



## **making a difference**

improving planning outcomes for the  
whole of the community

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## Executive summary

This case study aims to support local authority planning departments 'mainstream' equality issues into their everyday work. It uses case studies and examples from planners and others to illustrate how this can be done.

The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) supports local authorities to actively consider all the equality strands – race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age – in everything they do. In addition it asks local authorities to take account of other relevant demographics, such as socio-economic, health and education status, availability of transport and whether communities live in a rural or urban setting. These factors can have a significant impact on how communities benefit from services and decisions an authority makes.

In planning, this will mean taking all strands and factors into account in:

- decisions on planning proposals
- evidence gathering and equality mapping,
- place shaping and plan-making,
- community engagement,
- providing responsive services, and
- employment and workforce development.

This case study outlines the practical steps authorities have taken in relation to improving equality outcomes.

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been a shift from traditional, land use planning to a broader approach that recognises the key role of spatial planning in promoting sustainable and cohesive communities. A consideration of equality and diversity must lie at the heart of this vision.

People from different ethnic backgrounds, disabled people, men and women (including trans men and women), older people, younger people, people of different faiths, gay men, lesbians, bisexual people and heterosexual people may need and experience different things from the built environment. They may also encounter different barriers when it comes to accessing planning services or participating in consultation exercises.

In order to provide accessible services and create inclusive environments, planners and councillors need to understand the needs and aspirations of diverse communities in their area. They must routinely and systematically consider the short and long-term impact on these groups of the plans and decisions they make. These may be related to long term planning policy such as spatial or transport strategies or day to day operational matters such as making decisions about extensions for larger families, adaptations for disabled people, sites for Gypsies and Travellers or granting planning permission for older people's housing.

Planners and councillors will need to consider the long term implications of any strategy and be aware of the potential for tensions between different faith and age groups arising from developments. They have a key role to play in promoting community cohesion, ensuring community safety and implementing access to transport for all

The EFLG places an increased emphasis on demonstrable outcomes. Whilst developing processes is helpful, it is not sufficient in the long term and local authorities will need to ensure they deliver real benefits.

The EFLG asks authorities to evidence that these issues have been considered – whether this is through carrying out Equality Impact Assessments of plans, evidencing that a diverse range of people have been involved in consultation or in monitoring decisions to ensure that some communities are not disadvantaged by the processes which are used.

# Overview of the Equality Framework for Local Government

Since 2001, the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) has helped local authorities make real progress in mainstreaming equality. However, over time, the strengths and weaknesses of the standard have become clearer.

The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) launched in 2009, uses a wider definition of equality, set out in 'The Equalities Review', based on the idea of equal life chances.

**“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and opportunity to live in the way people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.**

**An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be.”**

This definition is more aspirational than the formal legal definitions of equality. It is about what we can do to create a fairer society and recognises that:

- equality is an issue for us all;
- we don't all start from the same place;
- to create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs.

**Visit the IDeA website for more detail on the 5 key areas against which authorities measure performance:**

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=9499336>

## Know your communities: equality mapping

Planning authorities are required to develop an evidence base which includes demographic data about equalities groups and use this to inform their plan and decisions. Strategic Housing Market Assessments, for example, should include “an estimate of household groups who have particular housing requirements, e.g. families, older people, key workers, black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, young people, etc” (CLG 2007, p.9-10).

Our society is becoming more diverse. Understanding differences is no longer just an issue for urban areas with large black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups. The prosperity and cohesion of all communities are affected by differing age, gender, disability, religious and sexual orientation profiles.

At the same time it is important to understand difference in the context of other major issues. These include health, education, community safety, access to work and identifying where the equality gaps are for different groups. Measuring the gaps should be the basis of identifying local priorities and key outcomes. It will be impossible to develop an outcome-focused approach without this core evidence.

Good authorities recognise the need to go beyond the Census data in developing their evidence base. This is because it either does not capture recent demographic changes or because it sheds little light on the needs, experiences and aspirations of local groups in relation to the built environment.

In 2007 the **London Borough of Lewisham** was part of the international Intercultural City project run by Comedia and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation - <http://www.interculturalcity.com/about.htm> .

The focus of the Lewisham project was to examine how local development studies and Masterplanning techniques could be enhanced in order to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse community. One of the planned outcomes was to help Lewisham produce a new framework or template for area master-planning. They explored new ways in which public agencies and partners (non-planners) could contribute more fully to the master-planning policies. Details of the case study can be found at [http://www.interculturalcity.com/city\\_case.htm#lewisham](http://www.interculturalcity.com/city_case.htm#lewisham) .

The community engagement phase of the project gave the council's planning and economic development officers the opportunity to go out to communities and find out about their interaction with the local built environment and their future needs and priorities. They developed a toolkit so that they and others could replicate this "intercultural listening and learning circle".

"We did not just want a consultant to go out and talk to communities. We wanted planners to build relationships and build on their own understanding and skills in working with the community. Planners really embraced the role and now have close links with communities so they can go back to them to talk to groups when they need to. Planners have had a mind shift – they really do understand the communities' needs more fully."

**Barbara Gray**  
**LB Lewisham Planning & Economic Development**

This approach was particularly evident in the drawing up of 'People, Prosperity, Place' (also known as the Lewisham Regeneration Strategy) which sets out the council's vision for the future of the borough from now until 2020. It focuses on the ways in which regeneration contributes to the sustainable community strategy priorities, particularly those around crime, health, education, enterprise and business growth and cultural vitality.

The strategy will be supported by three year implementation plans, structured around the people, prosperity and place themes and the key strategic objectives set out for each theme. They will include clear actions and targets with measurable outcomes to demonstrate the impact of our actions and progress towards achieving our objectives. The first implementation plan covering 2008-2011 is now in place.

The strategy was initially produced in 2007 in a draft form for consultation with local residents and other stakeholders. The council wanted to find out:

- Do local residents and other stakeholders in Lewisham share the vision?
- What do people think about the three key themes set out in the draft strategy – People, Prosperity and Place – and the aims, objectives and issues identified for each theme?

The consultation included the following elements:

- Young people’s consultation event attended by 20 members of the young citizen’s panel. The event included short presentations, a regeneration tour of Lewisham and a workshop led by the young people.
- Resident’s consultation event attended by 85 people, a representative sample of local residents, who were recruited through a recruitment screening process. The event included presentations, an electronic voting session and workshops.
- Stakeholder survey, a postal survey sent out to over 400 local organisations and individuals including elected members, amenity societies, community groups and residents associations.
- Web based survey, open to all through Lewisham’s website.
- Face to face consultation with specific equalities groups as part of the strategy’s equalities impact assessment. Groups/individuals consulted included:
  - Lewisham Disability Coalition;
  - Age Concern;
  - Seniors;
  - Pensioners Forum;
  - the Mayor’s Faith Advisor;
  - Lewisham and Kent Islamic Centre;
  - Catford and Bromley Synagogue;
  - Association of Tamil Parishioners;
  - SACRE;
  - Manager of 286 bar (previously Stonewalls);
  - Lewisham Ethnic Minority Partnership and
  - the Indo Chinese Centre and Community School.

- Staff consultation through an intranet survey, team briefings and specific sessions with the Staff Panel and Black Staff Forum.

Several hundred individuals and groups took the time to read the draft strategy and feed back their comments. The finalised version of the strategy incorporates many of those stakeholder suggestions and comments.

Further information on the strategy, consultation process and Equality Impact assessment are available from the Lewisham website:

<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/CouncilAndDemocracy/StrategiesPlans/PeopleProsperityPlace.htm>

The approach used in this initial project has now been 'mainstreamed' into the way the council consults and engages with its communities on major priorities. This was done recently in North Deptford.

The programme was targeted at residents of the North Deptford area, local public and voluntary sector stakeholders, local businesses and young people. It aimed to gather local views about potential major developments facing North Deptford, as well as to reveal any significant planning issues which could be addressed by the council.

The consultation found broad support for growth and regeneration in North Deptford, but with concerns regarding the impact of new residential development on community facilities, services and cohesion.

Many opportunities for improvement and investment were identified, including upgrades to the public realm, open spaces and local housing. The provision of new connections, new shops and improved community facilities and services as part of long term redevelopment of opportunity sites was also highlighted.

This will assist the council with ongoing and future negotiation with developers of sites in the North Deptford area. It will also help the council make strategic and key local decisions on how to improve the provision of local services and allocate resources.

<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/Environment/Regeneration/DeptfordAndNewCross/NorthDeptford/NorthDeptfordConsultationReport.htm>

In July 2008, **Oadby and Wigston Borough Council** appointed consultants to undertake and prepare a faith community profile and places of worship needs assessment with the aim of providing a comprehensive profile of the borough's faith communities and a needs assessment in relation to places of worship and associated facilities.

This was because the council recognised that for some time, a number of different faith groups had been approaching the council for help in identifying and securing planning permission for new or expanded places of worship. Given the small size of the borough, competition for development and rising land costs, the council was concerned that it had not always been able to provide groups with appropriate long-term solutions.

The purpose of the study was to inform planning policy formulation, including the preparation of town centre masterplans for Oadby and Wigston. Rather than continue to deal with these requests on a case-by-case basis through the development control process, the council felt it pertinent to commission some research into the extent of each faith community, their location and needs now and in the future in order to plan for their development needs more effectively through the local development framework process.

The research also provided the council's community planning team and local strategic partnership with additional information, and helps to inform the borough's sustainable community strategy and multicultural group.

The objectives of this study included the need to:

- Identify the make up of each faith community in terms of age, gender and extent and whether there are concentrations of particular communities at locations within the borough;
- Determine the communities that are served by particular places of worship and associated facilities and their location in order to aid planning of future developments;

- Enable a sound evidence base to help formulate and support at examination, policies relating to places of worship and associated facilities within the core strategy, allocations development plan document and town centre masterplans and relevant supplementary planning documents;
- Provide an evidenced needs assessment, by which development control officers can evaluate planning applications for places of worship and associated facilities;
- Provide the council, and in particular its community planning team, with baseline information and a clearer understanding of the borough's different faith communities to allow for more focused and pro-active engagement with this community of interest.

The research comprised two main strands. A detailed engagement process was undertaken with faith communities in the borough to map worship space needs and develop a faith community profile. At the same time, an in-depth planning analysis was undertaken to develop a worship space needs assessment.

As a result of this work the borough has been able to take the needs of faith communities into account in formulating a specific policy in their submitted core strategy which deals with community facilities and places of worship.

Details of the study can be found at <http://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/Home/Planning/Forward%20Plans/Local%20Development/Faith%20Community%20Study.pdf>

## Place shaping

Locally developed policies and strategies are rooted in an evidence base. Authorities are therefore in a good position to ensure that equality is built into their plans based on what the evidence tells them. It can then be considered right from the start, in everything they do.

The Greater London Authority has issued supplementary planning guidance (SPG) on planning for equality and diversity in London. The SPG aims to 'encourage developers and planners to consider equality issues at the earliest stages of applications and in the preparation of DPDs'. It contains information about the legislative context to planning for equality groups, an overview of the key spatial and social issues for London and for target equality groups and signposting to a range of useful resources. This is a model that might usefully be replicated elsewhere at a regional or local authority level.

Some authorities have incorporated EqlAs into the sustainability appraisal process. Integrating the two processes may help to increase the status of EqlAs and can improve efficiency, since data collection and consultation exercises can be designed so they gather information relevant to both processes. This can help to generate comparable and consistent findings and objectives and take advantage of synergies between the two exercises.

A good core strategy needs to tell the story of the place, explain how it works and highlight its qualities and distinguishing features. Telling the story helps everyone understand how the qualities of the place have shaped the strategy and its priorities for future quality.

**'Planning for places: Delivering good design through core strategies' CABE November 2009**

In December 2009, **Tower Hamlets** approved its core strategy proposed submission document and submitted it to the Secretary of State for independent examination. Its approach to plan making has already gained national recognition and the

core strategy is included in CABE's best practice guide on planning for places.

The core strategy 'Reinventing the Hamlets' sets out a long term spatial strategy to deliver the aspirations set out in the 'Community Plan 2020' for building 'One Tower Hamlets' through reinventing the 24 hamlets which shape the borough and bringing them together to make Tower Hamlets a great place to live and work.

The key spatial themes are:

- Refocusing town centres
- Strengthening neighbourhood well-being
- Enabling prosperous communities
- Designing a high quality city
- Delivering place making

The core strategy is supported by a comprehensive evidence base and underpinned by continuous consultation and engagement with all sections of the local community, stakeholders including service providers' developers, government and non government organisations as well as local community and business groups. Although community engagement has been a continuous feature of the core strategy, this has been interspersed by two stages of formal community consultation, with each stage presented with a consultation document.

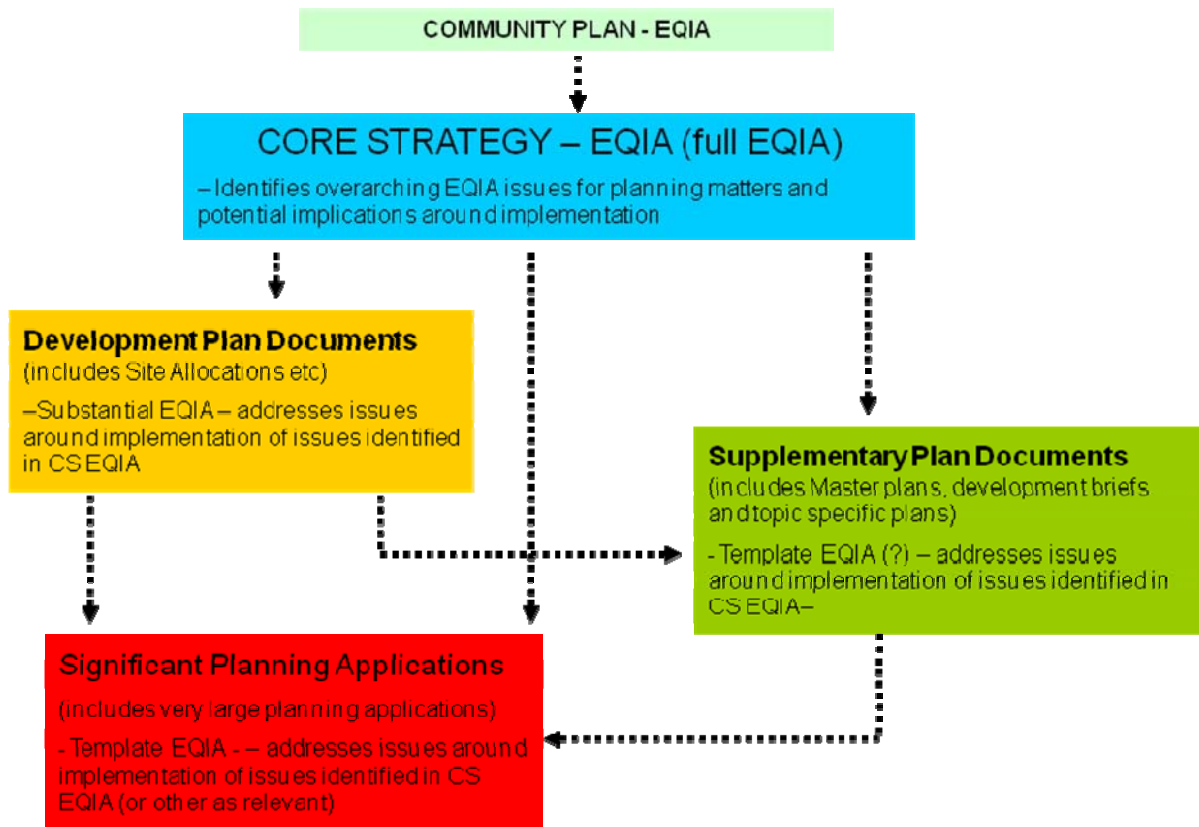
A population modeling tool has also been developed in conjunction with partners to provide a better understanding of how both natural population growth and plan development will impact on the demand for homes, jobs and social infrastructure such as open space, schools, health centres and leisure facilities. The model generates population estimates based on planned development in the borough up to 2025.

An equality impact assessment has been completed for each version of the core strategy.

[http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgsi/851900/861\\_diversity\\_and\\_equalities/equality\\_impact\\_assessments/eqia\\_2008-2009.aspx](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgsi/851900/861_diversity_and_equalities/equality_impact_assessments/eqia_2008-2009.aspx)

The EqIA has highlighted general and specific equality impacts likely to emanate from the vision and identified what actions need to be taken to mitigate adverse impact.

## Equalities Impacts in Planning – ‘golden thread’



As shown in the diagram, a ‘golden thread’ approach has been adopted so that there are clear links between the equality outcomes set out in the core strategy, subsequent development plan documents and significant planning applications as they emerge. Planning staff have been trained to carry out EqlAs on major developments and supplementary planning documents, including the completion of the strategic EqlA on planning obligations.

**Tower Hamlets** has recently been assessed as having achieved the ‘**excellent**’ level of the EFLG having been able to evidence that equality issues relevant to their communities are embedded in their sustainable community strategy and strategic plans and they work with all strategic partners and the voluntary and community sector acting as advocates to achieve defined equality outcomes.

## **HMR developer team**

As part of the Transform South Yorkshire- pathfinder housing market renewal (HMR) programme, the planning service at **Sheffield City Council** has set up the HMR development team to support the delivery of the programme. This is a bespoke team of urban and transport planners and designers. The development team provides project services as well as developing policy and plays a lead role in developing the design quality strategy. The development of each site is an important opportunity to help deliver the vision as set out in the neighbourhood plan.

A market brief is prepared for each site providing site specific information, and describing how the site should contribute to the overall vision for the area.

## **HMR developer manual**

The brief for a site is read alongside the council's [HMR developer manual](#). The manual sets the general quality standards, national, regional and local, required from the proposals and offers detailed guidance and best practice on design quality and development issues. Together they act as the competition brief for any site.

The manual links its guidance with the work of other agencies, stakeholders and departments and covers the broad range of factors critical to creating more sustainable communities and successful neighbourhoods. These include the need for quality schools, parks, streets and service centres as well as improved housing stock, which takes account of the cultural diversity needs and aspirations of the whole community.

It includes proposed additional standards in the internal house layout and space standards section to take account of faith and cultural needs of black and ethnic minorities. The manual is a "live" document acting as a record of best and evolving practice. The process of drafting it creates a forum for discussion where officers share and test ideas and involve other stakeholders in the process such as the communities BME strategy group.

## Other PAS case studies

The PAS case study, 'Knitting together: planning and our ageing population' highlights the importance and benefits of planners working closely with internal and external partners to create policies and a vision which respond to the challenges of an ageing population. <http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/aio/271295>

## Development management

### Design and access

High performing authorities have broadened their view of 'access' to include a consideration of gender, mental health, age, ethnicity and religion.

Since August 2006 design and access statements have been required as part of the application submission material for all but the most minor forms of development. This has been a step forward in encouraging explicit consideration of issues in the design.

Guidance on design and access statements has been developed by CABE. Statements should demonstrate how development can create accessible and safe environments, including addressing crime and disorder and fear of crime. The statement should provide information on the results of any consultation carried out - or to be carried out - on access issues. Depending on the scale of the development proposal, this may include consultation with local communities and access groups.

### Lifetime homes and super flexible homes

'Lifetime homes' and 'super-flexible homes' are two examples of the ways in which the current and future needs of diverse groups of people have been taken into account in planning and design.

The London Plan sets a target that 100% of new homes must meet the 'lifetime homes' criteria and that 10% should be mobility accessible. London boroughs, such as **Tower Hamlets** have made it a standard condition of planning permission that developers meet these requirements.

**Milton Keynes** and English Partnerships are undertaking a demonstration project for the concept of super-flexible homes at their Tattenhoe Park development. The initiative recognises that flexible dwellings are needed to accommodate diverse communities and lifestyles. For example, this includes people choosing to work from home, growing families, families with several generations living together and faith and community groups who might need additional space for social gatherings in large groups.

Super-flexible homes are easily capable of extension or adaptation to meet such changing needs over time. Examples of super-flexible housing include:

- open roof trusses to facilitate upwards extensions
- semis with attached garages to enable future first floor extensions and
- open or flexible floor plans.

The development framework for Tattenhoe Park includes a requirement that 30% of the new houses should be super-flexible.

See:

[http://www.miltonkeynespartnership.info/MKP\\_Projects/project\\_detail.php?Key=34](http://www.miltonkeynespartnership.info/MKP_Projects/project_detail.php?Key=34)

Research commissioned by **Bridging Newcastle Gateshead** housing market renewal pathfinder explored the size and housing needs of the large Orthodox Jewish community in Gateshead. Concerned that this group tends to be hidden within census data, a survey estimated that over half the residents of the Bensham ward are members of this community. Whilst Orthodox Jews want to remain in Bensham because of local community and religious facilities and networks, there is a significant mismatch between the design, size and quality of local housing stock and the size of many Orthodox Jewish families, which typically include six to eight children.

Bridging Newcastle Gateshead has responded with a remodelling project in Whitehall Road, Bensham, in which 22 previously vacant flats in a poor state of repair have been converted into 11 three storey terraced houses. The conversions incorporate within each home a new kitchen and a succah extension, which allows for the custom of sleeping under the stars at particular festivals. The success of the model is such that the registered social landlord, Home Housing, is

building a new, complementary development of 15 five-bed family homes adjacent to the conversions.

Between September and October 2003, RBA Research Limited carried out a quantitative research survey supported by the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, Sadeh Lok Housing Group and **Rotherham MBC**

Sadeh Lok, a Registered Social Landlord, was commissioned to examine the sustainability of the area and residents' satisfaction. The research identified the following issues in terms of the specific housing needs of residents in the area:

- the need for larger family houses with more bedrooms;
- the need for more storage space or more space outside their houses; and,
- overcrowding was a problem in 16% of households surveyed (half of these – about 50 households said it was a major problem).

In order to respond to this need, as part of the 2006-08 Affordable Housing Programme, Rotherham MBC identified a suitable site to facilitate the development of six units of extended family accommodation to meet the needs of the households identified by Sadeh Lok.

The site selected not only supported the principle of sustainability by promoting the re-use of a brown field site but the partnership with Sadeh Lok also supported another council priority - the development of sustainable neighbourhoods by extending the choice and quality of affordable housing to the communities and promoting the regeneration of one of the most deprived wards in the area.

This partnership has resulted in a high quality development with the minimum 'very good' ECO standard of 8 purpose built units.

### **Other PAS case studies**

The PAS case study 'Access all areas' explores good practice in planning inclusive and accessible buildings.

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pagelId=111412>

## Neighbourhood design

Planners make a significant contribution to how neighbourhoods look, how safe people feel in them and how easy it is to move around them in order to mix with others and access facilities and transport. Different equalities groups are likely to have different needs and experiences of their neighbourhoods. Fear of abuse and attack may be a particular concern for Muslims, gay men, lesbians, bisexual people and trans men and women. Uncluttered and safe walkways are likely to be a particular priority for people with visual impairments and the provision of play facilities will be important to children, young people and those looking after them.

### **Designing out crime**

Many local authority planning departments are working in partnership with community safety partnerships and the police in initiatives to design out crime. Designing out crime and designing in community safety should be central to the planning and delivery of new development.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires all local authorities to exercise their functions with due regard to their likely effect on crime and disorder and to do all they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder. The prevention of crime and the enhancement of community safety are matters that a local planning authority should consider when exercising its functions under the Town and Country Planning legislation.

Within residential areas, attracting a mix of people of different ages, lifestyles and economic status can be advantageous for crime prevention. This avoids concentrations of groups who may be more likely to offend or be targeted as victims and avoids the creation of areas devoid of occupation, activity and surveillance at particular times. Providing a range of housing types in terms of dwelling size, type, tenure and affordability can also support this.

'Secured by Design' is the UK Police flagship initiative supporting the principles of designing out crime by use of effective crime prevention and security standards for a range of applications. Research shows that Secured by Design can

reduce burglary and car crime by 50 percent and criminal damage by 25 percent. It supports one of the Government's key planning objectives - the creation of secure, quality places where people want to live and work.

The **London Borough of Newham** worked in partnership with the Metropolitan Police in their plans for Silver Town Quays. This enabled the joint planning of community safety features, including street lighting and CCTV. The council has continued to meet fortnightly with the police to review and revise plans to ensure that they meet the needs of local communities and promote neighbourhood safety.

Newham also found that planning activity can also impact on community cohesion; through creating mixed neighbourhoods which include places where people can mix and meet and through providing inclusive opportunities for local people to get involved in designing their local area.

The creation of 'home zones', which work through the physical alteration of streets and roads in an area, has given organisations the opportunity to involve different groups in the design process.

## Planning advice

One of **Wychavon District Council's** promises for 2006/07 was 'to increase understanding and develop a new approach and policy for our Gypsy community'. In order to do this they carried out a scrutiny review to improve their approach. A team was set up to review current practice, what was happening elsewhere and put together a plan of improvements for the future.

The three main outcomes were:

### **1. Better relationships between the council and local Gypsy and Traveller communities, specifically;**

- consultation and communication mechanisms
- a protocol setting out what "you can expect from us and what we can expect from you"
- a leaflet, summarising the council's roles, key contacts and partners.

## **2. Breaking down barriers and building understanding between settled residents and the local Gypsy communities, specifically;**

- understanding the tensions that exist and why
- features/articles in The Wychavon Magazine to build understanding and acceptance.

## **3. Balancing supply of sites and demand for the future – helping to inform the planning process, specifically;**

- pre-application engagement and advice
- proper enforcement
- setting out the principles that will need to be applied when new sites are required.

In terms of the planning process this has resulted in a number of positive and concrete outcomes:

- The remit of the Gypsies and Travellers officer has been extended so that there is now a single point of contact for co-ordinating activity across legal, planning, housing, benefits and relationship issues.
- A simple guide to the planning system has been produced in conjunction with the Travellers Times which is widely available and has been commended as best practice by CLG. See:  
<http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/cms/business/planning/planning-application/advice-and-guidance/gypsy-applications.aspx>
- Pre-application advice is provided early, and several joint site visits were made last year with the planning enforcement manager to encourage applicants to put in planning applications. This has proven successful and resulted in three new sites being passed at committee on one night providing 10 new pitches.

All three sites had pre-application advice and engaged with the planning system early on. In fact, two of the applicants felt confident enough in the process to submit planning applications without the use of an agent and spoke at committee to put their case forward.

- The Gypsies and Travellers officer works with the Planning Enforcement and Legal teams to ensure proportionate enforcement action is taken. Enforcement activity is guided by the council's new code of practice.
- Training has been provided to both officers and councillors to improve their understanding of the needs of this group.. A 'Sites and Rights' DVD has been produced. This prompted a lively discussion and debate when shown at a policy and development control meeting. In addition, a discussion evening is being held early in 2010 for town and parish councillors about the responsibilities the council has in relation to Gypsies and Travellers.

As a result of all this activity, both officers and councillors have become more confident and experienced in dealing with Gypsies and Travellers planning applications. This has resulted in the provision of 23 more pitches in the last two years.

Wychavon has been assessed as having met the requirements of the '**achieving**' level of the EFLG. They have been able to evidence that, 'the identified needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups are addressed and services are designed to ensure that customers and citizens are treated with dignity and respect'.

### **Other PAS case studies**

The PAS case study 'Spaces and places for Gypsies and Travellers: how planning can help', draws on emerging good practice in some local authorities to identify how effective use of the planning process can increase the number of authorised pitches available for Gypsies and Travellers in line with new government planning guidance.

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/aio/29822>

### **Enforcement**

Enforcement decisions are made in accordance with plans and policies, whose impact on different equalities groups should already have been assessed through the EqIA process. Deciding whether and how to enforce development controls in a particular case also requires officers to weigh up the likely

harms and benefits and make a professional judgment. Planning authorities need to be able to demonstrate that they are using this discretion fairly, especially where there are potential tensions between different groups in the community.

Authorities should monitor both satisfaction with and outcomes from their enforcement activities by equalities groups, investigating and taking action where there appear to be differences.

At **Sheffield City Council**, the planning department undertook ethnic monitoring of their planning applications and found that BME groups and individuals were more than twice as likely to have their planning application refused. 18% compared with 8% of people who described themselves as 'UK white'. Although sample sizes were small, the council was keen to identify whether anything in their processes or policies was causing this difference.

Officers suspected it might be due to BME applicants' lower take-up of specialist advice when preparing applications and their lower rates of attendance at pre-application meetings with the planning department. A detailed review of a sample of case files and discussions with the case officers appeared to confirm the interim findings.

The main reasons according to the draft research paper were the types of development applied for, notably hot food take-aways, restaurants, bars and house extensions; and the poor quality of planning submissions. This was partly due to the absence of a planning agent or poor planning knowledge displayed by the agent.

The council acknowledges that they also need to provide training on the planning system to improve the quality of planning applications and engage directly with individuals by offering follow up support to those who have had their applications refused. Although this is not something the planning department has to do, they believe it will reduce the number of unsuccessful planning applications in the future.

As a further response, the council produced a leaflet explaining planning processes in community languages. These were targeted at hot food takeaways, as the council recognised that some BME people could be reached through these businesses.

## Community engagement

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires each local planning authority to prepare a statement of community involvement, setting out its commitment to consultation, the types of communities in their area and how they intend to involve them in developing local plans.

Community involvement in planning is not new. People have always had the opportunity to have their say on new planning documents and planning applications. However, many people were unaware of these opportunities and were therefore unable to get involved. People from some equalities groups have faced particular barriers in terms of finding out about or getting involved in planning decisions. These barriers may include language, literacy, confidence, caring responsibilities or disabilities.

Community engagement runs through many of the case studies in this document and is covered elsewhere in detail in the PAS case study, 'Getting Engaged': <http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/aio/49624>.

**Milton Keynes Council** planning department commissioned an audit of their consultation activities which identified barriers to participation for some equalities groups. As a result, and as part of the statement of community involvement, they now do an 'equality audit' for each proposed local development document or major planning application. This examines the profile of the affected population in terms of age, ethnicity, disability and educational qualifications/literacy and identifies local stakeholders and groups. The audit aims to ensure that appropriate involvement techniques are used and that those at risk of exclusion from the process are heard.

Under the new arrangements **Rotherham MBC's** statement of community involvement (SCI) was formally adopted by the council on 14 June 2006 following several periods of consultation and an independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

The SCI sets out the council's policy for community participation. It includes the engagement of traditionally excluded groups, together with the standards of community involvement to be achieved in the preparation, alteration and

review of the various documents in the new local development framework (LDF) and in consultations over planning applications. It is intended to ensure the active, meaningful and continued involvement of local communities and key stakeholders throughout the development plan preparation process.

Over the summer of 2009, Rotherham consulted on its core strategy revised options. This set out three options to accommodate the borough's future requirements for new homes and employment land.

A number of different methods were used for engaging with the community including online consultation. 13 workshops were held including targeted ones for women, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities, young people and older people. In addition two parish council public meetings and six drop in sessions were organised. As a result over 6,000 representations were received. The council worked in partnership with Yorkshire Planning Aid and enlisted the help and assistance of other key organizations to deliver facilitated workshops. These included:

- Voluntary Action Rotherham,
- Rotherfed (Federation of Tenants and Residents),
- the Women's Strategy Group,
- youth cabinet,
- older people's network,
- disabled peoples representatives, and
- Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA).

A number of issues were identified by the different communities as being important. For example, women were particularly concerned about safety and security and the need for facilities for young people, as were young people themselves. The BME group highlighted the fact that communities were changing and that while to date most families have looked after their elderly, special care homes for the BME population might be required in the future. Additionally they pointed out the need for larger houses given the size of their families.

The final feedback report which is in the process of being prepared will summarise the key planning issues arising from all of the workshops. These key issues will then guide the

preparation of the final draft of the core strategy to be consulted on later this year.

**The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council**

recognises that the past five years have seen a great deal of consultation with the community about the plans to regenerate Bradford city centre; from the Will Alsop Masterplan for the city centre through to the four city centre neighbourhood development frameworks. In order to minimise consultation fatigue and to maximise opportunities for all groups to have a say, the council has developed an innovative and exciting range of ways of getting feedback on the issues and options for the Bradford City Centre Area Action Plan.

One key tool which has been developed is a 25-minute film produced by a Bradford based media production company on behalf of the council featuring people's views on the city centre and ideas for how it can be improved for shoppers, businesses and visitors and made accessible for everyone.

Getting young people to come along to traditional events and voice their opinions can be especially challenging. The planning department at the council therefore decided that it needed a way to connect with this group and others, a way that would be accessible for them in their own time. It needed to be informative and encourage discussion and debate.

What emerged was the first Facebook LDF public consultation group blog. It was decided to trial the Bradford City Centre Area Action Plan because the area is of interest and concern to the many people who use it. The group was set up in late 2007 and already has over 50 members. It contains discussions on key topics and issues, links to the city centre area action plan and related documents and links to the various short films commissioned by the council and Bradford Centre Regeneration (the urban regeneration company for the city centre)

In addition to the fact that DVD clips have been viewed frequently and young people have posted comments on the boards and forums, the council reports that they have also had contact from young people directly as a result of the group.

The council has noticed that the messages from the young people show that their needs and aspirations are often similar to other groups. There have also been specific issues raised

regarding the leisure offer and the evening economy and this links well to the council's plans to provide a more vibrant city centre with better employment opportunities for all through the creation of a new central business district and a city centre park. Comments will feed into the formulation of the area action plan.

**Yorkshire Planning Aid (YPA) is part of the Royal Town Planning Institute** and gives free independent and professional planning advice on planning issues to community organisations and individuals who cannot afford professional fees so that they can engage effectively with the planning system.

Between November 2007 and October 2009 YPA's 'Planning for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities' project provided a dedicated service to help individuals and groups from BME communities across the Yorkshire and Humber region to understand and engage with the planning system.

The project consisted of consultation workshops on local development framework (LDF) documents and free training events on the planning system, with a link to the YPA advice service and its purpose was to help address the lack of participation of people from BME communities in the planning system, by targeted capacity building and engagement opportunities.

Six local authority areas were chosen, either for their high BME populations, or because YPA already had links with the community due to previous work there. These were Barnsley, **Bradford, Calderdale, Hull, Kirklees, and Rotherham.**

The project aimed to break down complex planning documents, communicate their contents clearly and develop techniques and resources to connect with hard to reach groups. It also sought to increase understanding among professionals of ways to engage people from BME communities, as well as to improve networks between planning departments, equality and diversity officers and community and voluntary sector bodies.

The project featured training, consultation events, workshops, activities to build local capacity, and opportunities for residents to engage with the planning system in six council areas. All activities were tailored to particular target groups.

In total, 570 people attended 35 consultation events, and 16 training events were delivered including interactive planning education sessions for 3 secondary schools.

The anticipated long term outcomes are:

- Improved towns and cities, through development policies which reflect the needs and aspirations of people from ethnic minority communities;
- Skills development for people from BME communities, enabling them to better engage with and influence the future development of their areas;
- Raised awareness amongst BME communities of local democratic processes, and increased knowledge of how to participate;
- A better understanding within the planning profession and local authorities across the Yorkshire and Humber region of ways to secure the engagement of people from BME communities in the planning system;
- Improved links between planning departments, equality and diversity units, and the voluntary and community sector.

Although the long term project outcomes have yet to come to fruition, overall the project has been successful at engaging people from BME communities, many of whom would otherwise not have been involved in LDF consultations or planning training. Moreover, the project has demonstrated that there is a real interest amongst people of all ages to understand and influence the planning system.

The final report YPA Planning for BME Communities available at:

[http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk/pooled/articles/BF\\_NEWSART/view.asp?Q=BF\\_NEWSART\\_315816](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk/pooled/articles/BF_NEWSART/view.asp?Q=BF_NEWSART_315816)

It distills a number of lessons from the project and makes practical recommendations for engaging BME communities in planning.

**Rotherham MBC** has been assessed as having achieved the '**excellent**' level of the EFLG as it was able to evidence that "effective forums are in place to enable all equality stakeholders/representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups to challenge, scrutinise and evaluate priorities".

### **Other PAS case studies**

'Engaging the community in planning policy: innovative approaches in Richmondshire', looks at how a rural authority with a small team came up with innovative and effective ways of engaging their community in developing the core strategy.  
<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pageld=438519>

## Conclusion

The role of planning in guiding and shaping new developments can have a fundamental impact on the way in which people live in their communities. It provides an ideal opportunity to help address inequalities and ensure that the full range of needs in the community is taken into account to minimise negative impacts and promote equality through every stage of the planning process.

Whilst acknowledging that the nature of plan making means it may take some years before the most important impacts are seen; the work which is being undertaken will produce wide benefits as local authorities demonstrate that they understand and know their communities and that they take every opportunity to involve them in planning design, including removing any barriers to engagement or access to services.

Another clear benefit in involving communities in the planning process is that it increases their sense of ownership of their local communities and the buildings, streets, open spaces. Work on equalities also fosters better relationships with the local authority, whether this is in relation to understanding the reasons for decisions taken or a result of being listened to and heard.

## Top tips

- ✓ Monitor access to, experience of and outcomes from development control, plan-making and consultation activities for different equalities groups. Don't just collect the data – use the knowledge from it to shape decisions and action.
- ✓ Work in partnership and make the most of the knowledge of other departments and organisations that represent different equalities groups, such as Age Concern or MIND.
- ✓ Focused and well-structured Equality Impact Assessments are vital: they should help shape policies and services to help promote equality and address disadvantage.
- ✓ Be conscious of equality groups within your community engagement processes: are any under-represented?
- ✓ Be innovative about reaching those groups who are not involved: take a walk in their shoes to understand better ways of engaging these groups.
- ✓ Use every opportunity to promote equality through planning proposals. Use your influence to gain outcomes for your communities through s106 agreements.
- ✓ Build equality and diversity into your existing processes – from sustainability appraisals to business plans to staff appraisals.
- ✓ Ensure there is clear internal responsibility for equality and diversity at each stage or in each part of your work. Check that workforce development and communication structures support this.
- ✓ Keep focusing on the outcomes – what difference do you hope to make and to which groups and individuals? How can you evidence this?

## References and resources

CABE (2005) Creating Successful Neighbourhoods: Lessons and actions for Housing Market Renewal

CABE (2006) Design and access statements: how to write, read and use them

CABE (2008) Inclusion by Design – equality, diversity and the built environment

CABE (2009) Planning for Places – Delivering good design through core strategies

Centre for Regional Social and Economic Research, Sheffield Hallam University (June 2007): Minority Ethnic Residential Experiences and Requirements in the Bridging Newcastle Gateshead Area: A Report to Bridging Newcastle Gateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder

CLG (2008) What works in Community Cohesion, DCLG, London

CLG (2008) Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society

CLG (2007) Strategic Housing Market Assessments: Practice Guidance Version 2

IDeA/ LGA (2009) The Equality Framework for Local Government - <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/9585101>

London Borough of Lewisham/ COMEDIA –Intercultural City: Making the most of diversity: Knowing Lewisham

Mayor of London (2007) Planning for Equality and Diversity in London: Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan

ODPM (2005) Diversity and Equality in Planning: Good Practice Guide

Information about the Tomorrow's Planners scheme drawn from [www.pathuk.co.uk](http://www.pathuk.co.uk)

Further information about design and crime prevention can be found at:

Designing Out Crime Association <http://www.doca.org.uk>

Secured by Design  
<http://www.securedbydesign.com/index.aspx>

ODPM (2004) Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention

## **Contributing organisations**

Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Bridging Newcastle Gateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder

London Borough of Lewisham

London Borough of Newham

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Milton Keynes Council

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Sheffield City Council

Wychavon District Council

Yorkshire Planning Aid

**Planning Advisory Service**

Layden House  
76-86 Turnmill Street  
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[pas@idea.gov.uk](mailto:pas@idea.gov.uk)  
020 7296 6880

[www.pas.gov.uk](http://www.pas.gov.uk)



**Local Government Association**

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 400 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.

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