

EQUALITY SCREENING

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

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Caxton Avenue Conservation Area	Michael Corbett (Senior Planning Policy Officer)

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?
<p>The aim of designating the Caxton Avenue Conservation Area (CA), which would cover properties on Caxton Avenue and a small number on Coombelands Lane in the Rowtown area of Addlestone, is to protect the special architectural and historic interest of the area. It will provide additional protections for the properties and their setting and require compliance with policies in the Council's adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan which relate to CA designations.</p> <p>Under section 69(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 it states that:</p> <p>Every local planning authority— (a) shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and (b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.</p> <p>Therefore, the Council is required, from time to time, to review the Borough and designate (where appropriate) new CAs where this is merited. As the officers have consulted both Runnymede's and Surrey County Council's heritage specialists, who have agreed the proposed area meets the threshold to be designated as a CA, proceeding with the designation would be supported by primary legislation.</p> <p>Runnymede Borough Council recognises that a quality-built environment is an essential element in creating distinctive, enjoyable and successful places in which to live. The CA designation would build upon principles set out in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (particularly Policy EE5: Conservation Areas) and, as such, is a fundamental part of the planning policy 'toolkit'.</p> <p>The Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA), which has been prepared sets out why the area is considered to have special architectural and historic interest, the local and national context related to the development along Caxton Avenue and Coombelands Lane, including its history and details of the original design of the houses. If the area is ultimately designated, this will help inform applicants and decision makers as to why the area is significant when planning applications in the area are under consideration.</p> <p>Local consultation (in line with the relevant legislation) has taken place on the proposed designation and introduction of the CAA, initially for a four-week period, and then for a further period of just less than 3 weeks. Consultation has given local residents the opportunity to be more involved in the CA designation and appraisal process and informed them of the decision-making process if the designation is formally made.</p> <p>The CA designation, if made, is not expected to affect any RBC employees. However, in terms of service users/members of the wider community, it has been identified that that the designation has the potential to impact on those who live in or visit the proposed Conservation Area who have the protected characteristic(s) of age or disability given the additional policy requirements which would apply and which would add additional controls in terms of the changes that can be made to the external appearance of a buildings within the designated area. Whilst CA designation does impact on the planning process, any proposal that requires planning permission within the designated area will be judged on its planning merits (including any personal circumstances / equalities issues raised by the applicant which could be material considerations weighed in the planning balance).</p>

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.

There is the potential for there to be inadvertent negative impacts upon those residents who live in / visit the area if they were to have protected characteristics, such as being elderly or disabled, as the higher design standards / limitations that CA status can impose on an area could result in it being harder for adaptations to be made to buildings, e.g., the installation of ramps to access a property.

A review of the comments received following the public consultation has been undertaken and the implications in terms of equalities have been discussed with the Council's Equality Group (see more information on this point in section C below).

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.

Public consultation on the proposed Conservation Area designation at Caxton Avenue has provided the opportunity for relevant consultees to provide comments. All comments made, including those which have related to equalities matters have been carefully considered and discussed with the Council's Equalities Group. In particular, this relates to the comment made that Loss of Permitted Development Rights and the ability to make beneficial changes to properties resulting in a restriction of the enjoyment of the property, particularly in relation to those with restricted characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010. However, the Government requires Local Authorities to designate Conservation Areas through primary legislation where they have been identified to have special architectural or historic interest, and the Council is following this process. Furthermore, although there would be some restrictions / loss of Permitted Development Rights if the area were designated as a Conservation Area, this would not result in a ban on certain types of development taking place, it would mean that planning permission would need to be applied for instead so a proposal could be considered against the Council's adopted policies. Through this process, personal circumstances can be weighed in the planning balance before an application is determined.

If designated, the Caxton Avenue CA will benefit most elements of the community who live and/or visit this part of the Borough. This includes benefits which result from the protection and enhancement of the area covered by the designation.

Whilst this EqIA screening has picked up potential negative impacts on those with the protected characteristics of age and disability, it is not considered that a full EqIA is required as the Government requires Local Authorities to designate Conservation Areas through primary legislation where they have been identified to have special architectural or historic interest, and the Council is following this process. Also, as set out above, personal circumstances can be weighed in the planning balance when determining planning applications.

Date completed: 7th July 2023

Sign-off by senior manager: Georgina Pacey