

The Equalities Impact Assessment for the SCI has been revised following the consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement, which ran for an 8-week period from 4 July to 29 August 2025.

Section 1

What is your proposal and what will change as a result? Please give an overview of your proposal. What decisions are you seeking?

The production of a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a legislative requirement under Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). It is also a requirement under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) that the SCI be reviewed every five years following its adoption.

The SCI sets out what consultation will take place when we are developing and reviewing our planning documents (i.e. the Local Plan, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)) and when determining planning applications. It also provides information as to how the Council will work with our partners and communities ('qualifying bodies') to facilitate proposals for neighbourhood development plans or orders.

This proposed SCI seeks to update and alter how the Council consults with the public on all planning matters (including planning policy matters, decisions on planning applications and other associated matters). The changes are limited and reflect changes to planning policy/guidance at a national level, as well changes to the constitution at the local authority level.

There is not a statutory requirement for the Council to undertake a consultation exercise for the SCI; however, the Council took the decision to run a consultation on the SCI which was published on the Council's website and made available to those people registered on the Planning Policy mailing list.

The responses to the consultation received have provided useful information to support a variety of different ways that the Council can better engage with the general public, which we will need to consider for future planning policy documents. There was emphasis that too much focus on digital means of consultation means that hard to reach groups, sometimes in isolated rural locations cannot effectively engage with the planning system

Concerns were raised about paper responses to the Local Plan not being properly logged. So, members recommended the Planning Policy team publishes a clear process for how all response formats – email, letter, phone, online – are handled and counted. The Council will consider this in the light of planning legislation but is only required to publish a summary of the consultation responses. All consultations are logged and considered as they are written, unless they are inflammatory.

Section 2

Consider what impact this proposal will have on different communities by assessing each characteristic. You will need to indicate what impact you anticipate for each group and explain why.

Age

- **Positive**
- Negative
- Neutral

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI outlines a range of consultation methods for the Local Plan, including the use of digital platforms such as social media and the Council's website that will be a positive for younger residents who utilise these means. It also commits to traditional engagement methods, such as providing hard copies of documents at accessible venues (e.g. libraries and the Council offices) and consideration of in-person exhibitions at certain regulatory stages (Regulation 18). The SCI will be published online in an accessible format, and in line with our Reasonable Adjustments Policy for customer, we can provide copies to suit individual accessibility needs, on request. These measures are expected to have a positive impact on older individuals by offering multiple ways to access information and participate.

The SCI also follows the principles of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2024-2028 and is specific about its aim to engage with traditionally hard-to-reach groups, which includes older people with accessibility needs and younger persons who are typically disengaged from council planning processes.

Consultation and Accessibility

Although there is no statutory requirement to consult on the SCI, the Council has chosen to do so in the public interest. The SCI was made available on the Council's website and sent to over 5,000 individuals and organisations on the Planning Policy mailing list who have commented on previous versions of the Local Plan. There were no identified age-related impacts in relation to the consultation.

Potential Barriers

The reliance on digital formats and existing mailing lists for the SCI consultation may limit access for some older individuals who are not digitally engaged or have not previously interacted with the Planning Policy team. The SCI already contains various methods of consultation that can be used and the Council will use these techniques flexibly to get the best out of the public consultation.

Conclusion

While the SCI includes positive and inclusive consultation measures, the limited scope of the SCI consultation itself may present barriers for some older individuals. However, while the consultation on the SCI was conducted digitally, the SCI commits to using multiple consultation channels when assessing planning documents to suit the needs of older persons, who are less likely to be digitally

engaged, and young persons, who are more likely to use digital communication methods. Evening and weekend exhibitions also benefit those of working age to engage in planning consultations.

As such, the overall impact is assessed as positive.

Disability

- **Positive**
- Negative
- Neutral

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI outlines a range of consultation methods, including the use of digital platforms such as social media and the Council's website, including virtual exhibitions. The virtual exhibitions are accessible and inclusive as possible, with online material being screen reader compatible and having closed captions etc. The Council's website also has built in accessibility features.

The SCI also commits to traditional engagement methods, such as providing hard copies of documents at accessible venues (e.g. libraries and Council offices) and considering in-person exhibitions as part of the Local Plan process at certain regulatory stages (Regulation 18). These measures are expected to have a positive impact on individuals with disabilities by offering multiple ways to access information and participate. The SCI clearly states the Council's intention to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and interests of local communities. It emphasises inclusive engagement and encourages participation from all individuals throughout the planning process.

Solutions from the Wealden Disability Involvement Group include working closely with resident associations (even if not statutory consultees) and openly offering officer-supported completion of consultation forms for individuals who require reasonable adjustments. Social media was raised as a good tool but should supplement and not replace face-to-face engagement with the wider community.

Consultation and Accessibility

The SCI was published on the Council's website in an accessible format and shared with individuals on the Planning Policy mailing list. While these methods support digital accessibility, they may not fully reach individuals with certain disabilities—particularly those who do not use digital platforms or are not already engaged with the Planning Policy process. However, there are positive impacts in that the SCI aligns with the Council's Reasonable Adjustment Policy for customers.

Gender reassignment

- Positive
- Negative
- **Neutral**

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI sets out the Council's intention to conduct an inclusive a consultation as possible. However, the SCI relates specifically to the consultation process for development plans, planning applications and supporting documentation, which are primarily land use-focused and will not contain policies directly relevant to individuals with this protected characteristic. Nonetheless, the SCI follows the principles of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2024-2028, ensuring that equality considerations are embedded into the consultation process. That said, policies within the Local Plan that promote wellbeing, quality of life, and inclusive public spaces may offer positive indirect benefits.

The SCI clearly states the Council's intention is to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and interests of local communities. It emphasises inclusive engagement and encourages participation from all individuals throughout the planning process.

Marriage and civil partnership

- Positive
- Negative
- **Neutral**

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI sets out the Council's intention to conduct an inclusive a consultation as possible. However, the SCI relates specifically to the consultation process for development plans, planning applications and supporting documentation, which are primarily land use-focused and will not contain policies directly relevant to individuals with this protected characteristic. Nonetheless, the SCI follows the principles of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2024-2028, ensuring that equality considerations are embedded into the consultation process.

The SCI clearly states the Council's intention to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and interests of local communities. It emphasises inclusive engagement and encourages participation from all individuals throughout the planning process.

Pregnancy and maternity

- **Positive**
- Negative
- Neutral

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI sets out the Council's commitment to conducting an inclusive a consultation as possible. The SCI relates to the consultation process for the progression of a statutory development plan and supporting documents, which would include policies that are likely to benefit individuals with this protected characteristic. The emerging Local Plan may include policies that promote accessibility, wellbeing, and inclusive community development. That said, policies within the Local Plan that promote wellbeing, quality of life, and inclusive public spaces may offer positive indirect benefits.

The SCI clearly states the Council's intention is to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and interests of local communities. It emphasises inclusive engagement and encourages participation from all individuals throughout the planning process.

Multiple communication methods could benefit this group by providing flexibility and supporting them to engage in consultations while managing caring responsibilities. The SCI also highlights the use of accessible venues which will support pregnant persons and new parents to engage.

The outcome is therefore considered to be a positive one overall.

Race

- **Positive**
- Negative
- Neutral

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI demonstrates a clear commitment to inclusive engagement. The SCI also outlines plans to engage with public, private, and charitable organisations that can provide insight into the specific needs of marginalised groups, such as people from the global majority. This will help shape consultation methods that overcome barriers to effective participation. That said, policies within the Local Plan that promote wellbeing, quality of life, and inclusive public spaces may offer positive indirect benefits.

The SCI clearly states the Council's intention to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and interests of local communities. It emphasises inclusive engagement and encourages participation from all individuals throughout the planning process.

Consultation and Accessibility

The SCI will be made available on the Council's website and shared with individuals on the Planning Policy mailing list and a copy will be made available at the council office. It will also be available in other languages upon request, supporting accessibility for non-English speakers. The visuals and graphics that we use in consultations and through planning policy documents will be beneficial to people who are non-native English speakers.

Conclusion

While the limited scope of the SCI consultation itself may restrict access for some individuals with this characteristic, such as Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople, the Council's proactive engagement strategy and inclusive policy direction are expected to result in a positive impact, with some positive effects anticipated through the Local Plan's policy commitments and the SCI's inclusive approach.

Religion or belief

- Positive
- Negative
- **Neutral**

Why?

Summary of Impact:

The SCI sets out the Council's intention to conduct an inclusive a consultation as possible. However, the SCI primarily relates to the consultation process for development plans, planning applications and supporting documentation, which are land use-focused and may not contain policies specifically relevant to individuals with this protected characteristic. That said, policies within the Local Plan that promote wellbeing, quality of life, and inclusive public spaces may offer positive indirect benefits.

The SCI clearly states the Council's intention to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and interests of local communities. It emphasises inclusive engagement and encourages participation from all individuals throughout the planning process.

The potential negative impacts, such as hosting consultation events during religious observances will be mitigated through awareness of religious observances, hosting events on different times/days and using digital consultation methods.

Conclusion

Given the nature of the SCI and the scope of its consultation, the overall impact on individuals with this protected characteristic is assessed as neutral, with some potential for positive indirect effects through broader planning policies in the emerging Local Plan.

Sex

- Positive
- Negative
- **Neutral**

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI sets out the Council's intention to conduct an inclusive a consultation as possible. However, the SCI primarily relates to the consultation process for development plans, planning applications and supporting documentation, which are land use-focused and may not contain policies specifically relevant to individuals with this protected characteristic. That said, policies within the Local Plan that promote wellbeing, quality of life, and inclusive public spaces may offer positive indirect benefits.

The SCI clearly states the Council's intention to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and interests of local communities. It emphasises inclusive engagement and encourages participation from all individuals throughout the planning process.

Equality Considerations

The SCI aligns with the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2024-2028 and outlines how consultation efforts will be appropriately targeted to

reach as many protected characteristic groups as possible, together with the SCI consultation process itself having a neutral impact.

Legal Context

Although there is no statutory requirement to consult on the SCI itself, the Council chose to do so voluntarily. The SCI was made available on the Council's website and shared with individuals on the Planning Policy mailing list.

Conclusion

While the reduced scope of the SCI consultation itself may limit engagement for some individuals, the Council's inclusive approach and the positive policy direction of the Local Plan are expected to result in an overall positive impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.

Sexual orientation

- Positive
- Negative
- **Neutral**

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI sets out the Council's intention to conduct an inclusive a consultation as possible. However, the SCI primarily relates to the consultation process for development plans, planning applications and supporting documentation, which are land use-focused and may not contain policies specifically relevant to individuals with this protected characteristic. That said, policies within the Local Plan that promote wellbeing, quality of life, and inclusive public spaces may offer positive indirect benefits.

The SCI clearly states the Council's intention to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and interests of local communities. It emphasises inclusive engagement and encourages participation from all individuals throughout the planning process.

The SCI includes a dedicated section on the Public Sector Equality Duty, which outlines how the Council will have due regard to protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, during the consultation process for the Local Plan and supporting documents.

Caring responsibilities

- **Positive**
- Negative
- Neutral

Why?

Summary of Impact

Those with caring responsibilities will likely be positively impacted through multiple communication methods about planning activities, which will positively impact them by helping them to participate (e.g. by communicating digitally so they do not have to leave their homes/cared for person to engage and by providing hard copies of documents at accessible venues such as libraries and the Council offices). This is so they can take their cared for person with them to engage or they

do not have to go too far from their homes/cared for person's home to engage and attend in-person exhibitions at certain regulatory stages (Regulation 18) - which again would be at accessible, local venues to the planning activity. The overall impact is therefore considered to be positive.

Language

- Positive
- Negative
- **Neutral**

Why?

Summary of Impact

The SCI outlines the Council's commitment to ensuring an inclusive consultation process for planning. Although the SCI primarily relates to the consultation approach for development plans, planning applications and supporting documentation, which are mainly land use documents that may not contain policies directly relevant to individuals where language is a barrier.

The SCI includes the following wording: **"If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print or in another language please contact planningpolicy@wealden.gov.uk or 01892 602008"** which promotes accessibility and highlights that the council is part of the [Translation and Interpreting Framework](#) and can provide the SCI and any planning documents in someone's preferred language, on request.

Also, multiple consultation methods could have positive impacts such as digital translation is often available on personal devices, in-person exhibitions can give the opportunity for officers to explain complex proposals and terminology. In addition, plain English principles have been used to write the SCI.

Consultation and Accessibility

There is no statutory requirement for the Council to consult on the SCI itself. However, the Council has published the SCI on its website in an accessible format and notified individuals on the Planning Policy mailing list. These steps are intended to promote transparency and inclusivity. The SCI also includes a glossary where planning terms and acronyms are defined.

Conclusion

Given the nature of the SCI and the Council's voluntary decision to consult on the SCI, the overall impact on individuals with this protected characteristic is assessed as neutral. The inclusive approach to consultation helps ensure that no group is disproportionately excluded, even where direct policy relevance may be limited.

Socio-economic status

- Positive
- Negative
- **Neutral**

Why?

Consultation and Engagement

Contact has been made with public, private, and charitable organisations that can provide insight into the specific needs of individuals of different socio-economic backgrounds. The aim is to adopt consultation methods that overcome barriers to participation.

Consultation and Accessibility

The SCI was published on the Council's website in an accessible format and shared with individuals/organisations on the Planning Policy mailing list. Although there is no statutory requirement to consult on the SCI, the Council has chosen to do so in the public interest. In addition, the SCI includes a dedicated section on the Public Sector Equality Duty, outlining how the Council will consider the needs of individuals with protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, throughout the consultation process.

Multiple communication methods should have a positive impact on people with lower socio-economic status (e.g. people can participate digitally without time and resources needed to attend a venue). Having copies available at library will allow people to participate if they are digitally disconnected.

Considerations have been made regarding the length of any surveys as part of on-going consultations in order to not prevent people from engaging properly in planning policy consultations.

Conclusion

While the reduced scope of the SCI consultation itself may have some limitations, the proactive steps taken by the Council to engage with diverse communities and address specific needs are considered sufficient. Therefore, the overall impact of the SCI and associated consultation process on individuals with this protected characteristic is assessed as neutral, with some elements likely to have a positive effect.

Section 3

Which parts of the Public Sector Equality Duty are most relevant to the proposal?

1. *Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.*

- **Yes**
- No

Why?

The Council has highlighted accessibility, reasonable adjustments, and engaging with seldom heard groups in the SCI.

2. *Advance equality of opportunity*

- **Yes**
- No

Why?

The SCI clearly outlines multiple communication methods to be able to engage a wide variety of people in planning activities that will impact them.

3. *Foster good relations*

- **Yes**
- No

Why?

Yes, because we are consulting the community on a policy that effects them, but we are not legally required to consult on. Therefore, fostering good relations by allowing comments on the SCI that could improve accessibility, engagement methods and community cohesion. In addition, the Council have highlighted accessibility, reasonable adjustments, and engaging with seldom heard groups in the SCI.

Section 4

1. *What mitigations have you identified for each negatively impacted group in section 2? If you cannot identify any, please explain. For example, a replacement service does not exist or there is no resource.*

Multiple communication methods, aligning the SCI with the reasonable adjustment policy for customers and using accessible venues will address most barriers faced by people to allow them to engage in a way that is most appropriate for them, whether that is digitally, in-person, translated or with support from a council officer.

2. *What information have you used to assess the above anticipated impacts on different groups? Have you conducted any consultation or carried out any research? Use this space to explain any data (internal and external), academic research, theories, models you have taken into account.*

Officers have considered the Interim Equalities Impact Assessment (January 2024)¹ for the Wealden Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) and the Draft SCI.

An officer from the Planning Policy team attended a Wealden Disability and Inclusion Group (WDIG) meeting prior to the start of the SCI Consultation to provide a summary of the SCI and receive initial feedback from an identified group, that had previously shown interested in similar consultations. This resulted in the group submitting a formal consultation response during the consultation period for the SCI.

¹ [Wealden District Council Interim Equalities Impact Assessment for Wealden Draft Local Plan \(Regulation 18\), January 2024](#)

3. *If you believe there are any additional groups who may be positively or negatively impacted, please record this here. Outline what you anticipate the impacts to be for these groups and any mitigations you have identified.*

The overall effect of the SCI and its consultation process have been assessed as neutral or positive for each of the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010. We do not believe there are any additional groups who may be positively or negatively impacted by the SCI.

Actions:

- Revise EFIA once consultation feedback has been analysed. Understand if respondents are representative – equalities monitoring data. Use this to inform future planning policy consultations.

The Consultation Process for the SCI

There is no requirement in legislation for local planning authorities to consult when reviewing and updating their SCI. However, following good practice, the Council consulted on its draft SCI between 4 July and 29 August 2025. The public were informed about the consultation with a notification that was published on the Council's social media and emails were sent to those registered on the planning policy database.

Due to the limited scope of the SCI consultation itself, this may have restricted access for some individuals, such as Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople. Nonetheless, the Council has proactively engaged with individuals by sending emails to the registered consultee database. Additionally, an officer from the Planning Policy team attended a WDIG meeting to ensure that there was feedback from the representatives with disabilities.

The consultation received 26 responses overall; however, four of these were invalid as they either did not consider the draft SCI or were inflammatory. Only one respondent completed the equalities monitoring section of the consultation, which was filled in manually. This does not provide enough information for significant analysis.

Many of the responses were from town and parish councils within Wealden District, or from neighbouring local planning authorities. However, there were also responses from local resident groups and individuals. After analysis of the consultation responses, concerns were raised about the current methods used for consultation being weighted heavily towards digital responses. It was suggested that this did not assist rural communities and/or hard to reach groups with accessibility to these consultations.