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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment (EDIA) adoption statement for Merton's Local Plan

November 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 This document serves as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment (EDIA) (*formally known as equality and diversity impact assessments*) summarising how the EDIA process has influenced the Local Plan, hereafter referred to as the 'Plan'. Producing an EDIA statement is not a legal obligation at this stage, but the council has opted to create a brief EDIA statement upon the adoption of the Plan to summarise how the ongoing review of equality diversity and inclusion has influenced the Plan's preparation .

1.2 The Plan has been prepared within the context of social, economic and environmental factors. It sets out the council planning policy framework for development proposals in the borough with its sets the spatial vision and strategic objectives over the Plan's period (15-year). It supports and promotes good growth, which is expected to be socially and economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable. It addresses health and social-economic inequalities, supports improving air quality, promoting active travel and contributing to net zero emissions. Overall it will ensure development in the borough is sustainable, which meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The council [submitted the Local Plan](#) along with its supporting evidence to the Secretary of State in December 2021, accompanied by the completed EDIAs. In October 2024 Merton Council received the Planning Inspector's Final Report on the Examination of the Plan. The Inspectors found the Plan to be 'sound'¹. Upon its adoption, the Plan will carry full weight in the consideration of all submitted planning applications.

Community involvement

1.4 The development of the Plan started in 2018, since then the council has engaged and consulted with Merton's diverse communities including faith and religious organisations, residents' groups and societies, organisations representing ethnic groups and disability groups. The consultations were carried out in accordance with planning legislation and Merton's [Statement of Community Involvement](#). All comments and feedback on the Plan were considered by the council and appropriate changes made to the Plan, in accordance with national and regional planning policies² and legislation.

¹ The examination assessed whether the Plan was prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements and whether it is 'sound', in accordance with paragraph 35 of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#). A Local Plan is considered 'sound' if it is: Positively prepared, Justified, Effective and Consistent with national policy.

² The Local Plan is legally required to be in conformity with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and the [London Plan](#).

The EDIA process

- 1.5 The EDIA process examined the inequalities that can affect [9 Protected Characteristics](#) for example the impact of COVID19, socioeconomics, housing needs and examining the wider determinants of health. The assessments aided the development of the policies and the direction of the Plan. The council continued to carry out EDIAs, when required, as the Plan developed.
- 1.6 The following EDIAs were carried out by the council and made available as part of the public consultations:
- Equalities Impact Assessment 2021 ([OD10](#))
 - Equalities and diversity impact assessment of Merton's Local Plan main modifications 20 May 2022 ([LBM07](#)).
 - Equalities Impact Assessment of Merton's Local Plan dated January 2024 ([LBM 34](#)).
- 1.7 The above EDIAs were submitted to and considered by Planning Inspectors as part of their examination of the Local Plan. The EDIA process identified no known negative impacts on any Protected Characteristics groups by way of the Plan, its policies, vision and its strategic direction.
- The new Plan has incorporated approaches, which will have a positive benefit for all, not just the 9 Protected Characteristics. For example:
- [Transport for London \(TfL\) Healthy Streets Approach](#)
 - [Sport England's Active Design](#)
 - [Town and Country Planning Association \(TCPA\) 20 Minutes Neighbourhoods](#)
 - [Wider Determinants of Health](#)
 - Dementia friendly design
 - Active aging approaches
- 1.9 The above approaches are, recognised by government, planning and health professionals and developers, known to provide sustainable benefits; as well as positive benefits for all, improving health and wellbeing, encouraging more social interaction and inclusion, and promoting active travel.
2. The Equality Act 2010
- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 brings together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection. In 2011, the Act extended protection against discrimination to 9 '*Protected Characteristics*':

- Age
- Disability
- Sex/Gender
- Race
- Religion

- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

2.2 The Act introduces a [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#). The PSED is a legal requirement for public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions. The purpose of the PSED is to make sure that public authorities (for example a local authority) and organisations carrying out public functions think about how to promote equality in every aspect.

2.3 Those subject to the duty must have due regard to the need to:

- Aim 1: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Aim 2: Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Aim 3: Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.4 The PSED requires and enables local authorities to make decisions in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and rights of different members of our communities. Integrating an assessment of equality implications from the very start of a new policy saves time and helps prevent costly mistakes.

2.5 In regard to *PSED aim one*:

- The council have found the 'actual or likely impacts to be positive and justified.
- The council found 'no known negative impacts against any of the 9 Protected Characteristics

2.6 In regard to *PSED aim two and three*

- The council have found the 'actual or likely impacts to be positive and justified.
- The council found 'no known negative impacts against any of the 9 Protected Characteristics

Monitoring and review arrangements

2.7 The Plan's monitoring framework table (*chapter 17: Monitoring framework*) sets out the monitoring indicators for the Plan, which are reported in the [Authority Monitoring Report \(AMR\)](#). The indicators will monitor the performance of the Plan. It should be noted that the AMR is not the council's only monitoring tool. Separate monitoring arrangements and processes area in place for other council

strategies, such as the [climate change strategy](#). The Monitoring Framework outline the triggers for a review of the Plan. If the council decides that, a review (full or partial) of the Plan is necessary, an EDIA will be conducted to ensure the review has regard to the [Equality Act](#) and the council's obligation under the Act.

Conclusion

- 2.8 Merton Council does not believe the Plan would lead to direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 or create or worsen disadvantages or inequalities in Merton.

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