

Equality impact assessment

1. Introduction

1.1. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not.

1.2. “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 Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that Saddleworth Parish Council (as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan) is satisfying its statutory duties in this regard. Equality Impact Assessment (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.

1.4. 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 Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan is needed, what the intended outcomes are, and how it will be ensured that the policies will work as intended.

2. Methodology

2.1. An assessment has been made on whether the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics (in so far as data is available). The vision and objectives of the neighbourhood plan have been assessed, and individual policies are highlighted where they are considered likely to have a negative impact.

3. Baseline data

3.1. Data for the three council wards that Saddleworth Parish is available from the 2021 Census. The Parish is made up of the Oldham Council wards of Saddleworth South and Saddleworth North, and part of the Saddleworth West and Lees.

3.2. The data provided here is therefore split between the information on the two wards fully within the Parish, and the ward partially in the Parish. Approximately 43% of the population of Saddleworth West and Lees falls within the Saddleworth Parish. The data has been provided on a straight numerical breakdown (taking the overall figures for Saddleworth West and Lees and calculating a 42.8% split). It is likely that the part of Saddleworth West and Lees ward which falls within the Saddleworth parish is likely to be more similar in nature to the Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards, which in general means that there is slightly less diversity across the Parish than these figures will show, but the difference is marginal and no more than would be typical in a standard margin of error.

3.3. Information is available for the following protected characteristics: age, sex, marriage and civil partnership, disability, race and religious belief.

3.2. No data is available for the following protected characteristics: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and sexual orientation.

Population: 24,576

Age: 16.3% of the population are children aged 15 or less, 72.3% are in the age group 16–75, with 11.2% in the older age groups.

This comparison groups for Oldham as a whole are 22.7%/70.2%/7.1%, and for England as a whole are 18.6%/72.9%/8.6%. This means that Saddleworth has a greater elderly population than England as a whole, and significantly more elderly than Oldham.

Gender: The population of the Parish is 51.5% female, and 48.5% male.

Ethnic groupings: 96.4% of Saddleworth's population is categorised as white, with only a very small, mixed ethnic minority population.

This compares with Oldham as a whole, which has a 68.1% white population, with 13.5% of Pakistani heritage, 9% of Bangladeshi heritage, and 9.4% of all other ethnicities.

Across the UK as a whole, there is a 81% white population, 2.8% of Pakistani heritage, 1.1% of Bangladeshi heritage, and 15.1% all other ethnicities.

Marriage and civil partnership: 7.8% of the population are divorced or have had a civil partnership dissolved; 43.4% are married or in a registered civil partnership; 24.6% are never married or never registered in a civil partnership; 1.6% are separated but still legally married or legally in a civil partnership; and 6.3% are widowed or a surviving civil partnership partner. It does not apply for 16.3% of the population.

Religion: 61% of Saddleworth's population identifies as Christian, 33% as having no religion, and 1% as Muslim. 4% did not answer the question in the census. There were small numbers of Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh and other religion respondents, but none above 0.3% of the population.

Employment: Of the working age population (16–75) 7.2% are not in work, which breaks down as 2.1% unemployed; 2.6% sick or long-term disabled; and 2.5% looking after home or family.

Of those in work, 24.3% are in part time work and 75.7 are in full time work.

Process of community consultation

4.1 All written communications were in English and it was not considered necessary to translate them into any other language as 100% of residents speak English as their main language.

4.2. Throughout the preparation of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan, Saddleworth Parish Council has tried to promote the widest possible engagement of the local community in planning for the future development of the parish.

Full details of consultations are included in the consultation statement.

Widespread consultation was carried out during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Strategic Planning Committee worked hard, using a variety of methods, to reach all of the parish community. This included a drop-in sessions at the Civic Hall early on in the process, which sought to identify important issues affecting the community, and individual sessions in each of the villages, and in the secondary school.

Surveys were sent out to the 12,000 homes in the community at the start of the process, with a full online version available, and paper versions distributed to village halls, community centres and libraries. The online version was promoted through the local press and social media.

The same process was followed for the consultation on the proposed Neighbourhood Plan at the end of the process.

A six week consultation was undertaken on the draft Neighbourhood Plan in line with neighbourhood planning regulations. This included publicising the consultation and draft document online and a consultation document sent to all 12,000 homes in the parish.

Impact on groups with protected characteristics

5.1. The Vision of Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan states that:

"Our vision is that Saddleworth will be made up of many thriving communities, each a place with its own strong identity, each one offering great opportunities for people to make their homes, to work, and to spend their leisure time. Many of local people's needs for services, such as for shops, education, and healthcare will be effectively met within Saddleworth. New developments will be accommodated but will be located and designed with sensitivity and with investment in the necessary supporting infrastructure. Saddleworth will be known for the quality of its countryside and the care with which land owners manage it.

The fundamental principle which underpins our vision and the policies in this plan is that of sustainable development. This means:

- achieving simultaneous and carefully balanced progress in pursuit of economic, social and environmental objectives – not prioritising one of these issues at the expense of the others;
- considering the long term legacy of our actions – ensuring that young people and generations to come can enjoy a quality of life at least as good as that we enjoy in Saddleworth today, and that the biodiversity of the area is further enhanced;
- having a wide geographic perspective – recognising that our local actions can have much wider impacts. Climate change is just one example.

We are very clear that Saddleworth must not become just a commuter area for Greater Manchester and the West Yorkshire conurbation.

Saddleworth must work together with Oldham for the benefit of both the Parish and the wider borough.

Saddleworth will benefit greatly from its vital economic, social and environmental links with the rest of the Greater Manchester area, and also its strong connections to West Yorkshire. These neighbouring areas will continue to provide great opportunities for our residents, for instance, for employment and entertainment.

Likewise, the particular qualities which make Saddleworth such an asset to the North of England must be conserved and enhanced. The contribution which it will continue to make to the Peak District National Park is particularly noteworthy. Saddleworth's natural landscapes, its attractive and diverse villages, and its outstanding opportunities for a wide range of outdoor recreation are great strengths. These make Saddleworth a great place to live and visit, but they will also help to underpin its economic contribution.

The tourism and leisure sector is an obvious example, but we envisage that other small and medium sized enterprises will make Saddleworth their base because of its excellent environment and its vibrant communities, and because highly skilled people will choose to live here.

The Parish should be an area with a flourishing natural environment that is resilient, sustainable and well connected and that enables the free movement of wildlife through and across the Parish."

The vision of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan is expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community. The focus on the environment and biodiversity, has particular benefit for younger people and future generations. Meanwhile, the call for appropriate infrastructure – in particular education and healthcare – will particularly benefit people at either end of the age spectrum.

<p>OBJECTIVE 1: To ensure that development maintains green belt purposes and protects and enhances green spaces.</p> <p>To ensure that development delivers a high quality, well-integrated natural environment, and protects and enhances the existing natural environment, particularly recreation and nature conservation corridors, local green spaces and green belt.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective protects the character and rural nature of the Parish, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on people with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 2: To promote and encourage the stewardship and conservation of a beautiful and locally distinctive rural landscape in a period of changing climatic and economic conditions.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective protects the character and rural nature of the Parish, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on people with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 3: To protect and enhance the environment, and ensure that development adequately addresses flood risk, and promotes sustainability.</p> <p>To have clear information about watercourses for the purposes of risk assessment and response.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective protects the character and rural nature of the Parish, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on people with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 4: To ensure the sustainable design and construction of all new development.</p> <p>To support opportunities for energy generation and the minimisation of energy use.</p>	Positive	<p>This objective delivers on the vision of ensuring environmental improvements benefiting all residents, and by meeting energy efficiency standards are more able to keep a well-regulated temperature (minimising heat stress in high temperatures, and maintaining a steady temperature in cold temperatures), which will particularly benefit older people or those with health conditions.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 5: To conserve and enhance historic assets, and ensure that where possible, traditional, unused heritage assets are brought back into new use.</p> <p>Development must maintain or improve the unique local vernacular, with particular respect paid to historical design and methods of construction.</p> <p>To ensure that new developments are, wherever possible, of a high enough standard to create new heritage assets for the Parish in the future.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective protects the character and rural nature of the Parish, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on people with protected characteristics.</p>

<p>OBJECTIVE 6: To ensure developments, including public realm are designed to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>To design with public safety in mind, ensuring that the public realm has considered design which minimises risk from, and reduces the likelihood of, antisocial behaviour.</p>	Positive	<p>This objective is expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community and especially on those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Members of groups with protected characteristics are statistically more likely to be victims of antisocial behaviour and crime, so measures to reduce this are likely to deliver particular benefits for those groups.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 7: Ensure that key infrastructure needs are supported by any development, in particular ensuring that there is sufficient capacity at schools and health centres.</p>	Positive	<p>This objective is expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community and especially on those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>In particular, it should deliver measurable benefits for people with specific health needs, and those with mobility issues, either due to health/disability or age.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 8: To address under-provided housing needs, in particular, suitably affordable (including social) housing stock for first time entrants in to the market looking to stay in the area, or for pensioners to move into appropriate and easily maintained homes. In particular, this would include 1- and 2-bedroom homes, as indicated by the current housing needs analysis and surveys carried out for this Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>To ensure that development prioritises the use of sustainable sites, and makes effective and efficient use of brownfield land.</p>	Positive	<p>This objective should provide measurable benefits for more elderly members of the community.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 9: To help facilitate appropriate housing in Saddleworth, and encourage a range of approaches to providing it (which could include such options as a community land trust with Parish Council involvement, or Parish Council supported development).</p> <p>To facilitate low-cost alternative provision of appropriate housing for local residents for whom the market is not providing a means to remain in the area.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective protects the character and rural nature of the Parish, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on people with protected characteristics.</p>

<p>OBJECTIVE 10: Retain employment sites to support existing traditional industries, take advantage of the highly-qualified workforce, and to develop opportunities in emerging and future technologies and business.</p> <p>To ensure that there is adequate infrastructure and support both for people who access Manchester, West Yorkshire and Oldham for work, and those who work within Saddleworth.</p> <p>Ensure the provision of sporting, leisure and recreational facilities and spaces for the population.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective is expected to provide positive outcomes for working conditions across the area, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on residents with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 11: To ensure sufficient infrastructure, including communications, to allow residents to work from home with a view to encouraging entrepreneurial development, and to ensure that growing businesses can remain in the area.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective is expected to provide positive outcomes for working conditions across the area, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on residents with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 12: To support tourism with a view to strengthening the local economy, while minimising any negative impacts, in particular where tourist activity accentuates local pinchpoints for traffic and infrastructure.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective protects the character and rural nature of the Parish, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on residents with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 13: To recognise the importance of farming to the economy of Saddleworth, and to ensure that it continues to contribute to and improve the economy and the local environment.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective protects the character and rural nature of the Parish, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on residents with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 14: To ensure that each village retains or maximises a core set of services, such as banking, post offices, local shops and community facilities.</p>	Positive	<p>This objective is expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community and especially on those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>In particular, it should deliver measurable benefits for young people without access to private transport, and those with mobility issues, either due to health/disability or age.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 15: To address the under-provision of parking across the area, and to ensure that on street parking is used appropriately, and make parking available for specific uses.</p>	Neutral	<p>This objective tackles a major issue across the area, which will benefit a wide range of people, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on residents with protected characteristics.</p>

<p>OBJECTIVE 16: Ensure safe and accessible cycling and pedestrian routes, and enhance the provision of Bee Network routes across the area.</p> <p>Reduce existing congestion on the local and key route networks running through Saddleworth by ensuring that new developments are located so that they contribute to a reduction in the need for private car journeys.</p>	Positive	<p>This objective is expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community and especially on those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>In particular, it should deliver measurable benefits for young people without access to private transport, and those with mobility issues, either due to health/disability or age.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 17: To ensure quality public transport infrastructure, including connections between villages, as well as to the rest of the borough and beyond. Connections to healthcare provision and leisure facilities should be a particular priority, and transport for work as a priority for local and wider connections.</p> <p>To minimise the reliance on private transport across the district.</p> <p>To promote local representation on the development of local transport plans for Saddleworth.</p> <p>To maximise accessibility for those with mobility and health needs throughout the Parish, especially in rural areas.</p>	Positive	<p>This objective is expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community and especially on those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>In particular, it should deliver measurable benefits for young people without access to private transport, and those with mobility issues, either due to health/disability or age.</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE 18: To improve air quality, particularly near vulnerable groups. This would include monitoring and improving air quality across the area, as well as other criteria such as sound and vibration.</p> <p>To reduce risks to buildings from additional heavy traffic.</p>	Positive	<p>This objective is expected to have a positive impact on all sectors of the community and especially on those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>In particular, it should deliver measurable benefits to people more at risk of respiratory disease, in particular, those at either end of the age range.</p>

All of the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan objectives are considered to have a positive or neutral impact on those with protected characteristics especially the objective to improve the sense of community cohesion. There are no individual policies that are considered likely to have a negative impact. The objective and policy of providing new dwellings to meet the locally identified desire for small new homes is particularly positive for some groups with protected characteristics, as are the objective and policies that seek to retain and improve local businesses and services.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan 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 but perhaps most particularly the young, older people, families and people with a disability and/or limited mobility.

6.2. In preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, Saddleworth Parish Council and the Strategic Planning Committee 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.

6.3. In conclusion, the assessment finds the Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan to be appropriate and that the duty of care prescribed by the Equalities Act 2010 is met.