HIGHAM FERRERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
‘Preserving our Past and Enhancing our Future’

Equalities Impact Assessment

June 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Aims of the Equality Analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Methodology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Baseline Data</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Vision and Objectives of the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Impact of Policies and Proposals on Groups with Protected Characteristics</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1. Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2. Disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3. Maternity and pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4. Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5. Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6. Religion, Gender Re-assignment and Sexual Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Conclusion</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Introduction**

1.1 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) 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 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is the systematic analysis of a policy or policies, in order to identify the potential for an adverse impact on a particular group or community, in particularly those with a protected characteristic. It is a method of assessing and recording the likely differential and/or adverse impact of a policy on people from different groups so that if a policy results in unfairness or discrimination then changes to eliminate or lessen the impact be considered.

1.3 It is no longer a legal requirement for public bodies to produce an Equality Impact Assessment to cover every policy document or project. However, this document forms part of the assessment of the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan (HFNP) to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan does not have any equalities impacts and that it conforms to the requirements of the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans.

2. **Aims of the Equality Analysis**

2.1 The purpose of the analysis is to increase participation and inclusion, to change the culture of public decision-making and to nurture a more proactive approach to the promotion of equality and fairness at the heart of public policy. The aim in conducting the analysis is the promotion of fairness and equality of opportunity and thus it is the outcomes that are of primary concern.

2.2 The sections below consider the goals and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and then assesses the impact of policies and proposals on groups with protected characteristics.

3. **Methodology**

3.1 An assessment has been made on whether the HFNP has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics (in so far as data is available). A brief justification and explanation of the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan are provided below.

3.2 It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

Negative and Positive impacts are weighted in relation to their significance.
High impact  a significant potential impact or beneficial outcome.
Medium impact  some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures may be necessary or limited benefits accrue
Low impact  almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation-led or extremely low benefits

4. Baseline Data

4.1 Data for Higham Ferrers is available for the following protected characteristics: age, disability, race, religious belief, and sex. Data is not readily available for the following protected characteristics: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and sexual orientation. Unless stated otherwise the data source is the 2011 Census.

4.2 In 2011 there were 8,083 people living in Higham Ferrers 17.3% more than in 2001.

49.3% of these were male, and 50.7% were female.

This is exactly the same as figures for the UK national average.

- Higham Ferrers has a slightly higher proportion of people in the following age ranges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Higham Ferrers</th>
<th>England</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aged 0-19 yrs</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 39-59 yrs</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
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But slightly less

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Higham Ferrers</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older than 75 yrs</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 20-29 yrs</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of working age</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The proportion of young people (0-19) is slightly higher than the regional and national averages whereas the very elderly (75+) are slightly less well represented. There are a higher proportion of people between 30-59 than the national average and conversely a lower percentage of young adults (20-29), perhaps explained by the outflow of this cohort to seek education and employment opportunities. The working age population is slightly less in Higham Ferrers than the national average.

- The percentage of population in Higham Ferrers within the 0-4 years age range is 7.2%, as opposed to the national average of 6.3%. This suggests that the proportion of people with young families is slightly above the national average along with pregnancy and maternity rates.
- Higham Ferrers has a lower proportion of people whose day-to-day activities are limited a lot due to long term health problems or disability (7.0%) compared to the national average (8.3%).

Â In May 2014 there were 300 people in Higham Ferrers receiving Employment and Support Allowance or incapacity benefits (5.7%) compared to 10.2% of the population in Great Britain.

Â The profile of ethnic origin for Higham Ferrers in 2011 was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Higham Ferrers</th>
<th>England</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British white</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other white</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
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- These figures indicate that Higham Ferrers has a low non-white population (285 persons in 2011) compared to the national average.

- Religious belief in Higham Ferrers is strongly weighted towards Christianity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Higham Ferrers</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The top five non-Christian religions comprise only 1.1% of the population in total compared to 8.3% in England as a whole.

- Gender reassignment and sexual orientation are generally invisible characteristics for which little reliable data exists at local level.

In summary Higham Ferrers has:

Â a slightly higher proportion of young people (0-19 years old) and slightly less older people (75+ years old) than the national average. There is significantly less young adults who live in Higham Ferrers and slightly less people of working age than the national averages;

Â a marginally lower proportion of persons with incapacity or very bad health than nationally;
• a much lower proportion of non-white persons than the national average;
• a much lower proportion of people who practice religions other than Christianity than nationally.

5. Vision and Objectives for Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan

5.1 The HFNP will provide a framework of policies and proposals for the development of the Parish to 2031. The current Core Strategy for North Northamptonshire allocates 5,090 dwellings to the three towns of Higham Ferrers, Rushden and Irthlingborough to 2021.

5.2 The HFNP allocates a main site (The Ferrers site) for the town to accommodate growth to 2031 providing up to 300 dwellings. Infill development will also be permitted where acceptable and future growth, if justified to meet the need of the local community, can also be accommodated as part of the longer term Rushden East proposals. Known commitments together with the main allocation site and completions since 2011 will total more than 560 new dwellings which is the objectively assessed need of the town to contribute towards the housing target for the District identified in the emerging Core Spatial Strategy.

5.3 Vision - The HFNP vision is that:

Higham Ferrers will be:-

A sustainable, vibrant, thriving community
Strongly based on its history with an emphasis on its individuality, which encourages growth that complements its market town heritage.

A community which encourages attractive, high quality development
Including new housing, commercial property and community facilities within a compact market town environment.

A community that is inclusive
With safe access to its town centre and excellent links to adjacent housing estates, the surrounding countryside and the regional transportation network.

An attractive town centre
With increased vitality and activity that attracts a variety of new businesses and supports existing businesses to create a thriving High Street and encourage tourism.

5.4 The plan contains six themes, Development, Services, Design and Environment, Access, Town Centre and Method. The first five have related objectives which the Neighbourhood Plan will seek to attain. The five objectives are:

DEVELOPMENT - To promote sufficient housing and commercial development to meet local needs and to attract visitors, thereby providing a
degree of growth and employment opportunity whilst preserving the historic character and compactness of the town

**SERVICES** - To enhance residents' quality of life by improving leisure, education, health and environmental facilities.

**DESIGN & ENVIRONMENT** - To conserve and enhance the town's heritage and environmental features and promote quality and visually attractive and sustainable design in all new developments.

**ACCESS, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS** - To improve pedestrian/cyclist links within the town's boundary and to the surrounding countryside; provide more and better parking.

**TOWN CENTRE AND EMPLOYMENT** - To encourage a variety of new employment and the retention of the existing businesses.

**METHOD** - To deliver the above objectives in partnership with the residents, other stakeholders and all necessary statutory authorities.

5.5 All of the objectives of the plan attempt to improve the conditions for all of the population and achieve benefits for all members of the community.

However, objectives for Development, Services, Access and Town Centre support policies and proposals which might impact on persons with certain protected characteristics differently than they might affect the general population. In each case they aim to create an environment which would benefit persons with protected characteristics by providing decent homes, by reducing the need for cars and improving public transport and making Town Centre facilities more accessible to those with mobility problems, or by enhancing the prospects for local employment.

6. **Impact of Policies on Groups with Protected Characteristics**

The HFNP aims to create benefits for everyone who lives, works, shops, or spends leisure time within Higham Ferrers. This will be achieved by developing new and better housing, particularly affordable housing and smaller housing, enhancing the prospects for local employment development, preserving social, community and leisure facilities, improving access to local services and facilities, and preserving and enhancing the quality of the environment.

Groups with the various protected characteristics will be affected in different ways by the Neighbourhood Plan and the purpose of the analysis in this section of the assessment is to identify how various groups will be affected and whether the proposals and polices in the HFNP will adversely affect disproportionately those in the groups with protected characteristics. Without exception where policies in the Neighbourhood Plan do have an impact on groups with protected characteristics, it is a positive impact and not a negative one.
6.1 Age

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need to protect play facilities for children and provide new play equipment when development is being considered. It also protects Local Green Space to maintain open space and recreation areas important to all ages but especially young people.

Policy HF.DE3 seeks to retain areas of open space within the Parish particularly the recreation areas at Saffron Road and Castle Fields which have existing play facilities for all young people. Castle Fields and Riverside Park are also important informal areas for older people to enjoy quiet recreation and exercise.

Policy HF.H1, HF.H2, HF.H3 and HF.H4 support the need to provide local affordable housing in line with the demonstrated need and housing sizes which are smaller to better meet the need of young people by providing more starter homes and for elderly people wishing to downsize.

Policy HF.CD1 requires developers to consider contributions towards community facilities and prioritises young people’s facilities and additional sports and leisure development which will predominantly benefit young people. Allotments and Community Hall are also prioritised for future contributions which would tend to benefit more elderly people. Additional community facilities including allotments and sports fields are also proposed as part of the development mix for Higham East in Policy HF.H3.

The Neighbourhood Plan also contains policies which seek to improve and retain key facilities and services used by older people:

Policy HF.CD2 provides a mechanism to resist proposals which would result in the loss of the existing community facilities and HF.TCE1 encourages the diversification of retail and service provision within the town centre which may be relied on proportionally more by older people who possibly can’t or prefer not to drive. The policy also resists the loss of these services and facilities.

Policy HF.TCE2 supports proposals that will provide a better pedestrianised environment and public realm for the town centre and Market Square area which will improve traffic safety and enhance the ability of both the elderly and young families to navigate and get around the central area.

OVERALL - MEDIUM POSITIVE IMPACTS

6.2 Disability

The needs of persons who are disabled or who have limited mobility are recognised in:

Policy HF.TC3 and HF.TC4 require that new development layout, access routes and parking are satisfactory for disabled people and does not result in unacceptable impact on pedestrian safety. This will include the impact of
parked cars on pavements and inability of disabled people to negotiate these obstacles safely.

Policy HF.TCE1, HF.CD1 and HF.CD2 will also assist disabled people in seeking to retain services and community facilities as closely as possible to their place of residence.

OVERALL - LOW POSITIVE IMPACTS

6.3 Maternity and Pregnancy

Key issues for women who are pregnant or who have young children are access to appropriate housing, flexible employment, and access to facilities including health, developmental play, and recreational facilities.

The Neighbourhood Plan has policies which help meet all of these needs:

Policy HF.H1 and HF.H2 require that all new development will provide the appropriate level of affordable housing and those housing developments will be required to provide an appropriate housing mix ensuring a minimum of 50% smaller homes, which will help people starting a family to get a house of their own.

The Neighbourhood Plan also contains policies which aim to retain, and improve access to, key facilities and services used by young mothers and their children:

Policy HF.TC1 promotes new town centre facilities and provides a mechanism to resist proposals which would result in the loss of the existing retail and service provision, such as the Chemist, Post Office and convenience shops which will be utilised more heavily by mothers with young children.

Policy HF.CD2 supports the potential increase in additional community facilities and protection of Assets of Community Value which are likely to be used by groups supporting mothers with young children and policy HF.CD1 prioritises developer contributions for this purpose.

Policy HF.TC4 recognises the impact of development for on-street parking and seeks to minimise the inappropriate parking on pavements. This would help to keep pavements clear of parked vehicles and would assist mothers with a pushchair or young children to get around the new developments more safely. Policy HF.TC3 requires new developments to have ‘safe and convenient routes for walking, cycling and for disabled users that connect to other developments and to key destinations like the town centre’. These links would seek to separate pedestrian/cycle traffic from vehicles which would help pregnant woman and fathers negotiate the town more safely on foot.

Policy HF.DE4 provides for the safeguarding of open space and recreation grounds within the town which are likely to more heavily used by mothers and fathers with young children.
OVERALL - MEDIUM POSITIVE IMPACTS

6.4 Race

Non-white ethnic groups are a small proportion of the population in Higham Ferrers — in 2011 only 3.5% of the population was non-white and within this there are several groups with different ethnic origins.

Non-white ethnic groups can experience difficulties around discrimination (sometimes leading to hate crime), including language, health and well-being, deprivation and culture issues.

A public realm designed with safety in mind will minimise opportunities for hate crime. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that new development follows good urban design principles and provides safe and inclusive public environments.

Policy HF.DE1 requires that high quality design and layout is achieved in all new development.

Policy HF.TCE1 and HF.TCE2 require that development respects the town centre conservation area and supports the delivery of enhanced and safer public realm around the Market Square.

OVERALL - LOW POSITIVE IMPACTS

6.5 Sex

The Neighbourhood Plan contains no specific policies or proposals for any particular gender. The Neighbourhood Plan has been written to provide equal opportunity to both sexes in respect of the provision of development and access to facilities.

Neither sex is disadvantaged by any of the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan; on the contrary both sexes will benefit equally from the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

OVERALL - NEUTRAL IMPACT

6.6 Religion, Gender re-assignment, Sexual Orientation

Key issues for religious groups are discrimination relating to employment, housing and the provision of services, and their portrayal in the media.

Key issues for gender re-assigned people, gays and lesbians are personal relationships, transphobia and/or discrimination and hate crime.

The Neighbourhood Plan does not and cannot directly address the social attitudes that are involved in these issues. However, it does seek to provide a built environment which is open to all, with a safe public realm which all social groups can access and use equally.
7. **Conclusions**

7.1 The HFNP provides a strategy for the development of the Town and Parish, and a range of policies and proposals, which will result in positive benefits for many parts of the local community with protected characteristics: older people, young people, mothers to be and with young children, disabled people and those with limited mobility.

7.2 The HFNP does not explicitly address the needs of racial or religious groups, or transgender, gay or lesbian groups, or women. The Neighbourhood Plan does make equal provision for affordable housing and for a range of housing, and seeks to provide additional social, community and leisure facilities which will benefit these groups equally. It also seeks to provide a safer environment, particularly a safer public realm, where people with protected characteristics will be less liable to be subject to hate crime.

7.3 The HFNP Project Group does not consider that there are any negative equality impacts that arise from the policies or proposals contained within the Neighbourhood Plan or that it raises any issues in relation to any of the convention rights in the Human Rights Act 1998. These rights are defined as;

- Right to Life
- Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment
- Right to liberty and security
- Right from slavery and forced labour
- Right to a fair trial
- No punishment with law
- Respect for you private and family life, home and correspondence
- Freedom of thought, belief and religion
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of assembly and association
- Right to marry and start a family
- Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms
- Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property
- Right to education
- Right to participate in free elections

The plan either helps to reinforce these rights or is neutral in relation to them.