

## **Equality Impact Assessment of Northumberland Local Plan: Publication Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19), December 2018**

*This Equality Impact Assessment examines all elements of the Northumberland Local Plan that represent key changes, decisions or proposals that may have an impact on equality within the County. In preparing this statement, we cite specific data and consultation evidence wherever possible.*

*The duties that have been considered in drafting this Equality Impact Assessment are:*

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

### **PART 1 – Overview of the change, decision or proposal**

1. Title of the change, decision or proposal:

**Northumberland Local Plan: Publication Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19)**

2. Date of equality impact assessment:

**December 2018**

### 3. Brief description of the change, decision or proposal and the rationale for it:

The Local Plan identifies the quantity and general location of new development across the towns and villages of Northumberland and contains a vision, objectives and a series of planning policies that will be used to guide future development and help determine planning applications over the period up until 2036.

The Local Plan, when implemented will facilitate the delivery of:

- A prosperous economy through: helping support the creation of 15,000 additional jobs by 2036; ensuring a supply of 242ha of available land for economic development; promote areas of South East and Central Northumberland as cost effective alternatives to the Tyneside employment market; bringing forward interconnected sites around the Blyth Estuary for strategically important business sectors including low carbon; promoting quality office accommodation; support hubs for business services and creative industries as well as more dispersed rural businesses and home run enterprises; facilitate upskilling; helping grow tourism facilities and accommodation; supporting improvements to communications infrastructure - everything from the main routes and gateways to local provision of broadband; support the objectives of partner agencies in encouraging investment in the County.
- Extended housing choice, through the provision of at least 17,700 new dwellings (average of 885 dwellings per annum) over the plan period, helping to:
  - extend choice in the housing market, including the provision of affordable housing; increase the formation of new households;
  - increase the numbers of skilled workers moving into the County;
  - reduce those moving away;
  - help to rebalance the age structure of the resident population;
  - assist in the provision of housing for older people and vulnerable groups;
  - maintain and enhance local services; and strengthen the labour force.
- Sustainable development through growing the economy; supporting healthy and vibrant communities; contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural, built, water and historic environment of Northumberland; adopting a proactive approach to addressing the potential social, economic and environmental impacts of climate change; and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy.

The Council has consulted throughout the preparation of the Plan. The Spring 2018 consultation, which took place between 28 March and 2 May 2018, asked people to show the Council where, in their opinion, development should go and to flag up key issues, which they considered the Plan should address. The results of this consultation fed into the Draft Regulation 18 Local Plan.

Consultation on the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan took place between 4 July and 15 August 2018, where people were invited to make comments on the proposed draft policies, which set out the strategy for future building and environmental matters, as well as identifying in detail which sites the Council had identified as places for future economic or residential development and where Green Belt and settlement boundaries would be drawn. The Draft Plan also covered the full range of planning topics, under the general headings of economic development, housing, connectivity and movement, the environment, the water environment, contaminated and unstable land, pollution and soil quality, managing natural resources and

infrastructure, implementation and delivery. The results of this consultation have fed into this revised draft Local Plan - the Publication Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19)

The Council has made strong efforts to be inclusive of all the 2010 Equality Act 'protected characteristics'. During the build-up to the submission of the (subsequently withdrawn) Core Strategy the Council held a number of events aimed at representatives of protected characteristics or particular local minority groups.<sup>1</sup> A good understanding was gained from this previous work and has been added to during the two consultation stages of the current Draft Local Plan during which some of the same issues arose, even though there was no specially tailored events aimed at the protected characteristics.

The databases of contacts, built up over a number of years, have ensured that the process has been as inclusive as possible.

This Equality Impact Assessment shows how the Plan has addressed the issues and needs associated with each of the Protected Characteristics.

The Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement' (or SCI), which was last revised in February 2015 is also highly relevant. The SCI explains the planning system including the stages of the Core Strategy process. It also has a chapter called 'Inclusive Planning', giving commitments of how the Council will seek to involve all parts of its communities in drawing up the Core Strategy and other planning documents, making reference to each of the protected characteristics.

**4. Name(s) and role(s) of officer(s) completing the assessment:**

**Jonathan Nicholson, Senior Planner, Planning Policy**

**James Armstrong, Planner, Planning Policy**

**5. Overall, what are the outcomes of the change, decision or proposal expected to be? (E.G. will it reduce/terminate a low-priority service, maintain service outcomes at**

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<sup>1</sup> These early efforts during the former Core Strategy preparation included:

- Early development of contacts and special meetings with groups representing sections of the population, with a view to fulfilling these obligations. We established the best ways of reaching people through means such as email cascades and specialist publications. Once established, many gatherings of different representative organisations were attended on request and special meetings or workshops were arranged where appropriate. Special approaches were made on particular issues – e.g. the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community regarding implications of Green Belt changes.
- An extended special equalities consultation that straddled the Issues and Options and Preferred Options stages – an additional opportunity for groups and individuals to feed idea and concerns into the process of drawing up the Plan – involving meetings with representative groups to gather views, and culminating in a Single Equalities Workshop in December 2012. This included themed workshops with all feedback recorded; many representatives of minority groups were present.
- Special events for younger people to have their say on the emerging Plan: an initial set organised and run by YPIN a network representing young people in Northumberland; subsequent involvement in Youth Democracy Events aiming to inform young people on how to make their voices heard in the democratic process. A Facebook Forum, held at a later stage, also sought to attract younger people into the process.
- Two easy-read versions of the Core Strategy (at consecutive stages) which were targeted towards particular events and/or particular groups.

reduced cost, or change the balance of funding responsibility for a service which will remain the same? Will there be an impact on staff?)

The strategic objectives and outcomes in the Local Plan are set out in Chapter 3 of the Local Plan and the sections below.

6. If you judge that this proposal is **not** relevant to some protected characteristics, mark these below (and explain underneath how you have reached this judgement). Please consider the impact on both employees and service users before selecting a characteristic.

Disability  Sex  Age  Race  Religion and beliefs  Sexual orientation

Gender identity  Women who are pregnant or have babies

Employees who are married/in civil partnerships

**The characteristics indicated above are not relevant because:**

The protected characteristics are all considered relevant, with the exception of marriage and civil partnerships, in relation to which it is unlikely that any Council posts will be reduced or lost as a direct consequence of the Local Plan - i.e. not considered to be relevant to employees who are married or in civil partnerships.

Consideration of the scope of the Local Plan has concluded that it could potentially cause adverse or positive impacts for any of the protected characteristics. It was therefore considered appropriate for the EqIA of the various stages of the Local Plan to be carried out looking at the full range of groups and characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

The responses to the questions below, under each of the protected characteristics the response to the second question (i.e. Could those with the protected characteristic be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?), is expanded to incorporate an explanation to demonstrate how the plan seeks to avoid any negative impacts and where particular policies are intended to (or may) have a positive impact.

In response to the last question in each case: (i.e. Are there opportunities to create positive impacts for those with the protected characteristic linked to this change, decision or proposal?), a summary of responses relating to the protected

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<sup>2</sup> In 2013, the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) carried out for the first “Preferred Options” stage of the withdrawn Core Strategy included a chapter summarising the screening and scoping stages for the EqIA that would need to be applied to the Local Plan.

At the time, the Group Strategic Analysis of the (then) Local Services group identified that there may be medium potential for impact in terms of disability, age and race protected characteristics, implying that others of the protected characteristics would not have potential for impacts from the service that would differ from the impacts on the general population. Notwithstanding this service-wide conclusion, further consideration of the scope of the Local Plan concluded that it could potentially cause adverse or positive impacts for any of the protected characteristics. It was therefore considered appropriate for the EqIA of the various stages of the Local Plan to be carried out looking at the full range of groups and characteristics.

characteristic, given at the 2012 special equalities consultation is set out, along with a statement as to what the Local Plan proposed to address these points.

Many of the barriers listed under the protected characteristics below relate to issues of access. The Council has scoped supplementary planning documents on design (one general and one on highways design), which will contain detailed guidance to help it achieve its aim to make Northumberland accessible to everyone. The supplementary planning documents will be informed by a comprehensive review of best practice.<sup>3</sup>

## **PART 2 – Relevance to different Protected Characteristics**

**It is only necessary to complete questions relating to protected characteristics that have been identified as being relevant at question 6 above.**

### **Disability**

*Note: “disabled people” includes people with physical, learning and sensory disabilities, people with a long-term illness, and people with mental health problems. You should consider potential impacts on all of these groups.*

**Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services**

7. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by disabled people, about disabled people’s experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

There were 16,200 residents receiving disability living allowance (DLA) in Northumberland as at May 2016. Of these 52.3% were aged 16 to 65, which was higher than the England percentage figure of 58.2. However those receiving DLA probably only represent about a quarter of the numbers who regard themselves as having some form of disability. The table below shows that Northumberland sits more closely with the national, rather than the regional picture with regard to percentage disabled based on the Equality Act definition. Even so, this accounts for more than one in five people.

#### **Disability amongst people aged 16-64 (Oct 2011- Sept 2012)**

(Based on the Equality Act definition)	<b>Northumberland</b>	<b>North East</b>	<b>England</b>
% disabled	11.7	14.1	11.7
% work-limiting disabled	3.8	4.2	3.6
% both work-limiting disabled and disabled	20.5	24.0	20.4

Source: ONS Neighbourhood Statistics Local Authority profiles

The Local Plan is a plan for where development should go in the future. It has to be a plan that seeks to sustain the economy, the environment and communities. As

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<sup>3</sup> These scoping documents are subject to consultation alongside this Local Plan. They are entitled: “Northumberland Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document - Scoping Document”; and “Northumberland Highways and Transportation Design and Delivery Supplementary Planning Document”

such, it could affect how people are able to access, homes, jobs, services and other important aspects such as the countryside and recreation. The Plan seeks to locate new homes sustainably in relation to services, jobs and public transport and avoid areas of greater risk. It must also consider specialist needs of the population – how and where these could best be provided.

For disabled people, isolation from services and/or ways of accessing services and work are barriers, as is a lack of opportunity to access specialist housing where this is needed. Homes built in unsuitable locations such as isolated places or areas of flood risk can form a greater risk for disabled people than for other people.

**8. Could disabled people be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?**

It is considered that the Local Plan could include outcomes that will be of net benefit to disabled people insofar as they are currently disadvantaged within the environment of Northumberland. This reflects issues of location and access to homes, services and work that the Local Plan seeks to address.

The Local Plan seeks to facilitate lifetime homes and allow the flexibility for adaptations.

More generally, it will direct new development to sustainable locations, which, in strategic terms, should maximise accessibility for disabled people. All new development must meet sustainability criteria.

Specifically, the Local Plan includes among many relevant policies:

- A **strategic objective** on community health and wellbeing - to support sustainable communities across Northumberland; working to improve the quality of services and facilities to support physical and mental health, social and cultural wellbeing for all including responding to the needs and opportunities created by Northumberland's population.
- A **strategic objective** entitled 'homes' contains three key outcomes that aim to serve the county's ageing and vulnerable groups:-
  - A range of housing tenures, types, prices and sizes will have been provided in order to help meet local needs for different groups of the population, including meeting the needs of an ageing population;
  - Housing design and location will allow older people and vulnerable groups to live as independent lives as possible;
  - Lifetime neighbourhoods will have been developed in locations which have the greatest potential to support older people to remain independent as they age;
- **Policy HOU 5 - Housing types and mix.** This Policy supports a range of housing types and mix, including specialist housing for older and vulnerable people.
- **Policy HOU 11 - Homes for older and vulnerable people.** This Policy meets the changing needs of older people and vulnerable needs groups and supports residents' desires to live securely and independently in their own homes and communities over their lifetimes will be delivered wherever possible, by:
  - a. Supporting the adaptation of existing homes and the provision of new adaptable homes, including bungalows, level-access flats and sheltered 'extra care' accommodation, located in accessible and sustainable central locations well-served by local health, leisure, education and transport facilities;

- b. Supporting and facilitating the provision of integrated sheltered residential retirement and ‘extra care’ accommodation with support for older people and vulnerable adults as part of creating balanced and sustainable communities to meet identified priority needs in Main Towns and Service Centres;
- c. Supporting and enabling the provision of Use Class C2 residential care and nursing home accommodation options for those older and vulnerable people with physical disabilities and other needs who are unable to live independently, where justified by a specialist housing needs assessment;
- d. Facilitating the creation of ‘lifetime neighbourhoods’ and ‘retirement villages’ that are well-designed to be accessible for everyone, located centrally within larger settlements close to local services and community facilities. Such development should support the principles of ‘active ageing’, minimise their institutional character and incorporate the delivery of integrated tiered support;
- and e. Requiring planning applications to demonstrate in their supporting Design and Access Statement that development proposals meet the space and accessibility needs of older and vulnerable people, as well as supporting the principles of ‘active ageing’.
- **Policy TRA1 sustainable connections** promotes a spatial distribution of development, which enhances the accessibility of development, reduces the need to travel, and facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport. This policy also promotes good design principles in respect of the permeability, connectivity and legibility of development; and inclusive access.
- Chapter 8 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure well-designed places and high quality spaces are developed. The overarching design principles in **Policy QOP1** outline how proposals can support appropriate provision for the age-older cohort of the county’s population.

9. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of disabled people to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

Policies in the Local Plan should not reduce this ability but may actually increase it, gradually – e.g. a result of the policies on sustainable connections and high quality, sustainable design, mentioned above.

10. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards disabled people? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

This may be the case over time – e.g. if adapted homes allow disabled individuals to have greater visibility in the community and the environment, which would be less the case if they were confined to residential care or other specialist accommodation. Improved ‘legibility’ of environments, may also assist those with learning disabilities to have a more visible presence in communities.

11. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that disabled people will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Not anticipated to have any adverse impact. Although it is not anticipated that people will experience any increase in harassment as a consequence of the Local Plan, through the

Safer Northumberland Partnership, the County Council encourages people to report any concerns about harassment so that appropriate action can be taken.

By facilitating the ability of disabled people to function within the places where they live, it may be possible to break down barriers, and reduce the risk of harassment and victimisation.

- 12.** If there are risks that disabled people could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

We are not aware of any disproportionate disadvantage to disabled people, caused by the Local Plan, which may require such steps.

As components of the Plan are developed, individual reviews may identify improvements in outcomes for some people but may also identify negative impact on other groups. As decisions are made, the impact on different groups will be considered.

- 13.** Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for disabled people linked to this change, decision or proposal?

Hopefully yes, as policies such as those quoted in the response to Question 8 take effect.

The following were first identified at the 2012 special equalities consultation, as issues specific to this protected characteristic. Still relevant, the response in italics outlines how the Local Plan addresses them:

- **Accessibility to a wide range of services.**

*Local Plan response: see policies quoted in response to Question 8 above. An overarching strategic objective on community health and wellbeing protects and, where possible, enhances:-*

- *Accessible local services and community facilities*
- *Green infrastructure, open space provision and recreational facilities*
- *Social inclusion, health and wellbeing*

*State of the art hospitals will provide improved healthcare; Communities will have access to high quality education facilities; Neighbourhood Plans will have been produced by communities that wish to promote particular development in their areas, adding detail to the overarching policies within the Local Plan; Strategic growth will have been matched by the delivery of improved and new community infrastructure.*

- **Access to health care services.**

*Local Plan response: see policies quoted in response to Question 8 above.*

- **Provision of appropriate accommodation in the right locations to meet needs:** lifetime homes; retirement; sheltered housing; extra care housing.

*Local Plan response: Some of the policies referred to in Q8 above are relevant.*

- **Importance of lifetime homes** to allow older people (including with disabilities) to stay in their homes longer and retain their independence.

*Local Plan response: As a result of changes in national guidance, 'lifetime homes' standards can no longer be included however this type of housing will continue to be encouraged. **Policy HOU 11** states: 'Housing and other residential accommodation which meets the changing needs of older people and vulnerable needs groups and*

*which supports residents' desires to live securely and independently in their own homes and communities over their lifetimes will be delivered wherever possible'.*

- **Higher vulnerability to flood risk**

*Local Plan response: All homes and places of community assembly, such as hospitals, are now categorised as 'more vulnerable' uses as regards flood risk. This is a national policy, which means that these uses cannot be permitted on the floodplain and have to go through rigorous tests in other areas liable to flooding. These policies are followed and expanded upon in the Local Plan, backed up by detailed Strategic Flood Risk Assessments.*

## Sex

**Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services**

**14.** What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by men and women, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

Area	Total Population	Male		Female	
		Number	%	Number	%
Northumberland	315,263	153,914	48.8%	161,349	51.2%
North-East	2,624,621	1,287,177	49.0%	1,337,444	51.0%
England	54,786,327	27,029,286	49.3%	27,757,041	50.7%

The table shows the mid-2017 mid-year estimates for the distribution of the population between males and females at different spatial scales. It can be seen that the ratio of female to male is higher in Northumberland than for the North-East, which is (in turn) higher than England as a whole. This is largely explained by the older age profile, given that the life expectancy for females is greater than for males. Indeed since 2002 the median age of the Northumberland population has risen by 5.6 years to 47.7 by mid-2017.

The Local Plan sets out where development should go in the future. It has to be a plan that seeks to sustain the economy, the environment and communities. As such, it could affect how people are able to access, homes, jobs, services and other important aspects such as the countryside and recreation. The Plan seeks to locate new homes sustainably in relation to services; jobs and public transport and avoid areas of greater risk. It must also consider specialist needs of the population – how and where these could best be provided.

In terms of gender issues, the pattern of development can be a factor. The lives of older women are often very different from those of older men. On average, women live longer but have lower incomes and are more likely to be disabled. Women have different working patterns to men. Traditionally, women have also left the labour market earlier, though this is likely to change over time. Those in work may be more likely than men to have two part time, rather than one full-time job. There is also a lower likelihood that women will have 24 hour access to a car. (Wansbeck former district area is known to have the lowest percentage of women drivers in the country). The need for access to

public transport, proximity to workplaces and the avoidance of isolated locations are factors to consider in planning for the needs of women.

Because women are also often younger than their partners, more women than men live alone in their later years.

These factors will also impact on how the Local Plan needs to plan for other protected characteristics (age-older and disability).

**15.** Could men or women be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

It is considered that the Local Plan could include outcomes that will be of net benefit to women insofar as they are currently disadvantaged within the environment of Northumberland. This reflects issues of location and access to services and work that the Local Plan seeks to address.

The Local Plan seeks to locate most development in the larger settlements where jobs and services are already located. This should benefit women who may be more likely to need to access more than one part time job.

In addition, the Local Plan seeks to avoid isolated housing developments. Women tend to be live longer and therefore form a greater proportion of older and single person households, (a factor that is more acute in Northumberland than the NE and English average); so the fact that the Local Plan seeks to avoid isolated locations for new housing should be advantageous.

**16.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of men or women to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

Yes – over time.

The Local Plan seeks to bring about safer environments. Chapter 8 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure well-designed places and high quality spaces are developed. **Policy QOP1** includes a criterion that supports positive social interaction and a safe and secure environment, 'including measures where relevant to reduce the risk of crime and the fear of crime.' A separate criterion 'protects general amenity' which is a term commonly used to refer to the quality or character of an area and elements that contribute towards the enjoyment of an area.

These types of criteria should, hopefully, over time improve perceptions of urban environments within the County – e.g. that streets are safer to walk around after dark. This may, in turn, lead to a more level playing field for the genders in terms of experiencing their environments

In addition to the above, the Council will prepare a supplementary planning document, the Northumberland Design Guide SPD, which will include more guidance on the requirements of the design principles and other design-related policies within the Local Plan. The design policies and the Northumberland Design Guide will together set out local design expectations for the County.

Overall, it is considered that, over time, the Local Plan will have a net positive impact on the safety of environments in the County.

17. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards men or women? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No. While, the above may improve perceptions of urban environmental safety, and this may (in net terms) benefit females over males, it would be difficult to argue that the Local Plan will affect public attitudes towards either gender.

18. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that men or women will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Not anticipated to have any adverse impact. Although it is not anticipated that people will experience any increase in harassment as a consequence of the Local Plan, through the Safer Northumberland Partnership, the County Council encourages people to report any concerns about harassment so that appropriate action can be taken.

While a consequence of policy approach may, over time, improve perceptions of urban environmental safety, and this may (in net terms) benefit females over males, it would be difficult to argue that the risk of either males or females harassed or victimised in the streets would definitely improve, (although it would be hoped that any reduction in such incidents could, in part, be attributed to improved environments).

19. If there are risks that men or women could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

We are not aware of any disproportionate disadvantage to either males or females, caused by the Local Plan, which may require such steps.

As components of the Plan are developed, individual reviews may identify improvements in outcomes for some people but may also identify negative impact on other groups. As decisions are made, the impact on different groups will be considered.

20. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for men or women linked to this change, decision or proposal?

Yes – new housing, employment, retail or other larger scale schemes can be designed in a way that ‘designs out’ crime. Other initiatives to improve existing environments may be encouraged and, in certain instances, be assisted through contributions secured through legal agreements with the developers, where the improvements concerned are necessary for the development scheme to be able to proceed.

The following were first identified, at the 2012 special equalities consultation, as issues specific to this protected characteristic. Still relevant, the response in italics outlines how the Local Plan addresses them:

- **Increasing the accessibility of the built environment, public transport and housing** and improving access to services will benefit both men and women but will be particularly beneficial to people with caring responsibilities.  
*Local Plan response: The relevant policies are referred to in the response to Q16 above.*
- **Single parents struggling to find affordable living accommodation**  
*Local Plan response: The policies on affordable housing policies seek to maximise*

*the provision of affordable housing through the planning system, in accordance with identified needs.*

- **Isolation of women in rural areas**

*Local Plan response: Policies on accessibility and improved communications recognise that people will continue to live in isolated locations but need better links with the wider community. Policy TRA1 on 'Promoting Sustainable Connections' commits the Council to working collaboratively to development that promotes a spatial distribution which creates accessible development, reduces the need to travel by car, and maximises the use of sustainable modes of transport. The Local Plan does not, however, deal with the funding of public transport unless sought from a developer in connection with a development, (through legal agreement).*

- **Lack of support for women's enterprise initiatives**

*Local Plan response: Planning can only support particular initiatives in terms of facilitating their appropriate locations. If necessary, land could be allocated for these types of community uses as part of the forthcoming 'Delivery' part of the Local Plan. An overarching objective on 'community health and wellbeing' supports sustainable communities across Northumberland; working to improve the quality of services and facilities to support physical and mental health, social and cultural wellbeing for all including responding to the needs and opportunities created by Northumberland's population.*

- **Women often engaged in more than one job**

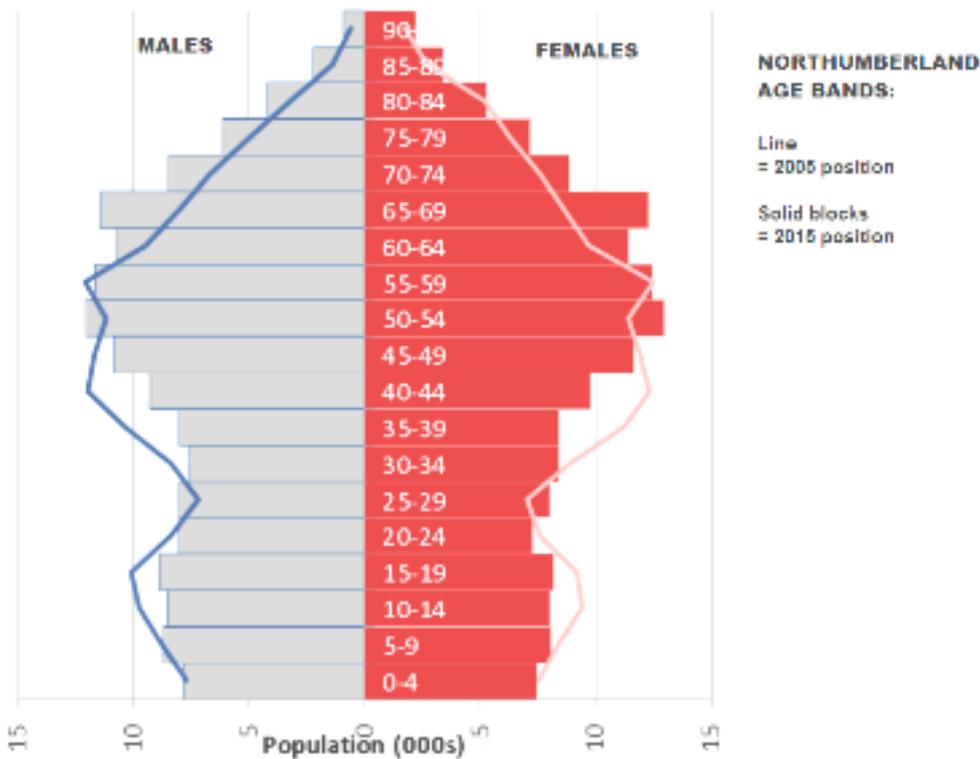
*Local Plan response: An overarching objective of the Local Plan is to increase the number and quality of jobs available. The hope is that the proportion poorly paid, part time jobs will reduce as better quality employment is established within the County.*

## **Age**

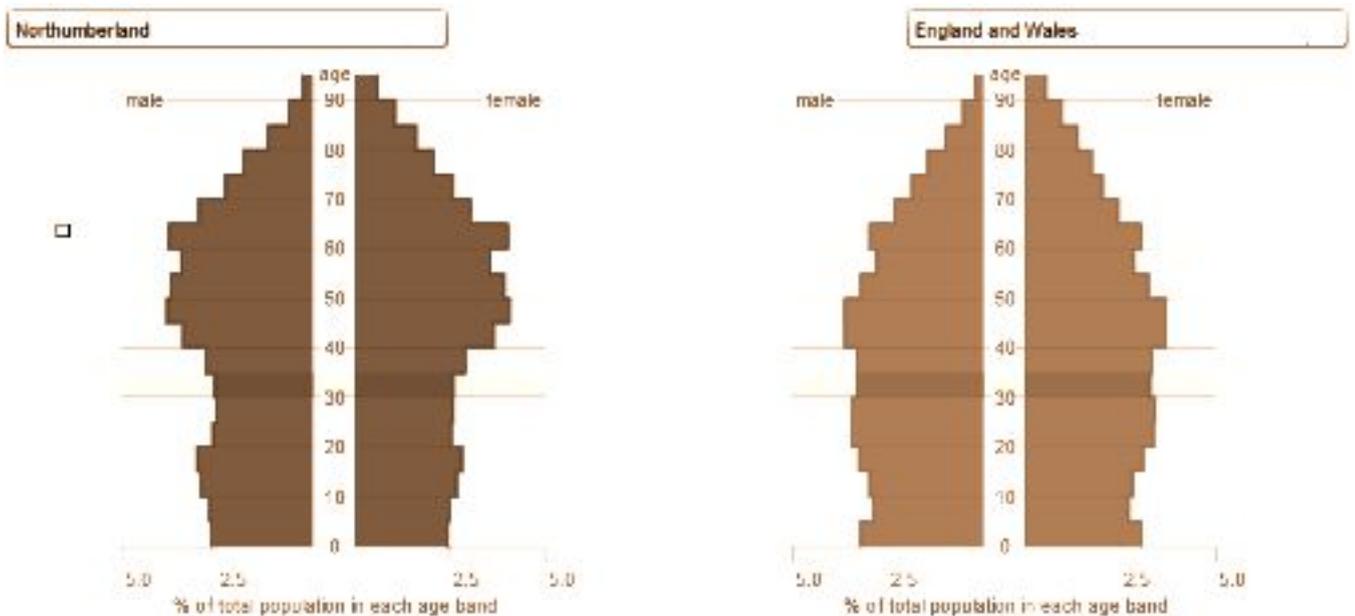
**Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services**

**21.** What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people of different age groups, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The population of Northumberland is an ageing one, as illustrated in the comparative diagram below (based on the 2015 mid-year estimates). It shows how a ten year period has seen the top-heaviness of the 'age pyramid', already clearly apparent in 2005, increase markedly, with the largest increase being in the 60 to 64 year old cohort.



The two diagrams below compare the Northumberland with the England and Wales position, as at the 2011 Census, demonstrating that the nation as a whole has a much higher representation of the younger age cohorts.



These show that in Northumberland, planning needs to cater for a greater proportion of older age groups than on average around the country. Indeed, between 2016 and 2036 there is projected to be a significant increase in those over 65 (by almost half), with those over 80 years of age doubling in number. Conversely, the core working age population of 20 to 64 year olds is projected to decrease by over 12%

The Local Plan is a plan for where development should go in the future. It has to be a plan that seeks to sustain the economy, the environment and communities. As such, it

could affect how people are able to access, homes, jobs, services and other important aspects such as the countryside and recreation. The Plan seeks to locate new homes sustainably in relation to services; jobs and public transport and avoid areas of greater risk. It must also consider specialist needs of the population – how and where these could best be provided.

The Local Plan's strategic objective entitled 'homes' contains three key outcomes that aim to serve the county's ageing and vulnerable groups:-

- A range of housing tenures, types, prices and sizes will have been provided in order to help meet local needs for different groups of the population, including meeting the needs of an ageing population;
- Housing design and location will allow older people and vulnerable groups to live as independent lives as possible;
- Lifetime neighbourhoods will have been developed in locations which have the greatest potential to support older people to remain independent as they age;

While the Local Plan looks to achieve an age structure that more closely resembles the right hand of the two pyramids above, this in itself will not disadvantage the older age groups. Indeed the presence of younger households and workforce should help bolster services that older age groups rely on.

In overall terms, the Local Plan values the contribution that older age groups make towards the economy and society and seeks to plan positively for this element of the population, as well as the younger elements.

How and where new development is planned affects overall levels of accessibility for people. In terms of older age groups, proximity to services, such as healthcare, is especially important and/or the means to access these by public transport. Accessing quality jobs is a key issue for younger people. Again, public transport can be a lifeline for young people wishing to access work.

Provision of appropriate accommodation in the right locations to meet needs is vital and this tends to be magnified as an issue for either end of the age spectrum. For the older age groups, the suitable provision and location of lifetime homes; retirement; sheltered housing and/or extra care housing are important. At the younger end of the age range, affordable housing can be the key to enabling people to live independently from family.

An additional factor for older people is that any homes built in unsuitable locations such as isolated places or areas of flood risk can form a greater risk for these age groups than is the case for younger people, who are less likely to be disabled, for example.

**22. Could people of different age groups be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?**

It is considered that the Local Plan could include outcomes that will be of net benefit to both the 'age-older' and 'age-younger' elements of the population, due to some of the issues of location and access to homes, services and work that it seeks to address. (In overall terms, the Local Plan seeks to plan positively all age ranges of the population).

## Age-older

The Local Plan will seek to facilitate lifetime homes and allow the flexibility for adaptations.

More generally, it will direct development to sustainable locations, which, in strategic terms, should maximise accessibility – something which is proportionately more important for the older age groups who, statistics show, are less likely to have access to a car and more likely to be disabled. All new development must meet sustainability criteria.

Specifically, the Local Plan includes among many relevant policies:-

- **Policy HOU 5 - Housing types and mix.** This Policy supports a range of housing types and mix, including specialist housing for older and vulnerable people.
- **Policy HOU 11 - Homes for older and vulnerable people.** This Policy meets the changing needs of older people and vulnerable needs groups and supports residents' desires to live securely and independently in their own homes and communities over their lifetimes will be delivered wherever possible, by:
  - a. Supporting the adaptation of existing homes and the provision of new adaptable homes, including bungalows, level-access flats and sheltered 'extra care' accommodation, located in accessible and sustainable central locations well-served by local health, leisure, education and transport facilities;
  - b. Supporting and facilitating the provision of integrated sheltered residential retirement and 'extra care' accommodation with support for older people and vulnerable adults as part of creating balanced and sustainable communities to meet identified priority needs in Main Towns and Service Centres;
  - c. Supporting and enabling the provision of Use Class C2 residential care and nursing home accommodation options for those older and vulnerable people with physical disabilities and other needs who are unable to live independently, where justified by a specialist housing needs assessment;
  - d. Facilitating the creation of 'lifetime neighbourhoods' and 'retirement villages' that are well-designed to be accessible for everyone, located centrally within larger settlements close to local services and community facilities. Such development should support the principles of 'active ageing', minimise their institutional character and incorporate the delivery of integrated tiered support;
  - and e. Requiring planning applications to demonstrate in their supporting Design and Access Statement that development proposals meet the space and accessibility needs of older and vulnerable people, as well as supporting the principles of 'active ageing'.
- **Policy TRA1 sustainable connections** promotes a spatial distribution of development, which enhances the accessibility of development, reduces the need to travel, and facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport. This policy also promotes good design principles in respect of the permeability, connectivity and legibility of development; and inclusive access.
- Chapter 8 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure well-designed places and high quality spaces are developed. The overarching design principles in **Policy QOP1** outline how proposals can support appropriate provision for the age-older cohort of the county's population.

In addition to the above, the Council will prepare a supplementary planning document, the Northumberland Design Guide, which will include more guidance on the requirements of the design principles and other design-related policies within the Local Plan. The design policies and the Northumberland Design Guide will together set out local design expectations for the County.

## Age-younger

The Local Plan has an overall aim of increasing the proportion of Northumberland's population which is of working age. This should have a positive effect on younger people. Other policies that should have a positive effect on younger people in Northumberland include:

- The **overarching objective and associated policies that seek to bring good quality employment and training** into the County, as well the policy on community services and facilities that seeks to provide and retain facilities for (inter alia) the educational needs of the community.
- **Policy HOU 7 Exception sites**. This Policy supports Entry-level Exception Sites for first time buyers or renters on sites not allocated for housing adjacent to an existing settlement.
- **Policy HOU 6 Affordable housing provision**. This Policy that seeks to deliver affordable housing, given the difficulties faced by younger people, with generally lower incomes and lower levels of savings, in accessing housing within the County. The quantum of affordable dwellings in each new development will be proportionate to its size and viability.
- **Policy TCS 6 Hot Food Takeaways**. In recent years, they have been associated with encouraging unhealthy eating, especially among children. As such there are strong and supportable reasons for excluding them from the immediate surroundings of schools. In addition, there are strong reasons to limit their numbers where there is already a proliferation of takeaways or where there are higher than average numbers of younger children already falling into the overweight categories.

Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people of different age groups to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

Policies in the Local Plan should not reduce this ability but may actually increase it, gradually – e.g. a result of the policies on such matters as affordable and specialist housing, sustainable connections and high quality, sustainable design, mentioned above. Policies that aim to create better and more accessible public spaces may also enable groups such as those in the older age bands to visit locations such as town centres on a more regular basis.

**23.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of different age groups? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

Possibly, over time, as improvements in the accessibility of the environment, including its 'legibility' for those with dementia, lead to an increased presence of these groups in the environment and community.

- 24.** Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people of different age groups will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Not anticipated to have any adverse impact. Although it is not anticipated that people will experience any increase in harassment as a consequence of the Local Plan, through the Safer Northumberland Partnership, the county council encourages people to report any concerns about harassment so that appropriate action can be taken.

By facilitating the ability of younger people to remain in their communities, through enhanced work and housing provision, and through facilitating older people to function within the places where they live, it may be possible to break down barriers, and, over time, reduce some of the risks of harassment and victimisation.

- 25.** If there are risks that people of different age groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

We are not aware of any disproportionate disadvantage to people from either the older or the younger age groups, caused by the Local Plan, which may require such steps.

As components of the Plan are developed, individual reviews may identify improvements in outcomes for some people but may also identify negative impact on other groups. As decisions are made, the impact on different groups will be considered.

- 26.** Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people of different age groups linked to this change, decision or proposal?

Hopefully yes, as policies such as those quoted in the response to Question 22 take effect.

The following were first identified at the Issues and Options stage of the withdrawn Core Strategy, as issues specific to this protected characteristic. Still relevant, the response in italics outlines how the Local Plan now addresses them:

### **Age-older**

- **Accessibility to a wide range of services**

*Local Plan response: Some of the policies referred to in question 22 above are relevant. An overarching strategic objective on community health and wellbeing protects and, where possible, enhances:-*

- *Accessible local services and community facilities*
- *Green infrastructure, open space provision and recreational facilities*
- *Social inclusion, health and wellbeing*

*State of the art hospitals will provide improved healthcare; Communities will have access to high quality education facilities; Neighbourhood Plans will have been produced by communities that wish to promote particular development in their areas, adding detail to the overarching policies within the Local Plan; Strategic growth will have been matched by the delivery of improved and new community infrastructure.*

- **Lack of public transport**

*Local Plan response: In addition to many Policies encouraging the use of public*

transport, **Policy TRA 1** 'Promoting Sustainable Connections' commits the Council to working collaboratively to support a range of transport modes with priority given to walking, cycling and public transport. The Local Plan does not, however, deal with the funding of public transport unless sought from a developer in connection with a development, (through legal agreement).

- **Access to health care facilities**

*Local Plan response: See first bullet point above.*

- **Provision of appropriate accommodation in the right locations to meet needs:** lifetime homes; retirement; sheltered housing; extra care housing.

*Local Plan response: Some of the policies referred to in Q22 above are relevant.*

- **Importance of lifetime homes** to allow older people to stay in their homes longer and retain their independence.

*Local Plan response: As a result of changes in national guidance, 'lifetime homes' standards can no longer be included however this type of housing will continue to be encouraged. **Policy HOU 11** states: 'Housing and other residential accommodation which meets the changing needs of older people and vulnerable needs groups and which supports residents' desires to live securely and independently in their own homes and communities over their lifetimes will be delivered wherever possible'.*

- **Higher vulnerability to flood risk**

*Local Plan response: All homes and places of community assembly, such as hospitals, are now categorised as 'more vulnerable' uses as regards flood risk. This is a national policy, which means that these uses cannot be permitted on the floodplain and have to go through rigorous tests in other areas liable to flooding. These policies are followed and expanded upon in the Local Plan, backed up by detailed Strategic Flood Risk Assessments.*

## **Age-younger**

- **Difficulty in accessing affordable housing**

*Local Plan response: The policies on affordable housing policies seek to maximise the provision of affordable housing through the planning system, in accordance with identified needs.*

- **Limited employment opportunities**

*Local Plan response: An overarching objective of the Local Plan is to increase the number and quality of jobs available.*

- **Young people leaving the area to improve their opportunities**

*Local Plan response: See previous bullet point – emphasis on the quality of new jobs. The whole of the Plan is geared towards increasing the proportion of working age people living in the County.*

- **Limited transport options to access employment; education and training**

*Local Plan response: In addition to many Policies encouraging the use of public transport, **Policy TRA 1** 'Promoting Sustainable Connections' commits the Council to working collaboratively to support a range of transport modes with priority given to walking, cycling and public transport. The Local Plan does not, however, deal with the funding of public transport unless sought from a developer in connection with a development, (through legal agreement).*

## Race

*Note: For the purposes of the Act 'race' can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as your current nationality. For example, you may have Chinese national origins and be living in Britain with a British passport*

**Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services**

**27.** What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people of different racial groups, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

According to census data, the proportion of people who described themselves as not being 'White British' has been very low in Northumberland compared with many parts of the country. However it is showing a marked increase – up from 1.9% in 2001 to 2.8% in 2011 and it can be assumed that the upward trend in ethnic minority groups will continue. Furthermore, they are concentrated, in many cases, in certain areas. It is important that the Local Plan considers the particular spatial needs generated by ethnic minority groups.

There are difficulties that people from ethnic minority backgrounds face in accessing affordable housing and certain services due to barriers such as language. In addition, migrants are often trapped in low paid jobs. Insofar as the Local Plan seeks to improve access to quality jobs, homes and services generally for the population, there may be the opportunity to influence access for ethnic minority groups – at least indirectly.

One particular group – Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT) – is known to be undercounted in official censuses due, in part, to their nomadic lifestyle. Perhaps, of all the ethnic minority groups, GRT have the most specialist needs in terms of planning spatially for their needs (accommodation / services / work).

Evidence shows that GRT face barriers in accessing mainstream services including accommodation, health and education. The Council is committed to providing inclusive and accessible services.

The element that the Local Plan seeks to deal with most directly is accommodation. **Policy HOU 12** in the Local Plan makes a commitment that the Council will make provision for any necessary pitches and/or plots over the plan period to meet the need identified in the most-up-to-date Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. This assessment points to a possible longer term need for additional permanent pitches for Gypsy and Traveller groups, but identifies a more immediate need for temporary stopping, particularly in SE Northumberland, which is being tackled by a team of people with experience liaising with GRT communities. Any new sites or yards that may be needed, as the Plan period progresses, are subject to a set of criteria including making sure that there will be the correct provision of the necessary infrastructure and services including jobs, shops, schools, medical facilities and public transport.

Notwithstanding the above commitments, further barriers to accommodation provision can be identified as follows:

- In terms of the types of specialist accommodation that may be required, communities can oppose sites being in their local area due to perceptions about matters such as loss of amenity.
- It is not possible for such sites to be located in the Green Belt. Since it is likely that sites would be outside built-up areas, this effectively precludes them from being located in a sizeable part of the County.

As with all aspects of planning, the Council will seek to find a sustainable solution or solutions in consultation with the GRT and settled communities. It is not considered that the Green Belt imposes a restriction on accommodation that is any greater than the restrictions faced by the wider population.

**28.** Could people of different racial groups be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

It is considered that the Local Plan could include outcomes that will be of net benefit to people from ethnic minorities – notably the GRT communities, who have particular accommodation needs that the Local Plan seeks to address but also as improvements are made to the availability of affordable housing and work opportunities.

The Local Plan seeks to deal with the spatially defined needs for housing, employment and services equally across the population. Where specialist provision is required, which is the case for GRT communities, the Local Plan seeks to plan sustainably for this and to remove barriers that may stand in the way, in consultation with all communities affected. It is not considered that the Green Belt imposes a restriction on GRT accommodation that is any greater than the restrictions faced by the wider population.

**29.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people of different racial groups to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

Yes, insofar as the Local Plan seeks to enable all sections of society to have access to work and services and participate in their local communities, including accommodating the full range of lifestyles that exist within the County.

**30.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of different racial groups? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

Facilitating the provision of properly planned accommodation for GRT communities, associated with the necessary service provision, should minimise the risk of any societal tensions – e.g. through the discouragement of unauthorised encampments.

**31.** Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people of different racial groups will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Not anticipated to have any adverse impact. Although it is not anticipated that people will experience any increase in harassment as a consequence of the Local Plan, through the Safer Northumberland Partnership, the county council encourages people to report any concerns about harassment so that appropriate action can be taken.

The provision of adequate accommodation for GRT communities should, over time, assist in reducing any tensions with the settled community.

- 32.** If there are risks that people of different racial groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

We are not aware of any disproportionate disadvantage to any ethnic group within the population, caused by the Local Plan, which may require such steps.

As components of the strategy are developed, individual reviews may identify improvements in outcomes for some people but may also identify negative impact on other groups. As decisions are made, the impact on different groups will be considered.

The majority of the service users are White British. Equality Monitoring will aim to identify if there are any unanticipated impacts on ethnic minority groups. At this stage no adverse impact is expected as a consequence of the intended outcomes of the Local Plan.

- 33.** Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people of different racial groups linked to this change, decision or proposal?

Yes, as accommodation and associated needs should be met, (see above).

The following were first identified at the Issues and Options stage of the withdrawn Core Strategy, as issues specific to this protected characteristic. Still relevant, the response in italics outlines how the Local Plan addresses them:

## **GRT**

- **Ensure that the Gypsy/Traveller way of life is facilitated**  
*Local Plan response: See response to Q28*
- **Provision of sites for new permanent and transit pitches and stopping off places**  
*Local Plan response: See response to Q28*
- **Need to improve existing sites**  
*Local Plan response: This would be a management issue*
- **Restricting development in the Green Belt may have an impact on the gypsy and traveller community**, as national guidance states that the Green Belt is not an appropriate location for new pitches. Consultation on mitigating action through identifying alternative provision may be needed  
*Local Plan response: While this does reduce the possible choice of locations for future pitches or plots, the Council and GRT communities have been aware of this for some time. On balance, it is not considered that the Green Belt imposes a restriction on accommodation that is any greater than the restrictions faced by the wider population.*
- **Directing new pitches to less environmentally sensitive areas**  
*Local Plan response: Environmental criteria are built into the policy on future provision of sites or yards. The actual choice of location will take these criteria into account.*
- **Directing new pitches to locations which are accessible to education and health facilities**  
*Local Plan response: Criteria on these factors are built into the policy on future*

provision of sites or yards. The actual choice of location will take these criteria into account.

## All groups

- **Difficulties faced by migrants accessing affordable housing**, often exacerbated by the language barriers and/or illiteracy.

*Local Plan response: The Council supports access to information in different forms. The website includes a facility to translate documents into a number of other languages. Local Plan policies on affordable housing seek to maximise the provision of affordable housing through the planning system, in accordance with identified needs.*

***Policy QOP1** includes a criterion that supports positive social interaction and a safe and secure environment, 'including measures where relevant to reduce the risk of crime and the fear of crime.' A separate criterion 'protects general amenity' which is a term commonly used to refer to the quality or character of an area and elements that contribute towards the enjoyment of an area.*

*These types of criteria should, hopefully, over time improve perceptions of urban environments within the County – e.g. that streets are safer to walk around after dark. This may, in turn, lead to a more level playing field for migrants in terms of experiencing their environments*

- **Migrants often trapped in low paid jobs**

*Local Plan response: An overarching objective of the Core Strategy is to increase the number and quality of jobs available.*

- **Need better access to services and facilities**

*Local Plan response: An overarching objective on 'community health and wellbeing' - to support sustainable communities across Northumberland; working to improve the quality of services and facilities to support physical and mental health, social and cultural wellbeing for all including responding to the needs and opportunities created by Northumberland's population.*

***Policy TRA1** on 'Promoting Sustainable Connections' commits the Council to working collaboratively to development that promotes a spatial distribution which creates accessible development, reduces the need to travel by car, and maximises the use of sustainable modes of transport. The Local Plan does not, however, deal with the funding of public transport unless sought from a developer in connection with a development, (through legal agreement).*

## Religion or belief

**Note:** In the Equality Act, religion includes any religion. It also includes a lack of religion. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or a lack of such belief.

**Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services**

**34.** What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people with different religions and beliefs, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

Of those who stated that they had a religion in the 2011 Census, less than 2% followed religions other than Christianity. Nonetheless, it is recognised that particular religions will have particular requirements and this may include identifying land for places of worship.

A comparison between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses in Northumberland shows some changes in the minority religions, as well as a reduction in those stating a Christian belief. These changes could have implications for the requirement for different types of places of worship – an issue that was first raised by religious groups at the Issues and Options stage of the withdrawn Core Strategy – see Q41 below.

	2001		2011		Change	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Christian	249,029	81.1	216,673	68.6	-32,356	-12.5
Buddhist	352	0.1	578	0.2	226	0.1
Hindu	258	0.1	335	0.1	77	0.0
Jewish	129	0.0	169	0.1	40	0.1
Muslim	663	0.2	1,018	0.3	355	0.1
Sikh	385	0.1	494	0.2	109	0.1
Other religion	596	0.2	980	0.3	384	0.1
No religion	36,156	11.8	75,620	23.9	39,464	12.1
Religion not stated	19,622	6.4	20,161	6.4	539	0.0

Source: 2011 and 2001 Census (KS201EW & KS06), Office for National Statistics.

A barrier that may be faced by people from particular religions is accessing suitable places of worship, which may have particular requirements in terms of location and land. Insofar as the Local Plan will determine the future location of development, the Plan could influence the opportunities for religious groups to practice their religions. It is known that parking restrictions outside places of worship has been an issue in the past.

**35.** Could people with different religions and beliefs be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

It is considered that the Local Plan could include outcomes that will be of net benefit to people from religious groups, insofar as the plan sets out policies that encourage the appropriate location of community facilities, including places of worship, even though the plan does not go into the level of detail that would involve allocating particular pieces of land for these uses.

**Policy INF 2** on community services and facilities looks to provide for the needs of the community including their spiritual and cultural needs, and wherever possible improve the quality, accessibility and levels of provision by (inter alia):

- Strongly resisting the loss of community services and facilities, unless an appropriate alternative is provided or there is demonstrable evidence that there is no longer a community need for the facility and suitable alternative uses have been considered;
- Supporting the development of new community services and facilities where deficiencies in provision would be addressed and provided that unacceptable adverse effects on the environment and the local community can be avoided or mitigated....

Any new places of worship would be subject to the application of parking standards, which would hopefully overcome the issue of lack of parking – at least for new establishments.

**36.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people with different religions and beliefs to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No.

**37.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people with different religions and beliefs? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No.

**38.** Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people with different religions and beliefs will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Not anticipated to have any adverse impact. Although it is not anticipated that people will experience any increase in harassment as a consequence of the Local Plan, through the Safer Northumberland Partnership, the County Council encourages people to report any concerns about harassment so that appropriate action can be taken.

- 39.** If there are risks that people with different religions and beliefs could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

We are not aware of any disproportionate disadvantage to any religious group within the population, caused by the Local Plan, which may require such steps.

The County Council will continue to recognise the needs of different faith based observances and practices, and identify support needed for service users to access religious and faith based groups and services through the planning process.

As components of the Local Plan are developed, individual reviews may identify improvements in outcomes for some people but may also identify negative impact on other groups. As decisions are made, the impact on different groups will be considered.

- 40.** Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people with different religions and beliefs linked to this change, decision or proposal?

The following were first identified at the Issues and Options stage of the withdrawn Core Strategy, as issues specific to this protected characteristic. Still relevant, the response in italics outlines how the Local Plan addresses them:

- **Provision of land / sites / buildings for community facilities and worship / burial sites** suitable for different religious beliefs and non-religious beliefs.  
*Local Plan response: An overarching strategic objective on community health and wellbeing protects and, where possible, enhances:-*
  - *Accessible local services and community facilities*
  - *Green infrastructure, open space provision and recreational facilities*
  - *Social inclusion, health and wellbeing*

***Policy INF 2** on community services and facilities looks to provide for the needs of the community including their spiritual and cultural needs, and wherever possible improve the quality, accessibility and levels of provision by supporting the development of new community services and facilities where deficiencies in provision would be addressed and provided that unacceptable adverse effects on the environment and the local community can be avoided or mitigated.*
- **Opportunities for engagement on issues such as sustainability**  
*Local Plan response: These opportunities have been provided throughout the process.*

## Sexual Orientation

*Note: The Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.*

**Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services**

- 41.** What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people with different sexual orientations, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The Government estimated in 2016 that just over 1 million (2%) of the UK population aged 16 and over identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). ONS state that 1.4% of the North East population identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). There are no statistics to suggest that proportions are likely to be significantly different in Northumberland than elsewhere.

Known barriers for these groups include perceptions of isolation in rural areas, which may be stronger for minority groups such as LGB, a higher likelihood of hate crime in these areas, along with poorer support networks, especially for older people with this characteristic. As set out below, some policies in the plan may help address this.

- 42.** Could people with different sexual orientations be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

It is considered that the Local Plan could include outcomes that would indirectly benefit people from minority groups in terms of sexual orientation – e.g. in reducing the likelihood that new development will be in isolated rural locations – encouraging the appropriate location of community facilities and promoting better means of communicating from more remote places (i.e. superfast broadband).

- 43.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people with different sexual orientations to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There may be a marginal benefit over time as issues of isolation are overcome through the more central location of new development and the rolling out of full broadband coverage.

- 44.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people with different sexual orientations? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

- 45.** Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people with different sexual orientations will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Not anticipated to have any adverse impact. Although it is not anticipated that people will experience any increase in harassment as a consequence of the Local Plan, through the

Safer Northumberland Partnership, the county council encourages people to report any concerns about harassment so that appropriate action can be taken.

- 46.** If there are risks that people with different sexual orientations could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

We are not aware of any disproportionate disadvantage to lesbian, gay and bisexual people, caused by the Local Plan, which may require such steps.

As components of the strategy are developed, individual reviews may identify improvements in outcomes for some people but may also identify negative impact on other groups. As decisions are made, the impact on different groups will be considered.

- 47.** Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people with different sexual orientations linked to this change, decision or proposal?

Hopefully some – at least indirectly and over time.

The following were first identified at the Issues and Options stage of the withdrawn Core Strategy, as issues specific to this protected characteristic. Still relevant, the response in italics outlines how the Local Plan addresses them:

- **Isolation of lesbian, gay or bisexual people living in rural areas**

*Local Plan response: Policies on accessibility and improved communications recognise that people will continue to live in isolated locations but need better links with the wider community. **Policy TRA1** on ‘Promoting Sustainable Connections’ commits the Council to working collaboratively to development that promotes a spatial distribution which creates accessible development, reduces the need to travel by car, and maximises the use of sustainable modes of transport. The Local Plan does not, however, deal with the funding of public transport unless sought from a developer in connection with a development, (through legal agreement).*

- **Access to services in rural areas**

*Local Plan response: An overarching strategic objective on community health and wellbeing protects and, where possible, enhances:-*

- *Accessible local services and community facilities*
- *Green infrastructure, open space provision and recreational facilities*
- *Social inclusion, health and wellbeing*

***Policy INF 2** on community services and facilities looks to provide for the needs of the community including their spiritual and cultural needs, and wherever possible improve the quality, accessibility and levels of provision by supporting the development of new community services and facilities where deficiencies in provision would be addressed and provided that unacceptable adverse effects on the environment and the local community can be avoided or mitigated.*

## Gender Identity

*Note: The Act provides protection for transgender people. A transgender person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender.*

**Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services**

**48.** What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by transgender people, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

There is no information on the numbers of this protected characteristic in the County – nor on whether proportions are different from the national average.

There is nothing to suggest that this protected characteristic would be affected any differently than the population in general as a result of the Plan. Having said this, comments collected from representatives of LGBT suggest that perceptions of isolation in rural areas may be stronger for minority groups such as this one. Some policies in the plan may help address this, in a similar way to the points raised above for LGB.

Known barriers for these groups include perceptions of isolation in rural areas, which may be stronger for minority groups such as this, a higher likelihood of hate crime in these areas, along with poorer support networks, especially for older people with this characteristic. As set out below, some policies in the plan may help address this.

**49.** Could transgender people be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

It is considered that the Local Plan could include outcomes that would indirectly benefit people undergoing gender reassignment – e.g. in reducing the likelihood that new development will be in isolated rural locations – encouraging the appropriate location of community facilities and promoting better means of communicating from more remote places (i.e. superfast broadband).

**50.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of transgender people to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There may be a marginal benefit over time as issues of isolation are overcome through the more central location of new development and the rolling out of full broadband coverage.

**51.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards transgender people? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No.

**52.** Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people falling into the gender identity protected characteristic will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Not anticipated to have any adverse impact. Although it is not anticipated that people will experience any increase in harassment as a consequence of the Local Plan, through the Safer Northumberland Partnership, the county council encourages people to report any concerns about harassment so that appropriate action can be taken.

**53.** If there are risks that the gender identity protected characteristic could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

We are not aware of any disproportionate disadvantage to people within the gender identity protected characteristic, caused by the Local Plan, which may require such steps.

As components of the strategy are developed, individual reviews may identify improvements in outcomes for some people but may also identify negative impact on other groups. As decisions are made, the impact on different groups will be considered.

**54.** Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for transgender people linked to this change, decision or proposal?

Hopefully some – at least indirectly and over time.

The following were first identified at the Issues and Options stage of the withdrawn Core Strategy, as issues specific to this protected characteristic. Still relevant, the response in italics outlines how the Local Plan addresses them:

- **Isolation of people living in rural areas who fall under gender identity protected characteristic**

*Local Plan response: Policy ICT1 on planning for high quality communications infrastructure recognises that people will continue to live in isolated locations but need better links with the wider community. Policy TRA1 sustainable connections promotes a spatial distribution of development, which enhances the accessibility of development, reduces the need to travel, and facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport. The Local Plan does not, however, deal with the funding of public transport unless sought from a developer in connection with a development, (through legal agreement).*

- **Access to services in rural areas**

*Local Plan response: An overarching strategic objective on community health and wellbeing protects and, where possible, enhances:-*

- *Accessible local services and community facilities*
- *Green infrastructure, open space provision and recreational facilities*
- *Social inclusion, health and wellbeing*

*Policy INF 2 on community services and facilities looks to provide for the needs of the community, and wherever possible improve the quality, accessibility and levels of provision by supporting the development of new community services and facilities where deficiencies in provision would be addressed and provided that*

*unacceptable adverse effects on the environment and the local community can be avoided or mitigated.*

## **Pregnancy and Maternity**

*Note: the law covers pregnant women or those who have given birth within the last 26 weeks, and those who are breastfeeding.*

**Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services**

**55.** What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by pregnant women and those who have children under 26 weeks, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

At any given time, a significant minority of the population will be pregnant and/or looking after young children. They will have particular needs relating to childcare which will have implications for how the environment is planned. Examples would be finding affordable living accommodation for single parents, which may be more of a barrier than for some other people in affordable housing need. Accessing vital childcare facilities poses difficulties in more isolated rural areas. These are issues which are relevant and within the scope of the Local Plan to address.

**56.** Could pregnant women and those with children under 26 weeks be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

It is considered that the Local Plan could include outcomes that would indirectly benefit pregnant women and/or those with children under 26 weeks, who may experience some issues with accessing homes, work and services – not least due to encumbrances such as prams and pushchairs. The plan aims to equalise access including through the following:

A policy on sustainable connections promotes a spatial distribution of development, which enhances the accessibility of development, reduces the need to travel, and facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport. This policy also promotes good design principles in respect of the permeability, connectivity and legibility of development; and inclusive access.

A policy on high quality, sustainable design seeks to achieve (inter alia): a high standard of accessibility, permeability and legibility for all users with a clear and intuitive distinction between public and private space; a safe environment by reducing opportunity for crime; and vibrant places which contribute positively to quality of life and wellbeing by inclusion of .... high quality public spaces.

In addition to the above, the Council will prepare a supplementary planning document on design with practical guidance to help it achieve its aim to make Northumberland accessible to everyone.

Issues of accessing affordable housing for lone parent families could be helped through the general approach on affordable housing provision, which seeks to maximise the provision of affordable housing through the planning system, in accordance with identified needs.

Also of relevance, the policy on community services and facilities looks to provide for the health and well-being ...needs of the community.

- 57.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

Policies in the Local Plan should not reduce this ability but may actually increase it, gradually – e.g. a result of the policies mentioned above.

- 58.** Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No.

- 59.** Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Not anticipated to have any adverse impact. Although it is not anticipated that people will experience any increase in harassment as a consequence of the Local Plan, through the Safer Northumberland Partnership, the county council encourages people to report any concerns about harassment so that appropriate action can be taken.

- 60.** If there are risks that pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

We are not aware of any disproportionate disadvantage to pregnant women or those who have given birth within the last 26 weeks, caused by the Local Plan, which may require such steps.

As components of the strategy are developed, individual reviews may identify improvements in outcomes for some people but may also identify negative impact on other groups. As decisions are made, the impact on different groups will be considered.

- 61.** Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks linked to this change, decision or proposal?

The opportunities relate to accessing health facilities and accessibility in general, which may improve gradually over time as an indirect result of policies including those mentioned in Q57 above.

The following were first identified at the Issues and Options stage of the withdrawn Core Strategy, as issues specific to this protected characteristic. The response in italics outlines how the Local Plan addresses them:

- **Provision of [baby] changing facilities etc.**

*Local Plan response: The new policy on 'High Quality Sustainable Design' includes a number of criteria that seek a high quality of public buildings and public spaces.*

- **Single parents struggling to access affordable living accommodation**

*Local Plan response: The policies on affordable housing policies seek to maximise the provision of affordable housing through the planning system, in accordance with identified needs.*

- **Childcare provision and costs, particularly in rural areas**

*Local Plan response: **Policy TRA1 sustainable connections** promotes a spatial distribution of development, which enhances the accessibility of development, reduces the need to travel, and facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport. The Local Plan does not, however, deal with the funding of public transport unless sought from a developer in connection with a development, (through legal agreement).*

*Local Plan response: **Policy ICT1** on planning for high quality communications infrastructure recognises that people will continue to live in isolated locations but need better links with the wider community. The particular issue of the costs of childcare provision cannot be tackled through the Local Plan.*

- **Access to services in rural areas**

*Local Plan response: An overarching **strategic objective** on community health and wellbeing protects and, where possible, enhances:-*

- *Accessible local services and community facilities*
- *Green infrastructure, open space provision and recreational facilities*
- *Social inclusion, health and wellbeing*

***Policy INF 2** on community services and facilities looks to provide for the needs of the community, and wherever possible improve the quality, accessibility and levels of provision by supporting the development of new community services and facilities where deficiencies in provision would be addressed and provided that unacceptable adverse effects on the environment and the local community can be avoided or mitigated.*

## **Human Rights**

**62.** Could the change, decision or proposal impact on human rights? (e.g. the right to respect for private and family life, the right to a fair hearing and the right to education)

No.

### PART 3 - Course of Action

63. Based on a consideration of all the potential impacts, mark one of the following as an overall summary of the outcome of this assessment:

<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has identified risks or opportunities to promote better equality; the change, decision or proposal will be adjusted to avoid risks and ensure that opportunities are taken.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has identified risks to equality which will not be eliminated, and/or opportunities to promote better equality which will not be taken. Acceptance of these is reasonable and proportionate, given the objectives of the change, decision or proposal, and its overall financial and policy context.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis shows that the change, decision or proposal would lead to actual or potential unlawful discrimination, or would conflict with the Council's positive duties to an extent which is disproportionate to its objectives. It should not be adopted in its current form.

64. Explain how you have reached the judgement ticked above, and summarise any steps which will be taken to reduce negative or enhance positive impacts on equality:

Based on the evidence available at the time of conducting this Equality Impact Assessment, there appear to be a range of opportunities to see a net improvement for people with the protected characteristics listed above, as a result of the approaches set out in the Draft Local Plan. The Local Plan seeks to minimise any risk to the wellbeing of any of groups or individuals having these protected characteristics.

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#### **PART 4 - Ongoing Monitoring**

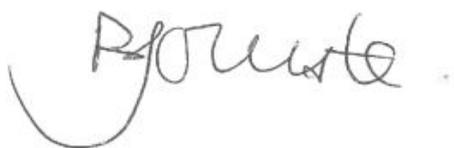
65. What are your plans to monitor the actual impact of the implementation of the change, decision or proposal on equality of opportunity? (include action points and timescales)

The Local Plan is accompanied by a monitoring and implementation framework. Monitoring against baselines will be undertaken as part of the yearly review of the Plan, or more frequently if there is an event or occurrence that would make it necessary.

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#### **PART 5 - Authorisation**

66. Name of Head of Service and Date Approved



**Paul Johnston**  
**Interim Executive Director: Place**

07/12/2018

Once completed, please send to: [Keith.Thompson@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Keith.Thompson@northumberland.gov.uk)