

Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EqlA please ensure you have read the EqlA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

Organisation prepared for

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Version

1.3

Date Completed

Last updated 17.03.23

Description of what is being impact assessed

The EqlA assesses the impacts of the revised Masterplan for the Firepool redevelopment site, between Taunton Station to the north and the Priory Bridge Road to the south, which is due to be considered for adoption by Somerset West and Taunton Council as a material planning consideration in March 2023.

The Masterplan is not a planning application, so could change in the future when detailed applications are considered, but sets out the broad ambition for the site now, compared to the last approved application of 2018.

The proposals for the site are based on mixed use residential and leisure s and include the provision of new hard and soft landscaping, trees, public art, new places for seating to create a public open space, that duals to act as pedestrian and cycle access through the wider Firepool site from north to south, in addition to multiple cycling and walking routes through the site East-West providing additional facilities for activity and exercise.. The boulevard space has been developed to not just be a transitional space, but also seeks to act as a high-quality amenity space where people spend time and where events can be held. The central

zone of the Boulevard will include a new water feature comprising of a basin of permanent water which will be enclosed on three sides with the fourth accessible from hard landscaped steps and a ramp.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#),, should be detailed here

The District profile for SWT and the 2011 Census has been referenced. It is important to recognise however, that the area covered by this Masterplan will be accessed by a significant number of people from outside of our district, and indeed outside of the county of Somerset; for example visitors coming to watch the Cricket or for other cultural and leisure purposes. Therefore, understanding the make-up of the people and households within the district or county only take us so far.

We have therefore reached out to equalities groups and invited responses from the public, through formal public consultation, in order to better understand the potential impacts and opportunities that should be considered once more detailed plans relating to this site are brought forward at a later date. The outcomes to the consultation are detailed within an appendix to the main report. This EqIA draws on themes most applicable to equalities issues from that and earlier related exercises.

Desktop research has also been undertaken in relation to equality impacts for similar Masterplans in other areas of the Country.

The Masterplan also draws on published good practice in the form of guidance and policy, for example [Inclusive Mobility. A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#),
<https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/cycling-for-everyone-a-guide-for-inclusive-cycling-in-cities-and-towns>
<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/2879/2879.pdf>

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

Officers within the Council with an overview of the Equalities function, who have experience of identifying impacts on those with protected characteristics have been consulted for this identification of potential impacts. Consultation was also undertaken with Somerset Sight (RNIB), Taunton Disability Action Group, and the Council's Equality Group involving Members with particular skills and experience in this area particularly in regard to the public realm elements of the Southern Boulevard which is subject to a detailed planning permission, granted in 2022.

Furthermore, the public in general, as well as a range of specific equalities related groups were invited to review and comment on the Draft Masterplan as part of the public consultation. This document has been updated in response to comments received during consultation.

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact
Age	<p>The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic.</p> <p>However, with older age also comes increased incidences of disability. Please see considerations within the 'Disability' section later.</p> <p>A comment was made on the public consultation regarding the proximity of student accommodation to over 55 accommodation. This has been addressed in the consultation response summary, but the proximity is relative – they are close on the plan but in reality not adjacent or “next door”. The implication that student accommodation = rowdy or disruptive however is not substantiated.</p>			
Disability	<p>The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.</p> <p>However, delivery will need to give particular consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of adequate seating for those who are less mobile and require more frequent pauses during their journey. • The careful placing of street furniture to avoid trip hazards , for those who are sight impaired or with more restricted mobility. • Where there are significant changes in levels across the site, people who have difficulty using steps will be provided with an alternative route or a resting platform if pushing others up a ramp 			

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring an element of blue badge parking within the site to support those who are unable to walk, cycle or scoot access the site. • Including space for primary care facilities (subject to NHS funding) within the site to make it more attractive and inclusive place to live for those with mobility issues, thereby helping create and support a more diverse resident community within the site. • Ensuring surface materials proposed for the public realm and pathways is safe in all weathers and provides appropriate colour and texture differentiation when required. To help those with sight impairments or restricted mobility in particular use the space in a safe and inclusive way. • Opportunities for including 'Changing Places' toilet facilities within the site to help those carers of people with profound disabilities and provide enhanced dignity for the disabled person themselves. • Mitigating potential conflicts between pedestrians (particularly those with mobility issues or are hearing or sight impaired) and cyclists/ e-scooter users within shared pathways and the public realm, through designing-in appropriate signage, lighting and space. Outside of planning and design process, practical actions can be put in place such as E-scooter geo-fencing technology allowing for speed to be reduced in high pedestrian areas 			
Gender reassignment	<p>The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.</p>			

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact
Marriage and civil partnership	<p>The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.</p>			
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.</p> <p>However, delivery will need to give particular consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of adequate seating for those who are less mobile and require more frequent pauses during their journey. • Where there are significant changes in levels across the site, people who have difficulty using steps will be provided with an alternative route or a resting platform if pushing babies and infants up a ramp (in a pushchair or buggy). • Designing in natural surveillance, adequate lighting and designing-out potential blind spots/hiding places etc. in order to make the space feel safe and inviting to all users, particularly those protected groups that experience heightened fear of violent or sexual crime or incidents of violent and sexual crime (such as women). 			

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact
Race and ethnicity	The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.			
Religion or belief	The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.			
Sex	<p>The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.</p> <p>However, delivery will need to give particular consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing in natural surveillance, adequate lighting and designing-out potential blind spots/hiding places etc. in order to make the space feel safe and inviting to all users, particularly those protected groups that experience heightened fear of violent or sexual crime or incidents of violent and sexual crime (such as women and girls). <p>The specific design of the cycle and pedestrian footways will take into consideration concerns regarding security and perception of safety that are highlight in published guidance:</p>			

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative impact	Neutral impact	Positive impact
	<p>https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/cycling-for-everyone-a-guide-for-inclusive-cycling-in-cities-and-towns</p> <p>https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/2879/2879.pdf</p> <p>To date, this has been demonstrated in the planning application for Southern Boulevard that includes a detailed and comprehensive lighting strategy, and will be replicated in the wider delivery of cycle routes through the site. Please see planning application ref: 38/22/0176</p>			
Sexual orientation	<p>The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.</p>			
Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<p>The creation of a traffic free route from the train station to the town centre, new and attractive public realm as well as modern energy efficient homes and business premises will be of significant positive benefit to all who chose to live, work or move within this space, regardless of their Protected Characteristic. There is no evidence to suggest that people who share this Protected Characteristics would be negatively affected by this proposal as a consequence of their Protected Characteristic.</p>			

Action plan				
Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Equality considerations arising from the public consultation to date have been considered as part of the development of this iteration of the Masterplan and will be given additional focus as detailed applications affecting this site come forward.				<input type="checkbox"/>
Further engagement will take place as detailed designs for the site are developed.				
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If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.				

Action plan				
Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Completed by:	Joe Wharton with developer and LPA colleagues			
Date	10.02.23			
Signed off by:	Joe Wharton			
Date	17.03.23			
Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:	Paul Harding			
To be reviewed by: (officer name)				
Review date:	Post consultation (subject to changes being required) On submission of any detailed applications based on this Masterplan			