Educational Grounds (91), Allotments and Community Garden (124) were mostly never visited.

Accessibility

How accessible are the open spaces that you use in relation to walking, cycling, driving and public transport?

Key stakeholders and community consultees scored walking as Excellent or Good, cycling and driving as Good and public transport as Average. Comments were made by both key stakeholders and community consultees that there is poor public transport connectivity to the villages across the District.

How accessible are the open spaces across the district as a whole in relation to walking, cycling, driving and public transport?

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Key stakeholders and community consultees scored walking, cycling and driving as Good and public transport as Average. As above there are several rural areas of the District which have poorer connectivity and accessibility to open spaces.

Quality

How would you rate the quality of open space that you use?

Key stakeholders and community consultees both scored the quality of the open spaces they use and/or manage as Good. Welland Park in particular was identified as being a high quality open space.

How would you rate the quality of open space across the district as a whole?

Key stakeholders scored the quality of open spaces across the district as Average, whereas the community scored them as Good. It was noted that footpaths across the district could be improved including the provision of walking and cycling routes, and access for disabled users.

Responders also noted that an improvement in maintenance and rewilding would improve the quality of open space.

Quantity

How would you rate the quantity of open space you use?

Key stakeholders and community consultees both stated that there is enough of Parks and Gardens and Churchyards and Cemeteries and Civic Space. Key stakeholders also thought there was enough Amenity Greenspace although community consultees did not think there enough Amenity Greenspace.

Key stakeholders and the community both agreed that there was not enough Natural Semi-Natural Greenspaces and Green Corridors.

How would you rate the quantity of open space across the District as a whole?

District wide key stakeholders and community consultees agreed there is enough Parks and Gardens, Churchyards and Cemeteries and Educational Grounds, and not enough Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace, Provision for Children and Young People, Accessible areas of Countryside on the Urban Fringe and Green Corridors.

Key stakeholders thought there was enough Amenity Greenspace whereas the community thought there wasn't enough. Both groups agreed that there was not enough Allotments and Community Gardens.

Play Provision

Key stakeholders were asked how important it is that play space is accessible within 10 minute walk from someone's home. Key stakeholders think this is very important (81%) or somewhat important (19%). No responses were received for not important.

The key stakeholder questionnaire noted that that play spaces are generally considered the most expensive open space typology to manage and therefore asked how the Council should address play facilities in the future. Most key stakeholders believe that if the current facilities were improved there would be no need for additional play facilities. The community consultee respondents also agreed.

Community consultees stated that they mostly have access to a playground approximately 10 minute walk from their home.

Marginally more people stated that they do use adventure playgrounds within the District.

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Improvements

Key stakeholders were asked what improvements they would like to see to open spaces that they use and/or manage. The highest score was more facilities such as seating and bins, followed by improved landscaping and maintenance. The lowest score was for better entrances and more information such as information boards. The community wanted to see better maintenance, closely followed by more facilities.

Across the District key stakeholders and the community want to see improvements to maintenance. Suggestions for improvement across the district included:

Increase dog bins;

Wilding areas and less frequent mowing regimes; and

Increase woodland cover.

Concerns were raised regarding overcrowding and increased usage throughout 2020 due to the Covid-19 (coronavirus) Pandemic. Concerns were also raised over the new Lutterworth East development, as well as losing open space across the District as a whole due to development.

Developer Consultation

Developers who undertake development in the District were identified by the Council and asked six questions relating to their role in providing and managing open spaces in the District.

Open Spaces Provided

The developers were asked what type of open space their company provides as part of new developments. All developers who responded have provided Amenity Greenspace and 80% have provided Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace and Provision for Children and Young People. None of the developers have provided Civic Spaces or Educational Grounds. This was also reflected in which open spaces developers prefer, as all developers prefer to provide Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace and Amenity Green Space.

Management post-development

As part of the consultation stage, the Council wanted to find out what the preferred approach to open space management is for developers post development. The developers who responded do not have internal management companies to manage open spaces.

The majority of developers who responded choose to transfer open space to an external management company or resident owned entity, because they often feel this is the only option, however they would prefer to transfer open space to the District or Parish Council.

The majority of developers who responded felt that the process of transfer to the Council was the largest barrier for transferring open spaces to the District Council instead of a management company.

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One developer elaborated on this by saying they were unclear on the process of transfer, they often found timescales for transfer were lengthy, there is also confusion of ownership/responsibility within the Council, and commuted sums. Another developer agreed with the concerns over commuted sums by stating that the cost of the commuted sum can affect the viability of a site.

All developers were in favour of the Council providing a number of units below which play provisions are not required in new development. They had no issue with off-site contributions but wanted more clarity in relation to on-site provisions to assist with site appraisal.

Three of the developer consultees currently use the existing Open Spaces Strategy (2016) and two do not.

Residents Associations

A meeting was held with representatives of several resident associations in the District where open space is managed by third party managing organisations rather than Harborough District Council.

It should be noted that managing organisations can be resident led, or an external private or third sector management company.

The objective of the meeting was to provide residents with an opportunity to voice on the ground experience of managing organisations. Information gathered in this meeting and subsequent correspondence with the group has provided guidance in the development of this Strategy.

Full details from this meeting can be found in Appendix C and comments have been considered with Chapter 8.

Step 3: Consultation and involvement

Have you consulted and if so outline what you did and who you consulted with and why.

The consultation was available in HDC webpages, and was sent to all Parish Councils. It was also advertised to the general public as a press release and included in Local Papers. Officers promoted the open spaces strategy consultation at meetings before and during consultation, and the officers undertook the residents focus group

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Step 4: Potential impact

Considering the evidence from the data collection and feedback from consultation, which communities will be affected and what barriers may these individuals or groups face in relation to Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Other groups e.g. rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived or disadvantaged communities and also the potential impact on Community Cohesion. Remember people have multiple characteristics so the impact of a policy on a particular community may impact people within the community differently. Where possible include numbers likely to be affected.

The impact of the Open Spaces Strategy is across all communities, backgrounds, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Open space should be free and accessible to all.

The area where the Open Spaces Strategy can have the biggest positive impact is provision of facilities for older children and older persons.

The largest detrimental affect is the potential loss of open space. Any decisions involving the loss of existing open space that is managed by the Local Authority will be subject to a separate Equalities Impact Assessment

Step 5: Mitigating and assessing the impact

If you consider there to be actual or potential adverse impact or discrimination, please outline this below. State whether it is justifiable or legitimate and give reasons. If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required

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to take action to remedy this immediately. If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people. Consider what barriers you can remove, whether reasonable adjustments may be necessary and how any unmet needs have identified can be addressed.

It is not considered at this time that the open spaces strategy will have a detrimental affect on persons because of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex or Sexual Orientation.

Step 6: Making a decision

Summarise your findings and give an overview of whether the policy will meet Harborough District Council's responsibilities in relation to equality, diversity and human rights. Does it contribute to the achievement of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations?

Provision of open space has the potential to have a positive impact on persons throughout the District. The Open Spaces Strategy will ensure that existing open space is protected and new open space is of the type and has the facilities to bring the biggest possible benefit to the community it serves.

By working with partner organisations and others Harborough District Council will seek to deliver suitable and accessible open space into the future and meet the objectives of the District Council.

Step 7: Monitoring, evaluation & review of your policy/procedure/service change

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What monitoring systems will you put in place to promote equality of opportunity, monitor impact and effectiveness and make positive improvements? How frequently will monitoring take place and who will be responsible?

The Open Spaces Strategy will be monitored for equality issues at each stage and prior to submission to Cabinet and Council for adoption.

Equality Improvement Plan

Equality Objective :

Action:

Officer Responsible:

By when:

Equality Objective :

Action:

Officer Responsible:

By when:

Equality Objective :

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Action:

Officer Responsible:

By when:

Equality Objective :

Action:

Officer Responsible:

By when:

Signed off by:

Date:

Once signed off, please forward a copy for publication to Julie Clarke, Equality and Diversity Officer
e-mail: j.clarke@harborough.gov.uk , telephone: 01858 821070.