



Integrated Impact Assessment of the Cannock Chase Local Plan: Preferred Options

Equalities Impact Assessment

Cannock Chase District Council

Prepared by LUC
March 2021

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Cannock Chase Local Plan

Equalities Impact Assessment

1. This report presents the findings of an assessment of the likely effects of the Cannock Chase Local Plan: Preferred Options on equality issues.
2. The requirement to undertake formal Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) of plans was introduced in the Equality Act 2010, but was abolished in 2012 as part of a Government bid to reduce bureaucracy. Despite this, authorities are still required to have regard to the provisions of the Equality Act, namely the Public Sector Duty which requires public authorities to have due regard for equalities considerations when exercising their functions. In fulfilling this duty, many authorities still find it useful to produce a written record of equalities issues having been specifically considered. That is the purpose of this report.
3. The Equality Act 2010 identifies nine 'protected characteristics' and seeks to protect people from discrimination on the basis of these characteristics. They are:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

4. There are three main duties set out in the Equality Act 2010, which public authorities including Cannock Chase District Council must meet in exercising their functions:
 - To eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
 - To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.
 - To foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Cannock Chase Local Plan

5. As described in the SA Report which has been provided within the full Integrated Impact Assessment (March 2021), the latest version of the Cannock Chase Local Plan, the Preferred Options version (March 2021), sets out 47 preferred policies. Preferred site allocations for housing, employment and mixed used development have also been included within Policies SO3.1, SO4.2, SO6.5, SO6.6 and SO6.7.
6. The purpose of the Local Plan is to guide development in the District up to 2036. Strategic planning is only one of the functions of Cannock Chase District Council, so it is not expected that the Local Plan alone would address all of the duties of the Equalities Act.

Baseline Information

1. The Preferred Options version of the Cannock Chase Local Plan (March 2021) and Appendix 3 in the SA Report within the full Integrated Impact Assessment (March 2021) set out baseline information about Cannock Chase District, including some information relevant to the protected

characteristics covered by the Equalities Act. The most relevant information is summarised below.

2. The population of Cannock Chase in mid-2019 was 100,762 [\[See reference 1\]](#), compared to the 2011 Census, when 97,462 people lived in the District across 40,664 households [\[See reference 2\]](#). The population is split between 49,873 males and 50,889 females.
3. As of 2011, 97.7% of the population in Cannock Chase are white. The remaining population includes a number of ethnic minority groups, including Indian (0.4%), Chinese (0.2%), and Caribbean (0.2%) [\[See reference 3\]](#). A total of 68,471 of the District's population are religious (70.3%) and the majority are Christian (69.1%). The remaining religious population are Buddhist (0.2%), Hindu (0.1%), Muslim (0.2%), Sikh (0.3%) and other religions (0.3%). The remaining population stated that they have no religion (23.7%) or did not state a religion at all (6.1%) [\[See reference 4\]](#).
4. As of 2019, it is estimated that there are 63,400 residents aged between 14 and 64 [\[See reference 5\]](#). The 2011 Census shows that 31.2% (24,686) of the resident population aged 16 and over are single, 49.4% (39,036) are married, and 0.2% (121) are in a registered same-sex civil partnership. A further 2.4% (1,930) are separated but still legally married or in a same-sex civil partnership. The remaining 16.8% (13,254) are either widowed, divorced or formerly in a same-sex civil partnership [\[See reference 6\]](#).
5. According to the 2017 mid-year population estimates for the District, Cannock Chase has above average percentage of younger people when compared to the whole of England. It also has above average percentages of people aged 65 to 74 when compared to England. However, the District has a lower average percentage of people aged 75 and over when compared to the whole of England [\[See reference 7\]](#). The average age in Cannock Chase based on mid-2019 estimates is 42.9, which is higher than the average for England as a whole at 40.0 [\[See](#)

reference 8]. Cannock Chase had a marginally higher proportion of people who are of working age (62.9%) when compared to the West Midlands region (61.7%) and Great Britain as a whole (62.5%) in 2019. There is expected to be an overall increase in all ages in Staffordshire County from 2019 to 2039. Percentage increases are expected in the District for older age groups, specifically persons aged 65 and over (+13.7% for ages 65 to 74, and +58.1% for ages 65 and over) **[See reference 9]**.

6. The health of people in Cannock Chase is varied compared with the England average. The 2011 Census statistics suggest that health in the District is reasonably good, with 78.7% of the population reporting themselves to be in good or very good health. Some 14.5% of the population reported themselves to be in fair health, while 5.3% in bad health and only 1.5% in very bad health **[See reference 10]**. Of all the usual residents aged 16 to 74 in Cannock Chase, 4.7% are either disabled or have a long-term sickness **[See reference 11]**. In 2018/19, Cannock Chase (66.4%) had a higher percentage of adults who consider themselves physically active than in the West Midlands region (64.0%) but a lower percentage than England as a whole (67.2%). Health deprivation in Staffordshire and the percentage of children (16.6%) who live in low income families in Cannock Chase are lower than both the regional and national averages. The average life expectancy in the District is slightly lower than the national average, at 78.6 for males and 82.7 for females **[See reference 12]**.
7. When considering all Indices of Deprivation (2019), the District of Cannock Chase is ranked 126th most deprived local authority district in England overall, and is ranked 13th most deprived in the region, where 1 is the most deprived **[See reference 13]**.
8. There is little baseline information available that is directly relevant to other protected characteristics including gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, sex or sexual orientation.

Method

9. The Cannock Chase Local Plan: Preferred Options document has been reviewed to consider the likely impacts of the preferred policies and the site allocations on each of the nine protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 listed above. The policy options and site options considered at the Issues and Options stage were reviewed as part of the EqIA work undertaken at that stage. For each protected characteristic, consideration has been given to whether the options considered for inclusion in the Local Plan are compatible or incompatible with the three main duties set out in the Equality Act 2010.

10. A colour coded scoring system has been used to show the effects that the Local Plan: Preferred Options document is likely to have on each protected characteristics, as shown below:

Score	Likely Effect
+	Positive
0	Neutral
-	Negative

11. Note that the criteria applied to the appraisal of site options as part of the EqIA differ from the criteria applied to the appraisal of sites as part of the Sustainability Appraisal in the main IIA Report; therefore, the effects identified are not equivalent between the two assessments.

Findings

12. The detailed findings of the equalities assessment for the preferred policies in the Preferred Options Local Plan are presented in Table 1.1 below. This

includes the preferred allocations for residential, employment and town centre/mixed use development which are set out through Policies SO3.1, SO4.2, SO6.5, SO6.6 and SO6.7. The Local Plan: Preferred Options document does not directly affect a number of the protected characteristics. All of the preferred policies and site allocations are expected to have either a positive, mixed or neutral relationship with regard to all of the protected characteristics considered in this assessment. The document is therefore considered to be generally compatible with the three main duties of the Equality Act 2010.

13. The Local Plan: Preferred Options document does not include any direct or indirect references to gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation and does not include policy options or site options that are considered to have a direct effect on these four protected characteristics. For the remaining five protected characteristics – age, disability, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and race - the options considered as part of the Local Plan: Preferred Options document are likely to have some positive and mixed effects as follows.
14. Policies which seek to address the provision of community services and facilities in the District, seek to support development that enhances community access to these types of facilities, or prevent development that would provide more limited access to these types of facilities (Policies SO1.2, SO2.1, SO3.1, SO5.1, SO5.4, SO5.7, SO6.5, SO6.6 and SO6.7 are all expected to result in a positive effect in relation to the protected characteristics of pregnancy and maternity and religion or belief. These policies are likely to contribute to the development of, and convenient access to, community facilities that could support meetings related to pregnancy or maternity and faith groups in the District.
15. Policy SO7.6 could have similar positive effects by ensuring that development achieves a more compact distribution in Cannock Chase. This approach could help promote modal shift in the plan area as jobs and services and facilities are located close to housing. However, this policy approach could result in less flexibility with regards to development at edge

of settlement locations. As such, the result may be some development 'jumping' the Green Belt to areas which are less well related to existing services and facilities. Mixed positive and negative effects are expected for this policy in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity. The negative effect recorded as part of the overall mixed effect in relation to these characteristics also reflects the potential for a more compact form of development in the District to result in lower levels of pollutants associated with travel by car. Given the potential variable accessibility to community facilities which may support faith group meetings, a mixed positive and negative effect is also expected in relation to protected characteristic religion or belief for Policy SO7.6.

16. Certain groups in the District are likely to be particularly vulnerable to air pollution, including younger and older people, people with cardiovascular or respiratory illnesses and pregnant women. Policies SO1.2, SO1.3, SO2.1, to SO2.4, SO3.1, SO4.4, SO5.1 to SO5.7, SO6.1 to SO6.7, SO8.1, SO8.2, and SO8.3 are expected to help encourage the use of more active and sustainable travel modes which could help limit the release of air pollutants associated with vehicular travel. These benefits are likely to result through support for the development that is well designed and allows for access to safe and convenient routes for walking and cycling. Policies SO5.1 to SO5.7 are expected to be of particular benefit in this regard given that they are specifically focussed on incorporating measures that would promote safe and accessible low carbon transport solutions. Through Policies SO5.3 and SO5.7 this includes support for infrastructure for electric vehicles. Policy SO5.7 would support appropriate levels of parking in the plan area (while also seeking to encourage alternative means of travel). This policy will be particular importance to older people and people with disabilities where they require access to essential services and also to limit the prevalence of social isolation in the District. The approach of Policy SO5.2, which requires the installation of new communications infrastructure at major developments from the point occupation is also likely to help limit social isolation in the plan area. Positive effects are expected in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity for the highlighted policies.

17. In addition to encouraging the use of more sustainable and active modes of transport, the design principles set out through Policy SO6.4 for Town Centre locations include support for the provision of frequent benches to assist those with mobility difficulties. This requirement is likely to be of benefit in terms of addressing social isolation in the District and may help to strengthen the positive effects identified for this policy in relation age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity. Town Centre locations are important meeting places for local people and are those at which residents can benefit from informal interactions with others.

18. Policy SO8.5 directly seeks to minimise all types of environmental pollution from development with particular regard for the need to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on Area Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). Harmful air quality impacts are also required to be minimised. Given the prevalence of AQMAs towards the south of the District, this policy will be of particular importance to help limit adverse effects on potentially vulnerable groups. Therefore, positive effects are also expected for this policy in relation to age, disability and pregnancy and maternity.

19. The employment and housing allocations and approach to retaining existing employment areas in the District are set out through Policies SO3.1, SO4.1 and SO4.2. These policies could result in increased levels of traffic in the Five Ways Island AQMA and the AQMA at the A5. Although mitigation measures are set out within some of these policies, the potential intensification of existing uses and new allocation sites are likely to result in increased vehicular travel and therefore increased air pollution. As such, negative effects are expected in relation to age, disability and pregnancy and maternity for these policies. However, the retention of Existing Employment Areas and provision of new employment in the District is likely to help ensure residents have nearby access to these types of opportunities. Furthermore, many of new employment and residential sites are located within the currently developed areas of the larger settlements in Cannock Chase. This will help reduce the need for residents to travel longer distances to access employment opportunities and services and facilities. This includes a reduced need for residents to commute out of the District for work. Therefore, the negative effects recorded for Policies SO3.1, SO4.1

and SO4.2 in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity are combined with positive effects.

20. Policy SO7.7 sets out amendments to the Green Belt boundary to accommodate some of the growth requirements for the District. The development allocated could result in an increase in the level of traffic and associated air pollution in the area which could intensify existing air quality problems. The sites allocated through this policy included those to the east of Heath Hayes and north of Norton Canes which could contribute to increased air pollution within the Five Ways Island AQMA. However, mitigation measures set out in the policy include new or enhanced green infrastructure and active travel routes, which are likely to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport from the allocated sites. In addition, the residential sites set out in the policy are relatively well related to the developed areas of those settlements, ensuring a more compact form of development in the District. This policy could therefore have both positive and negative effects in terms of air quality in the plan area. As such, a mixed positive and negative effect is expected in relation to age, disability and pregnancy and maternity.
21. Policies that seek to ensure the provision of affordable homes and a range of housing sizes and types for specific groups of the community (Policies SO3.2 and SO3.3) are likely to provide benefits in terms of helping younger people to get on the housing ladder as well as ensuring that homes are suitable for older people and people with disabilities. As such, positive effects are therefore expected in relation to the protected characteristics of age and disability.
22. The Local Plan Preferred Options document also includes a policy which specifically seeks to address the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. Policy SO3.4 seeks to ensure that existing authorised sites that are used by this group are protected, and supports proposals for new sites to meet the long term accommodation needs of this group. As such, this policy is expected to have a positive effect in relation to the protected characteristic of race.

Consultation on the Local Plan

23. As well as the content of the Local Plan, it is important that the protected characteristics of the Equalities Act are taken into consideration when preparing and consulting on the Plan, in particular ensuring that all groups of people have the opportunity to access and participate in consultations.

Likely effects of the Local Plan Preferred Options policies in relation to the nine ‘protected characteristics’

Table 1: Strategic Objective 1 – Delivering High Quality Development that is Distinctive, Attractive and Safe

Preferred policy option	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Policy SO1.1: Protecting, conserving and enhancing the distinctive local historic environment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO1.2: Enhancing the quality of the built environment	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Policy SO1.3: Creating safe places which deter crime and reduce the fear of crime	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

Policy SO1.2: Enhancing the quality of the built environment requires that major development proposals should include a Design and Access Statement to set out what services and facilities will be provided at the site and how facilities at other locations can be accessed. This requirement may help to limit the potential for development that would provide more limited access to services and facilities. Positive effects are therefore expected in relation to the protected characteristics of pregnancy and maternity and religion or belief as the policy is likely to contribute to convenient access to community facilities that could support meetings related to pregnancy or maternity and faith groups in the District.

Certain groups in the District are likely to be particularly vulnerable to air pollution. This includes younger and older people, people with cardiovascular or respiratory problem as well as pregnant women. Given that Policy SO1.2 supports design that is respectful of cycleways and footpaths it may help to encourage an uptake of more active modes of transport. Policy SO1.3: Creating safe places which deter crime and reduce the fear of crime is expected to help ensure public safety at open spaces and active transport routes. Both policies are likely to help limit the release of air pollutants associated with vehicular travel. Both policies are therefore likely to have a positive effect in relation to age, disability and pregnancy and maternity.

Table 2: Strategic Objective 2 – Creating Community Infrastructure and Healthy Living Opportunities Across the District

Preferred policy option	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Policy SO2.1: Safeguarding the provision of community infrastructure	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Policy SO2.2: Safeguarding health and amenity	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO2.3: Provision of active leisure and sport facilities	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO2.4: Providing opportunities for healthy living and activity	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO2.5: Allotments and community food growing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Policies SO2.1: Safeguarding the provision of community infrastructure, SO2.2: Safeguarding health and amenity, SO2.3: Provision of active leisure and sport facilities and SO2.4: Providing opportunities for healthy living and activity aim to provide well designed, safe and convenient routes for walking and cycling. These routes are likely to encourage the use of active travel and reduce the usage of private cars thereby reducing the release of air pollutants and greenhouse gases associated with vehicular travel. They will also help to encourage physical recreation in the plan area and with benefits to public health for all sections of the community. These policies are likely to benefit groups in the District that are particularly vulnerable to air pollution; this includes children, older people, people with cardiovascular or respiratory illnesses and pregnant women. Therefore, positive effects are expected in relation to age, disability and pregnancy and maternity. Policy SO2.2 is likely to be of particular importance in terms of limiting the potential for adverse health impacts on residents. This policy is specifically set out to require development to avoid unacceptable on-site or off-site risk or harm to human health. Policy SO 2.4 sets out an approach to major developments that will enable activity for all ages and abilities at active travel routes and open spaces which is likely to strengthen the positive effect recorded in relation to age and disability.

Policy SO2.1 will also help to safeguard existing and support the delivery of new community infrastructure. In addition to benefiting the protected characteristics already discussed, this policy is also likely to benefit the protected characteristic religion or belief by ensuring meeting venues remain accessible in the plan area.

Table 3: Strategic Objective 3 – Providing for Housing Choice

Preferred policy option	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Policy SO3.1: Provision for new homes	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	0	+	0	0
Policy SO3.2: Housing choice	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO3.3: Delivering high quality housing	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO3.4: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0

Policy SO3.1: Provision for new homes seeks to address the need for a sufficient supply of housing in the plan area. As well as identifying housing allocations within existing urban areas in accordance with the Spatial Strategy, the policy identifies new housing allocations adjacent to existing settlements in Cannock Chase. The majority of sites will provide good access to services and facilities given their relationship with the more developed areas. A number of these allocations are located in close proximity to Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the District (particularly to the south towards the A5 and Five Ways Island junction). Residents at these locations may suffer from poor air quality and there is potential for the delivery of new housing to result in increased traffic on already congested routes, which may have further implications for air quality. The allocation of residential development in locations where services and facilities are likely to be accessibility may help to promote modal shift in the plan area which could limit adverse impacts on air quality. Certain groups in the District are likely to be particularly vulnerable to air pollution, including younger, older, and pregnant women and those with cardiovascular or respiratory illnesses. Therefore, mixed positive and negative effects are expected in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity. A positive effect is expected in relation to the protected characteristic of religion or belief, as the allocation of housing at these locations could contribute to the convenient access to community facilities that could support meetings for faith groups in the District.

Policy SO3.2: Housing choice seeks to ensure the provision of a mix of housing types, sizes, and tenure to provide suitable housing that is able to meet needs of the District. The policy is also set out to create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities, while Policy SO3.3: Delivering high quality housing would ensure that new dwellings are of a sufficient size and layout to provide high quality, suitable accommodation that meets the requirements of a range of user types. These policies are likely to benefit first-time buyers who are often younger people and ensure that homes are suitable for older people and people with health problems or disabilities. As such, positive effects are therefore expected in relation to the protected characteristic of age and disability.

Policy SO3.4: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People specifically seeks to address the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers by ensuring that existing authorised sites are safeguarded from development that would prevent their use by this group. The development of a further 11 residential plots for new sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people to meet the long term accommodation needs of this group is also supported. As such, this policy is expected to have a positive effect in relation to the protected characteristic of race.

Table 4: Strategic Objective 4 – A Vibrant Local Economy and Workforce

Preferred policy option	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Policy SO4.1: Safeguarding existing employment areas for employment uses	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0
Policy SO4.2: Provision for new employment uses	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0
Policy SO4.3: Sustainable tourism and the rural economy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO4.4: Live work units	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO4.5: Provision for local employment and skills	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The location of Existing Employment Areas as set out in Policy SO4.1: Safeguarding Existing Employment Areas for employment uses and the new employment allocations as set out in Policy SO4.2: Provision for new employment uses (particularly sites to the south of Norton Canes and south east of Bridgtown) could result in increased levels of traffic within the AQMA along Watling Street between Norton Canes and Cannock town. Increases in traffic are most likely where new sites are allocated for development (i.e. SO4.2 rather than continuation of employment uses at existing sites under Policy SO4.1). However, the safeguarding of sites to the south of Norton Canes and east of Bridgtown could have similar effects. Policy SO4.2 seeks to mitigate these potential effects by requiring that office and light industry uses are directed to town centres, and that proposals for new employment development should safeguard and enhance active travel and sustainable travel opportunities, both of which should enable new employees to access employment locations via walking, cycling and public transport, limiting car use. Nevertheless, the potential intensification of existing uses and new employment uses as supported through both policies are likely to result in increased travel to employment sites and therefore increased air pollution. Certain groups in the District who are likely to be particularly vulnerable to air pollution, including younger, older, and pregnant people and those with cardiovascular or respiratory problems, could be negatively impacted by these allocations. Overall, negative effects are expected in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity.

The retention of Existing Employment Areas and provision of new employment in the District is likely to help ensure residents have nearby access to these types of opportunities. Many of the Existing Employment Areas in particular are located within the currently developed areas of the larger settlements in Cannock Chase. This will help reduce the need for residents to travel longer distances. Therefore, the negative effects recorded for Policies SO4.1 and SO4.2 in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity are combined with positive effects.

Policy SO4.4: Live work units would support the delivery of development which could support home working in the plan area. This approach is likely to benefit air quality in the plan area. The impacts of COVID-19 may mean that the increased trend of working from home might strengthen the potential for this policy to promote working from home and reducing the need for residents to commute longer distances. Minor positive effects are expected in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity.

Table 5: Strategic Objective 5 – Supporting the Provision of Sustainable Transport and Communications Infrastructure

Preferred policy option	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Policy SO5.1: Accessible development	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Policy SO5.2: Communication technologies	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO5.3: Low and zero carbon transport	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO5.4: Maintaining and improving the transport system	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Policy SO5.5: Hatherton Canal restoration corridor	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO5.6: Safeguarding proposed recreational footpath and cycle routes	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO5.7: Parking provision	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0

All policies under Strategic Objective 5 seek to promote the delivery of development and infrastructure that will reduce the need to travel by car. This is likely to be achieved by promoting sustainable travel alternatives including through the incorporation of electric vehicle charging points, rail and bus infrastructure, footpaths and cycle routes. The potential for a modal shift in transport choices is likely to help limit the release of air pollutants arising from transport emissions. Benefits for certain groups in the District who are likely to be particularly vulnerable to air pollution are likely to be most pronounced. This includes younger, older, and pregnant people and those with cardiovascular or respiratory illnesses. Therefore, positive effects are expected in relation to the protected characteristics of age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity. For Policies SO5.2: Communication technologies and SO5.7: Parking provision the positive effects are likely to be achieved by providing communications technologies which could limit the need for commuting longer distances for some residents and by providing an appropriate level of off-street parking at major developments which could help to promote modal shift.

Policy SO5.1: Accessible development sets out to meet the everyday needs of residents through nearby convenience ‘hubs’ and also requires major development proposals to deliver appropriate community infrastructure. Similarly, Policy SO5.4: Maintaining and improving the transport system provides support for proposals that will provide sustainable transport to specific services and facilities including schools and GPs and makes specific reference to providing access to education facilities. Ensuring that appropriate parking (Policy SO5.7) is provided at developments in the District will benefit people who are likely to experience mobility issues and could help to limit the potential for social isolation in the plan area. These policies support sustainable and equitable access across the District in general terms and are likely to benefit disadvantaged groups within the community. They could help to improve access to community facilities, including meeting spaces and religious venues. Therefore, in addition to the benefits already described these three policies are expected to have positive effects in relation to religion or belief. Policy SO5.2 is also noted to have potential benefits for limiting social isolation in the plan areas by ensuring a high proportion of local people can have appropriate access to communications infrastructure.

Table 6: Strategic Objective 6 – Creating Attractive Town and Local Centres

Preferred policy option	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Policy SO6.1: Hierarchy of town and local centres	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO6.2: Provision of main town centre uses and town centre services	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO6.3: Safeguarding existing Town Centre services	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO6.4: Town Centre design	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO6.5: Cannock Town Centre Redevelopment Areas:	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Policy SO6.6: Rugeley Town Centre Redevelopment Areas	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Policy SO6.7: Hednesford Town Centre Redevelopment Areas	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0

Although the delivery of new development in the plan area is likely to lead to some increased level of human activities and related pollution, town centre locations are those which are the most accessible in the District by sustainable modes of transport. Policies SO6.5: Cannock Town Centre Redevelopment Areas, SO6.6: Rugeley Town Centre Redevelopment Areas and SO6.7: Hednesford Town Centre Redevelopment Areas allocate sites at which residents would benefit from nearby access to services and facilities which could limit the need to travel by private vehicle. It is considered likely that protecting and enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town Centre locations (through all policies under Strategic Objective 6) would encourage a modal shift in the District. This is likely to have the added benefit of reducing the potential for impacts on local air quality, thereby benefitting certain groups in the District who are likely to be particularly vulnerable to air pollution. This includes children, older people, pregnant women and people with cardiovascular and/or respiratory illnesses.

Policy SO6.4: Town centre design would also help to promote the creation of streets that encourage shared use between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles, thereby explicitly encouraging more sustainable modes of transport. The design principles set out through Policy SO6.4, also include support for the provision of frequent benches to assist those with mobility difficulties which may help to address social isolation in the District. Town Centre locations can play an important role for local people in terms of providing for meeting spaces and allowing for informal interactions to occur. These benefits are likely to be supported through all policies under Strategic Objective 6. All policies under Strategic Objective 6 are expected to have positive effects in relation to the protected characteristics of age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity.

The allocation of Town Centre sites through Policies SO6.5 to SO6.7 is likely to house new residents in locations where they can easily access community facilities that could support meetings for faith groups in the District. Therefore, in a positive effect is expected in relation to religion or belief.

Table 7: Strategic Objective 7 – Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Preferred policy option	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Policy SO7.1: Protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO7.2: Biodiversity net gain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO7.3: Special Areas of Conservation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO7.4: Protecting, conserving and enhancing landscape character	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO7.5: Protecting, conserving and enhancing the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO7.6: Protecting, conserving and enhancing the Green Belt	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	0	+/-	0	0
Policy SO7.7: Amendments to the Green Belt	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0
Policy SO7.8: Protecting, conserving and enhancing the green space network	0	0			0				

Policy SO7.6: Protecting, conserving and enhancing the Green Belt would ensure that development achieves a more compact distribution in Cannock Chase. This approach could help promote modal shift in the plan area as jobs and services and facilities are located close to housing. However, this could result in less flexibility with regards to development at edge of settlement locations. As such, the result may be some development ‘jumping’ the Green Belt to areas which are less well related to existing services and facilities. This may mean some residents have to travel longer distances which could have implications for local air quality. Certain groups in the District are likely to be particularly vulnerable to air pollution, including children, older people, pregnant women and people with cardiovascular and/or respiratory illnesses. Mixed positive and negative effects are expected for this policy in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity. Given the potential variable accessibility to community facilities which may support faith group meetings, a mixed positive and negative effect is also expected in relation to protected characteristic religion or belief.

Policy SO7.7: Amendments to the Green Belt sets out amendments to the Green Belt boundary to accommodate some of the growth requirements for the District. The sites allocated for release from the Green Belt, including to the east of Heath Hayes, lie directly adjacent to an AQMA. This is also the case for the sites to the south of Norton Canes. The development of these sites could result in an increase in the level of traffic and associated air pollution in the area which could intensify existing air quality problems. However, mitigation measures set out in the policy include new or enhanced green infrastructure and active travel routes. These requirements are likely to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport from the allocated sites. In addition, the residential sites to the east of Heath Hayes and to the north of Norton Canes are relative well related to the developed areas of those settlements. As such, a mixed positive and negative effect is expected in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity.

Table 8: Strategic Objective 8 – Support a Greener Future

Preferred policy option	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Policy SO8.1: Low and zero carbon energy and heat production	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO8.2: Achieving net zero carbon development	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO8.3: Sustainable design	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO8.4: Managing flood risk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO8.5: Avoiding air, water, soil, noise and light pollution	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy SO8.6: Brownfield and despoiled land and under-utilised buildings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO8.7: Safeguarding mineral reserves	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy SO8.8: Managing waste	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

It is likely that through support for the delivery of low and zero carbon developments and sustainable design, Policies SO8.1 to SO8.3 would support reduced levels of air pollution in the District. The AQMAs in the plan area are noted to be associated with the high volumes of traffic along the strategic road network in the plan area, however, limiting the need for the use of fossil fuels to generate energy and heat is likely to have some benefit to air quality. Furthermore, Policy SO8.5: Avoiding air, water, soil, noise and light pollution directly seeks to minimise all types of pollution (including those relating to soils, air, water, noise and light) from development. Policy SO8.5 requires development to have particular regard for the need to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on Area Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). These policies would be of particular benefit to certain groups in the District that are likely to be increasingly vulnerable to air pollution. This is likely to include children, older people, pregnant women and people with respiratory and/or cardiovascular illnesses. Therefore, positive effects are expected for these four policies in relation to age, disability, and pregnancy and maternity.

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