

# EQUALITY SCREENING

Equality Impact Assessment guidance should be considered when completing this form.

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Runnymede Local Plan draft Consultation Strategy	Paul Wade, Planning Policy Officer

**A. What is the aim of this policy, function or activity?** Why is it needed? What is it hoped to achieve and how will it be ensured it works as intended? Does it affect service users, employees or the wider community?

A Local Plan is a document published by a local authority which guides development and land use changes across the authority area over a 15 year period. A Local Plan identifies how much housing, employment and commercial development should be built over this period and indicates where and when this should happen. A Local Plan also includes planning policies which support how development is expected to be built, protects important features such as sites for nature conservation, our open spaces and heritage. It forms part of the development plan once adopted. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Local Plans are prepared by a local planning authority in consultation with its communities and other stakeholders.

The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan was adopted in July 2020 and covers the period 2015-2030. National planning legislation and policy requires local authorities to review their local plans at least every 5 years and update them as appropriate. Runnymede Borough Council is preparing to update its Local Plan and is carrying out non statutory plan making activities whilst it is waiting for the new plan making system to be introduced at a national level.

The Chief Planner's Newsletter of 19<sup>th</sup> August 2025<sup>1</sup> is clear that one area where local authorities can focus in advance of the new national plan making system being launched is:

*Considering the approach and preparing for engagement including preparatory work for setting up digital engagement and identifying preferred methods of informal and formal engagement with residents and stakeholders.*

In line with this, the Council has prepared a draft Consultation Strategy to guide how the Council would propose to engage with its communities during plan preparation. A round of public consultation is now proposed on this draft document as part of non statutory early engagement to ensure preparedness for formal plan making activity. This consultation on communication and engagement techniques is an opportunity to identify whether the consultation techniques proposed by the Council are supported by the borough's communities.

The Council wants to hear from as many people as possible regarding how they wish to be consulted. It is anticipated that this consultation will be followed by the first period of formal consultation as part of the Local Plan process (date to be confirmed). This will be a scoping consultation which will provide an opportunity for

---

<sup>1</sup> [Planning update newsletter \(19 August 2025\)](#)

the Council to engage with communities and stakeholders to identify the planning related issues which are considered most important to address in a future Local Plan. Following this, there will be two further opportunities for residents and interested parties to comment on Local Plan preparation: one during a consultation on the vision and objectives for the plan, and another at the draft plan stage

**B. Is this policy, function or activity relevant to equality?** Does the policy, function or activity relate to an area in which there are known inequalities, or where different groups have different needs or experience? Remember, it may be relevant because there are opportunities to promote equality and greater access, not just potential on the basis of adverse impacts or unlawful discrimination.

The Protected Characteristics are; Sex, Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Beliefs, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity.

The Council has devised a full draft Local Plan consultation strategy. This has been informed by analysing equalities data collected from two previous consultations undertaken by the Planning Policy Team. These were the Open Spaces consultation undertaken in 2023 and the Climate Change Action Plan consultation, also undertaken in 2023.

As part of each of these consultations, respondents were asked (but were not required) to complete an equalities form at the end of the consultation providing information on their age and their gender. Ethnicity data was also collected as part of the Climate Change Action Plan consultation.

This data was then compared against census data, and the following conclusions were drawn:

- Overall there is no reason to be concerned about the level of engagement amongst either males or females (relevant to the protected characteristic of sex);
- There is a significant overrepresentation amongst the 35 to 74 age groups (relevant to the protected characteristic of age);
- The survey means excluded responses from those aged 13 years and under. Innovative means will need to be considered if we wish to consult this age group (relevant to the protected characteristic of age);
- The 16 to 34 age groups are significantly underrepresented (relevant to the protected characteristic of age);
- There was a zero response from the Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African community (relevant to the protected characteristic of race);
- Those of Asian ethnicity are underrepresented (relevant to the protected characteristic of race).
- There is an overrepresentation of white respondents across the two surveys (relevant to the protected characteristic of race).

To supplement this, the Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of the 2021 Census data to provide a greater understanding of the composition of Runnymede's population. This has been used to inform the draft consultation strategy with the aim of seeking to maximise engagement from all communities, including those that have been underrepresented in previous consultations and/or who are considered hard to reach

groups. The analysis of responses to previous consultations referred to above indicates that bespoke engagement techniques may be required in some cases to help those groups, including those with protected characteristics and those who have different needs, engage with Local Plan consultations. The proposed consultation activities contained within the draft Consultation Strategy can be summarised as follows:

- Internal consultation such as staff newsletters and councillor briefings.
- Information to be posted on the Council's website including FAQs during the plan preparation process.
- Targeted digital media advertising to promote the consultation.
- Utilisation of social media including facebook, twitter and Nextdoor
- Community Planning Panel-online MS Teams meetings/forums.
- Sending letters to statutory bodies and all registered on the Council's Planning Policy database.
- Targeted consultation with hard-to-reach groups (or the bodies representing them) (for more information please see chapter 5 of the draft Consultation Strategy). For example, giving tailored presentations to groups such as the Surrey Gypsy and Traveller Communities Forum and the Runnymede Access Liaison Group, arranging events with school children and students, exploring the possibility of making documents available in alternate languages to accommodate those who do not speak English as a primary language, contacting faith groups within the Borough asking them to raise awareness of the consultations and/or asking whether they will allow materials to be placed in their venues and putting accessible material into day centres.
- Holding road show style events where people can drop in and speak to Council representatives about the Local Plan across the borough. Events to be held on different days, at different times and in different settlements to maximise potential engagement.
- Making hard copy documents available for public inspection at the council offices and local libraries during periods of consultation.
- Display posters about the consultation in various locations across the Borough where residents are likely to see them.
- Publishing material in the Runnymede E-News & Business Newsletters as well as a borough wide mail out during the Scoping consultation about the Local Plan update process.
- Production of online and hard copy questionnaires with the aspiration to link the online form to a map based platform to allow for hyperlocal feedback.

A counter duty service will also be run for the duration of any Local Plan consultation where interested parties can come into the Council offices without an appointment and ask to speak to a Planning Policy Officer.

If the policy, function or activity is considered to be relevant to equality then a full Equality Impact Assessment may need to be carried out. If the policy function or activity does not engage any protected characteristics then you should complete Part C below. Where Protected Characteristics are engaged, but Full Impact Assessment is not

required because measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented that would mitigate the impact on those affected or would provide an opportunity to promote equalities please complete Part C.

**C. If the policy, function or activity is not considered to be relevant to equality, what are the reasons for this conclusion?** Alternatively, if there it is considered that there is an impact on any Protected Characteristics but that measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented please state those measures and how it/they are expected to have the desired result. What evidence has been used to make this decision? A simple statement of 'no relevance' or 'no data' is not sufficient.

The future implementation of the Local Plan Consultation Strategy has the potential to impact on people and groups in the borough who have protected characteristics. The need to ensure an inclusive approach to consultation to capture their views is recognised by officers and the draft Consultation Strategy has been written with this in mind. As set out in chapter 5 of the draft Consultation Strategy and as summarised in the response given in section B above, a range of consultation techniques are proposed to help maximise engagement rates during plan preparation including from those with protected characteristics, particularly those related to age and race.

Officers propose to review the responses reviewed during the course of the public consultation on the draft Local Plan Consultation Strategy in deciding whether further amendments should be made to the document prior to formal plan making commencing to address any equalities matters raised, and to help maximise opportunities to engage with as many individuals and communities as possible.

In running a public consultation on the draft consultation strategy as part of the Council's early non statutory plan making activity, it is hoped that the potential of groups with protected characteristics being excluded from the plan making process can be reduced as far as possible. A proactive approach will be taken to this consultation, with the aim of maximising response rates from hard to reach groups and those with protected characteristics.

This screening assessment will need to be referred to the Equality Group for challenge before sign-off.

Date completed: 09/11/2025

Sign-off by senior manager: Georgina Pacey 11/09/2025