

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2020-2036

Equalities Impact Assessment

July 2020



South Woodham Ferrers

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Note: The typeface and colour palette used in this Neighbourhood Plan reflects the original masterplan documents for South Woodham Ferrers

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document is the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) that has been prepared to accompany the submission version of the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 The Equalities Act places a duty on 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. 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 1.3 This report assesses the submission version of the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to ensure that South Woodham Ferrers Town Council (as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the South Woodham Ferrers NP) is satisfying its statutory duties in this regard.
- 1.4 EqIA is a systematic analysis of a policy or policies, in order to explore the potential for an adverse impact on a particular group or community. It is a method of assessing and recording the likely differential and/or adverse impact of a policy on people from different groups. If a policy results in unfairness or discrimination, then changes to eliminate or lessen the impact should be considered.
- 1.5 The purpose of the analysis is to increase participation and inclusion, to change the culture of public decision-making and to place a more proactive approach to the promotion of equality and fairness at the heart of public policy. The processes involved in conducting the analysis should not be looked on as an end in themselves. Instead, it should be borne in mind that the aim is the promotion of fairness and equality of opportunity and thus it is the outcomes that are of primary concern. In undertaking the EqIA, it is important to keep in mind why the Hassocks NP is needed, what the intended outcomes are, and how it will be ensured that the policies will work as intended.
- 1.6 For this purposes of this EqIA an assessment has been made on whether the South Woodham Ferrers NP has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics (in so far as data is available).

2. Baseline Data

- 2.1 Data for the South Woodham Ferrers neighbourhood plan area is available from the 2011 Census for the following protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, marriage and civil partnership, race and religious belief.
- 2.2 No data is available for the following protected characteristics: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.

South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Area – Population Characteristics

Total Population: 16,453

Age: 22.2% of the population are children aged 17 or less, 65.7% are in the working age groups (ages 18-64), with 12.1% in the older age groups (over 64). The mean age is 38.7 years.

Sex: 8,123 (49.4%) males; 8,330 (50.6%) females.

Main Language: English is the main language for 97.8% of households.

Country of Birth: 95.6% of residents were born in the UK; 1.2% were born elsewhere in the EU and 2.7% were born in other countries.

Ethnic group: 96.8% of residents are White; 1.1% of residents are Mixed/multiple ethnic groups; 1.4% are Asian/Asian British; 0.6% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; and 0.1% Arab.

Religion: 62.1% of residents are Christian; 29.8% of residents do not have a religion; 6.3% of residents did not state their religion in the 2011 Census.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: 52.9% of residents are married; 0.1% are in a registered same-sex civil partnership; 9.1% are divorced; 5.6% are widowed.

Health: The local community is generally healthy, with 87.4% reporting 'Very good' or 'Good' health at the time of the 2011 Census. Nevertheless, 195 individuals reported long-term sick or a disability.

Source: ONS – 2011 Census

3. Process of Community Consultation

- 3.1 All written communications were in English and it was not considered necessary to translate them into any other language.
- 3.2 Throughout the plan preparation process, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has sought to ensure that local residents, their representatives, local businesses, interest groups and wider interested parties, including statutory and regulatory bodies, have been actively consulted and their views sought.
- 3.3 Agendas, key reports and updates have been regularly provided online on the South Woodham Ferrers Town Council website.
- 3.4 The overarching principles of the stakeholder engagement process has been to engage in a manner that is extensive, effective, inclusive, fair, transparent and proportionate.
- 3.5 Widespread consultation was carried out during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Steering Group made every effort, using a variety of methods, to reach all of the local community. This included the following:
- A series of launch, awareness and profile-raising events in late 2016 and early 2017, including a Community Open Day, displays at the annual Christmas Fayre, Senior Citizens lunch and Children's Christmas Party.
 - An event with the Woodville School Student Council in March 2017, including a poster competition for pupils.
 - A series of visioning events held in August 2017 at the Town Council offices providing people with the opportunity to comment on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for South Woodham Ferrers. Following this work, the Neighbourhood Plan was paused whilst the Town Council engaged with consultation on the emerging Local Plan and the implications within that for South Woodham Ferrers, including proposals for growth to the north of the town.
 - A series of events in March 2019 that re-launched work on the Neighbourhood Plan, presenting a summary of key messages and opportunities for the Plan emerging from the earlier visioning exercises and whether these remained the key focus for work on the Plan. Events included attendance at the Mayor's annual charity event for local businesses and organisations, displaying material in the town centre, at the Town Council office, and presentation at the Annual Town Meeting. Surveys were prepared alongside this and made available both electronically and in paper format.
 - A workshop with town centre landowners in June 2019 to discuss the challenges and opportunities for the town centre, and to seek feedback on these. Questionnaires were also circulated.

- Informal consultation on emerging ideas and policies for the Neighbourhood Plan which lasted for a six-week period in July and August 2019. Display material was available to view at the Town Council offices for the duration of the six-week period, with two manned events also held, coinciding with (a) a drop-in and information event associated with the relocation of the health centre and (b) the summer 'fun in the park' event for children and parents / guardians. Surveys were prepared alongside this and made available both electronically and in paper format.
- Formal consultation at the Regulation 14 stage which took place between February and March 2020. This included production of display material available to view at the Town Council offices and in the library, displays and presentations at the Annual Town Meeting, publishing articles in Focus (the weekly magazine distributed to all households in South Woodham Ferrers and available from the Town Council and Library), and contacting various groups, organisations and residents direct. A survey was also made available alongside this in both electronic and paper formats.
- Regular contact was maintained with Chelmsford City Council through the process, providing updates on progress and allowing for comments to be made on the emerging content and drafting of policies in the Plan.
- Meetings were held with the team responsible for preparing the masterplan for the Northern Growth Area. Workshops organized by the Growth Area team were also attended and a separate Steering Group Committee established by the Town Council for the purposes of liaising specifically on growth area matters. Members of the Steering Group include those also sitting on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, allowing for regular updates.
- Screening for SEA / HRA purposes was undertaken by Chelmsford City Council on behalf of South Woodham Ferrers Town Council, including consultation with the statutory consultees.

- 3.6 Other means of communication for sharing information on the Neighbourhood Plan have included the use of noticeboards around the town, displays, presentations and Q&A sessions at the Annual Town Meeting, articles and updates published in Focus, and posts on the South Woodham Ferrers Facebook page.
- 3.7 Consideration has been given to all comments and responses made in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. In particular, the responses to visioning events and surveys in the early stages of the plan-making process were used to shape the vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan.

4. Likely Impact on Groups with Protected Characteristics

4.1 The South Woodham Ferrers NP Vision states that:

Our vision for South Woodham Ferrers is that, by 2036, it will have become a 'Complete Community'.

The strong sense of community and identity that the town experiences will have been strengthened. South Woodham Ferrers will be a safe, friendly, green, accessible and welcoming place for all, with a range of housing choices, leisure and employment opportunities, all in easy walk and cycle of the home, and with a strong and vibrant centre at the heart of the town.

Through future growth and change, South Woodham Ferrers will become the 'riverside country town', with greenery integrated into the heart of the town.

New development will reflect the best of the local 'Essex vernacular' and be an exemplar for new design and place making.

4.2 The vision of the South Woodham Ferrers NP is expected to have a positive likely impact on groups with protected characteristics. It recognises and supports access for the whole community to local social, employment, leisure and environmental amenities.

4.3 South Woodham Ferrers NP contains a series of objectives that set out how the Town Council proposes to deliver its vision for South Woodham Ferrers up to 2036. Delivery of the objectives will be through a combination of planning policies, projects and community action. Each objective is reviewed to assess whether it is likely to have an impact on groups within the Town with protected characteristics:

Objective	Likely Impact	Commentary
To revitalise the town centre such that it becomes the hub of civic life and activity, providing a wide range of uses and facilities that cater for day-to-day needs, entertainment and leisure for all ages.	Positive	This objective promotes enhancement of the town centre to form a social hub for all residents, being a place for all to spend time in and where there are a range of services to meet the needs of all. It is therefore believed to have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics.
To make it safer and easy for all people of all ages to move around South Woodham Ferrers, promoting active and sustainable travel measures.	Positive	This objective promotes active and sustainable travel measures and improvements to public transport for all residents and therefore is deemed to have a

		positive impact on those with protected characteristics.
To integrate surrounding green space into the town and create new green space for the use and enjoyment of all, whilst also delivering environmental, health and well-being benefits.	Positive	This objective will provide access to green space for residents with protected characteristics and thus have a positive impact.
To reflect the legacy of the Essex Design Guide in any new development, delivering high quality design in the built form and surrounding landscape. Development should be in keeping with the Essex vernacular and respect existing building heights.	Neutral	This objective will have a neutral impact. Though high quality design is an important development aspiration, there is no clear impact or focus on residents with protected characteristics.
To successfully integrate new growth and expansion with the existing built form and communities, providing housing choice and opportunities, as well as new community infrastructure, for the benefit of all.	Positive	This objective promotes high quality housing, which is affordable and sustainable, and infrastructure that supports the entire community so is expected to have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics.

- 4.4 All of the South Woodham Ferrers NP objectives are considered to have a **positive or neutral likely impact** on those with protected characteristics especially the objectives to support local services. There are no individual policies that are considered likely to have a negative impact. The objective to ensure the Town is safer and easier to move around is particularly positive for some groups with protected characteristics, as is the objective that seeks to provide a revitalised town centre.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The South Woodham Ferrers NP provides a suite of objectives and policies to respond to the vision for the benefit of the local community as a whole including those with protected characteristics.
- 5.2 In preparing the South Woodham Ferrers NP, South Woodham Ferrers Town Council and the NP Steering Group have sought to engage widely with the all of the local community. They have gone beyond minimum consultation requirements to gather the views of the community.
- 5.3 In conclusion, the assessment finds the South Woodham Ferrers NP to be appropriate and that the duty of care prescribed by the Equalities Act (2010) is met.

South Woodham Ferrers
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