

# Equality Impact Assessment Screening Opinion

Rural Development Supplementary  
Planning Document

November 2023



## Introduction

1. It is the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to undertake an Equality Impact Analysis at the time of formulating a decision, drafting a report, designing or amending a policy. This will ensure that the Council is considering and taking positive action where possible to promote access to services for all their communities, including their wider communities. The Equality Impact Assessment Screening Assessment will assess whether there is any impact upon any of the groups with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, which are listed in the table below. If an adverse impact upon any of these groups is identified then a full Equalities Impact Assessment will be required.
2. The Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document provides comprehensive guidance about development in rural areas. It seeks to address planning issues that are often encountered by property owners, business owners, agents, developers and members of the public. The SPD is divided into a number of chapters, which are summarised below.

### **Introduction**

3. This chapter provides a brief description of East Suffolk and emphasises the qualities of its rural environment and landscapes. It sets out objectives of the SPD and states that it does not seek to replicate local plan policies. It also provides the policy context for the SPD and includes an overview of relevant national and local policies.

### **Rural Worker Dwellings**

4. This chapter provides an explanation of rural workers dwellings and explains when they are necessary. Key local plan policies are Suffolk Coastal Local Plan policy SCLP5.6 (Rural Workers Dwellings) and Waveney Local Plan policy WLP8.8 (Rural Workers Dwellings in the Countryside). Existing dwellings should always be used where possible to house rural workers. The applicant needs to demonstrate that the worker needs to live on site, is employed full time and works for a well-established business. To qualify as rural workers dwellings is necessary for them to live on site permanently year-round. This chapter also sets out design considerations and the need for an occupancy condition as part of any planning permission. The final part of the chapter sets out how occupancy conditions can be changed.

### **Rural Annexes**

5. This chapter explains that Rural Annexes are required in certain circumstances. It sets out the policy background, stating that key Local Plan policies are Suffolk Coastal Local Plan policy SCLP5.13 (Residential Annexes) and Waveney Local Plan policy WLP8.8 (Residential

Annexes in the Countryside). This chapter provides information about the key characteristics of an annex, together with an explanation about how to design an annex. It also provides guidance about designing extensions to existing buildings to create an annex, conversions to existing buildings to create an annex, and how new buildings can form annexes.

### **Rural Residential Curtilage Expansion**

6. Residential curtilage is land immediately surrounding a dwelling house. This chapter helps property owners to understand which uses count as residential and when planning permission is required for a change of use of land. It explains how permitted development orders affect residential curtilage expansion. This chapter explains the impact of residential curtilage expansion on settlement boundaries, boundaries and hedgerows, as well as landscape and biodiversity. The last part of the chapter sets out information about permitted development rights and planning conditions.

### **Rural Buildings and Barn Conversions**

7. This chapter explains what rural building and barn conversions are and sets out the policy background. Key local Plan policies about residential conversions are Suffolk Coastal Local Plan policy SCLP5.5 (Conversions of Buildings in the Countryside) and Waveney Local Plan policy WLP8.11 (Conversion of Rural Buildings to Residential Use). Key policies about employment use are Suffolk Coastal Local Plan SCLP4.6 (Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use) and Waveney Local Plan policy WLP8.14 (Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use). This chapter sets out the key principles for converting an agricultural building to a dwelling. Key issues include whether an agricultural building can be converted to residential use and whether it is structurally sound. There is guidance about alterations to historic buildings and modern agricultural buildings. The chapter provides general guidance about converting agricultural buildings. Finally, the chapter provides guidance about class Q prior approval developments.

### **Economic Development**

8. This chapter sets out the key national and local policies concerning economic development in the countryside. It then provides guidance about common types of economic development in the countryside. Topics covered include factories and workshops, development of former airfields, farm diversification schemes, dog exercise fields and farm cafes and shops. The chapter also provides general guidance about issues such as road access, parking, design, and landscaping.

### **Equestrian Development**

9. This chapter describes ways in which equestrian development can impact upon the landscape. Crucially, equestrian development is not always covered by agricultural permitted development. This chapter therefore details the types of equestrian development that will require change of use and those which count as permitted development. This chapter also explains how equestrian development can impact upon wildlife and the historic environment and ways in which impact can be mitigated. The last part of the chapter discusses the provision of access for both equestrians and vehicles, as well as environmental protection considerations (such as animal licensing and water supply).

### **Tourism Accommodation**

10. This chapter sets out the policy guidance surrounding tourism accommodation. This includes key considerations such as permanence and attachment to the ground. Other topics include transport to and from the site, mitigating impacts on European protected sites, scale and design, sustainability, impact on areas of outstanding natural beauty, planning conditions on new tourist accommodation developments and permitted development rights.

### **Small-scale renewable energy regeneration**

11. This chapter provides policy guidance about residential energy generation (including historic buildings), roof-mounted photovoltaics, solar power farm equipment, heat pumps, biomass boilers and wind turbines. Within each of these topics is a discussion of permitted development and the section about wind turbines also includes information about landscape impact and biodiversity.

### **Wastewater management in rural areas**

12. This chapter provides guidance about existing septic tanks and treatment plants and new sewerage treatment plants. This includes the design and location of new sewage treatment plants.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

13. The Equality Act 2010 lists nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. East Suffolk Council has added a tenth characteristic, socio-economic deprivation, in addition to the nine protected characteristics listed in the legislation. This reflects that pockets of deprivation that exist across East Suffolk.

## Screening of impact on different groups

	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Likely Impact</b> (positive/negative/no impact)	<b>Reason for your decision</b>
a	Age (Includes safeguarding issues)	Positive impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides guidance about the design and construction of residential annexes. This provides accommodation for those who would like to live independently but still need to live close to their families. It will therefore benefit those of different age groups, particularly the elderly. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material. The consultation will therefore not discriminate against those from different age groups.
b	Disability	Positive impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides guidance about the design and construction of residential annexes. This provides accommodation for those who would like to live independently but still need to live close to their families. It will therefore benefit those with a disability. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material.

			The consultation will therefore not discriminate against those with a disability.
C	Gender reassignment	No impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides about development in rural areas. It will therefore not discriminate against this group. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material. The consultation will therefore not discriminate against those who have undergone gender reassignment.
D	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides about development in rural areas. It will therefore not discriminate against this group. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material. The consultation will therefore not discriminate against those who are married or in a civil partnership.
E	Pregnancy and maternity	No impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides about development in rural areas. It will therefore not discriminate against this group. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material.

			The consultation will therefore not discriminate against those who are pregnant or on maternity leave.
F	Race	No impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides about development in rural areas. It will therefore not discriminate against this group. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material. The consultation will therefore not discriminate against those from different racial backgrounds.
G	Religion or Belief	No impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides about development in rural areas. It will therefore not discriminate against this group. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material. The consultation will therefore not discriminate against those from any religion or belief.
H	Sex	No impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides about development in rural areas. It will therefore not discriminate against this group. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material. The consultation will therefore not

			discriminate in terms of sexual identity.
I	Sexual orientation	No impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides about development in rural areas. It will therefore not discriminate against this group. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material. The consultation will therefore not discriminate in terms of sexual orientation.
J	Socio-economic deprivation	No impact.	The Rural Development SPD provides about development in rural areas. It will therefore not discriminate against this group. Consultation documents will be available online, in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres and the Council has offered assistance in its publicity material. The consultation will therefore not discriminate against those who are experiencing social or economic deprivation.

## Consultation and Engagement

14. An initial consultation took place between 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023 and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The purpose of this initial consultation was to inform the structure and content of the Rural Development SPD. The consultation took place online and consisted of a questionnaire, which sought the views of those taking part. The following organisations and groups were consulted as part of the initial consultation:

- Specific Consultation Bodies



- Neighbouring Authorities
  - Town and Parish Councils
  - Developers
  - Agents
  - Architects
  - Planning Consultants
  - Housing Associations
  - Rural, farming and business associations Tourism Groups
15. The consultation was also advertised on social media. Town and parish councils, elected members and other organisations were notified directly by email or post. Hard copies were made available by post by contacting the Planning Policy and Delivery Team. In total, 26 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation. Comments received have been taken into account in the preparation of the draft SPD.
16. The document has also been presented to the Local Plan Working Group, which is where elected members provide advice and scrutiny about the preparation of planning documents.
17. There will also be a formal stage of consultation, which is scheduled to run between 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024. This consultation will last a total of eight weeks. An extra two weeks have been added to the duration of the consultation to take account of the latter part of the consultation overlapping with the Christmas holidays. The purpose of this consultation is to enable respondents to comment on the draft Rural Development SPD. The document will be made available online on the Council's website to enable people to comment. Consultation letters and emails will be sent to consultees on the Council's planning policy mailing list. A press release will be released covering the consultation. The planning policy mailing list includes Town and Parish Councils, Suffolk County Council, East Suffolk Councillors, neighbouring district Councils including the Broads Authority, developers, agents, landowners, business associations, civic societies, infrastructure providers, and members of the public.
18. Copies of consultation documents will be available online, and hard copies made available for inspection in libraries and in the Council's customer service centres.
19. Anyone who is unable to view the consultation documents online, in libraries or in the Customer Service Centres can contact the Planning Policy and Delivery Team, and the publicity material provides contact details and an offer of assistance.

## Presentation in Different Languages

20. As part of an eight-week period of formal consultation, the document will be published on the Council's website as well as in libraries and customer service centres, with hard copies available on request for those who cannot access the consultation in the ways listed above. The document may be requested in a different language. When such requests are received the Customer Services Team will be involved with ensuring this request is actioned.

## Proposed Changes

21. The Council will analyse responses received during the public consultation and will make any appropriate changes as a result of comments received.

## Conclusion

22. This EQIA screening exercise shows that the Rural Development SPD will not negatively impact upon any protected group or those experiencing socio-economic deprivation. Therefore, a full EQIA assessment is not considered necessary.