

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment Screening for the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit

Equality Impact Assessment guidance should be considered when completing this form.

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Runnymede Net Zero Carbon Toolkit	Stephanie Broadley

A. What is the aim of this policy, function or activity? Why is it needed? What is it hoped to achieve and how will it be ensured it works as intended? Does it affect service users, employees or the wider community?

The aim of the Runnymede Net Zero Carbon Toolkit is to set out best practice approaches in designing, specifying, constructing and fitting out a ‘net zero in operation’ new build housing or retrofit project. In driving the delivery of net zero homes, the Toolkit aims to reduce carbon emissions in the Borough generated by homes, improve air quality (as a net zero carbon home does not use any fossil fuels on-site), and also bring about financial and health co-benefits such as reduced energy bills, and more comfortable homes in extreme heat.

The Toolkit, once adopted, will not set new policy or replace existing policy. The guidance sets out aspirational net zero carbon standards and helps developers, architects and homeowners understand whether development proposals are being ambitious enough in responding to the climate emergency. The Toolkit is therefore a communication tool, rather than a planning or corporate policy position. To ensure it works as intended, the Toolkit will be promoted through a variety of means, such as on the Council’s website and social media channels, and through relevant events taking place with the local development community.

The Toolkit is designed to help the wider community - property developers, agents, landowners, design consultants, Councillors, neighbourhood groups and new and existing residents (as homeowners), by providing clarity on how to achieve net zero carbon standards. However, as a guide only, its readers are not obliged to undertake the processes suggested by the Toolkit; and the document in itself will not carry material weight in planning decision-making as it goes over and above the requirements of the 2030 Local Plan. Whilst the Toolkit aims to bring about positive behaviour change, its use is voluntary. However, if new development applies the principles of the Toolkit to bring about climate change benefits, these benefits are weighed in the balance alongside other issues in planning application decision-making.

B. Is this policy, function or activity relevant to equality? Does the policy, function or activity relate to an area in which there are known inequalities, or where different groups have different needs or experience? Remember, it may be relevant because there are opportunities to promote equality and greater access, not just potential based on adverse impacts or unlawful discrimination.

The Protected Characteristics are; Sex, Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Beliefs, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity.

By encouraging and facilitating the incorporation of energy efficiency measures and the appropriate use of renewable technologies in existing and new homes, the Toolkit will support the reduction of carbon emissions and support the Borough's response to the climate emergency, which, overall, will be of benefit to all groups.

The Toolkit is not expected to create any barriers to participation for people in protected characteristic groups of race, religion, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and therefore it is not considered that it will cause a negative impact or discriminate these groups.

However, the Toolkit does relate to an area in which there are known inequalities and where different groups have different experiences. Data and evidence from the Office for National Statistics and National Energy Action¹ indicate that the homes that are least energy efficient in England are more likely to be occupied by older people, including those with disabilities, and those on lower incomes. An increasingly high proportion of older households and those with a disability are being affected by fuel poverty.

It is important that the Council helps ensure that its residents' homes remain safe and warm into the future, particularly in view of the Borough's ageing population. There are opportunities for the Toolkit to be used by both the Council and private developers in promoting equality for older and disabled people, by using its principles in development schemes to deliver warm, energy efficient, well-adapted homes – potentially for both the Council housing stock and privately-owned homes. The Council can also use the principles of the Toolkit to offer trusted advice and support to help the Borough's older and disabled residents, and or, groups who represent them, to make their homes warmer and safer.

Use of the Toolkit therefore provides an opportunity to promote greater equality for those in the protected characteristic groups of age and disability. By installing energy efficient measures and renewable technologies, the Toolkit also has the potential to support residents with rising fuel costs by driving down energy bills. Budget allowing, the Toolkit will be promoted through the Borough's Community Life magazine, and officers will also request that the Toolkit be promoted through local Resident Association publications, to improve outreach to older households. There is also the opportunity for officers to attend local community events to raise awareness of the Toolkit amongst the older generation.

Whilst the Toolkit is guidance only and there is no obligation to implement its principles, the Council recognises that at the current time there is a 2-6% cost premium for delivering a net zero carbon home compared to a minimum Building Regulations standard equivalent. This is, however, balanced against the potential for lower fuel bills over time. By investing in net zero standards, there are significant opportunities to drive down costs of running a home over time e.g. a 35-40% reduction in residents' energy bills when compared to a Building Regulations compliant home.

Whilst socio-economic factors are not a protected characteristic, advice has been included in

¹ Summarised by the Centre for Ageing Better at: [A crisis of cold homes: Our housing stock is alarmingly inefficient | Centre for Ageing Better \(ageing-better.org.uk\)](#)

the Toolkit identifying sources of funding and local initiatives which can help those on lower incomes to invest in energy efficiency measures.

The Toolkit also attempts to make information on net zero carbon issues more accessible and engaging for all groups. The Toolkit has been written in a style that is easy to read and navigate. The document will be made available on the Council's website, but in recognition that not all people with protected characteristics – such as older people – will be able to access the Toolkit online, it is proposed that hard copies of the Toolkit be made available in local libraries and on request from the Climate Change team. Text has also been added to the Toolkit to make it clear that copies in large print, other formats or languages can be obtained via the Climate Change team on request.

If the policy, function or activity is relevant to equality then a full Equality Impact Assessment may need to be carried out. If the policy function or activity does not engage any protected characteristics, then you should complete Part C below. Where Protected Characteristics are engaged, but Full Impact Assessment is not required because measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented that would mitigate the impact on those affected or would provide an opportunity to promote equalities please complete Part C.

C. If the policy, function or activity is not considered to be relevant to equality, what are the reasons for this conclusion? Alternatively, if it is considered that there is an impact on any Protected Characteristics but measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented please state those measures and how it/they are expected to have the desired result. What evidence has been used to make this decision? A simple statement of 'no relevance' or 'no data' is not sufficient.

Overall, once adopted, the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit will be of benefit to all members of the community who live in the Borough by encouraging the delivery of energy efficient, warm and well-adapted homes.

The Runnymede Net Zero Carbon Toolkit sets out the Council's aspirations in respect of net zero carbon standards associated with new development and retrofit projects. Poor energy efficiency and high fuel bills are increasingly being experienced by older households, including those with disabilities. The Toolkit will help bring about positive outcomes for these groups if its principles are implemented by older householders in retrofit projects; and if new-build homes applying the principles are subsequently occupied by older households. The activities proposed to promote the Toolkit include those designed to improve outreach to older households, and those with disabilities.

To help mitigate impacts on those who would find it difficult to afford the measures identified in the Toolkit, advice has been included in the Toolkit highlighting where to source grant funding, such as the UK Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

Text has also been included in the Toolkit, and will be highlighted on the website, identifying the availability of hard-copy documents, and copies in large print, other formats or languages, to improve accessibility to the document by those of a protected characteristic group such as older people, or people of a different race.

The Climate Change team will seek feedback on the use of the Toolkit after it is adopted and

promoted, which may reveal any positive or negative impacts that exist and will assist officers in providing measures that seek to mitigate any negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics.

For the reasons set out in this screening, it is considered that a full EqIA is not required.

Date completed: 24/02/2024 by Stephanie Broadley

Sign-off by senior manager: Georgina Pacey 28/02/2024