

Equality Impact Assessment: Folkestone – A Brighter Future.

Introduction:

Equality and Diversity Policy 2021-25

The Council has an established Equality and Diversity Policy covering the period 2021-25. The policy is designed to ensure that everyone has a right to be treated fairly at work or when using council services. This is aligned to the Equality Act 2010 that defines nine protected characteristics that are to be protected from discrimination and the legislation also introduces the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) 2011 that aims to ensure public bodies, such as the Council have due regard to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation** and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The council's policy is designed to formalise the council's commitment through its work to supporting and promoting Equality and Diversity and ensuring that the council will strive to:

- **Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people because of their protected characteristics;**
- **Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of others;**

Encourage people from protected groups to participate

Decision makers within the council therefore must have due regard when taking decisions which may have implications for people with particular protected characteristics and therefore consider equality before and while developing policy and taking decisions, not afterwards.

The full policy can be read here at: https://folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/media/1092/Equality-Policy-2021-25/pdf/Equality_Policy_2021-25.pdf?m=63753924284430000

Equality Impact Assessments

The Council undertakes Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) in order to help individuals and departments to identify whether or not their policies, practices, procedures, procedures, functions and services may have an adverse impact on a particular community or group of people, ultimately ensuring that as an authority we do not discriminate and we are able to promote equality, diversity and human rights. The below sets out a summary of the two stage process for conducting an EIA:

Stage 1. Screening Stage

Stage 1 of the template is classed as the Screening Stage. This should always be completed. **Remember it should be an integral part of policy development not a last minute thought.**

At this stage you should be assessing obvious negative/positive impact or gaps in knowledge about likely impact. It should be a relatively short process which makes use of any previous consultation results, any differences in user satisfaction among groups, personal knowledge and experience, research, reports, existing equality data about service usage, internet searches, internal and external specialist advice, employees with previous experience of similar work, known inequalities etc. **If the likely impact on a particular group is unknown, then action should be taken to acquire this information.**

If the impact is positive (i.e. the outcome will benefit an Equality Group) then no further action is required. If no positive or negative impacts are identified then no further action is required. If the activity has the potential to cause adverse/negative impact or discriminate against different groups in the community it will require a full impact assessment (Stage 2).

In some cases it might be easy to put in place simple adjustments to eliminate any negative impact while you are working through the screening process, especially if you already have clear evidence/consultation and the process is an integral part of your policy development. It should only be done if you are absolutely confident that no other impact will be identified. If you choose to do this you should clearly document the reasons/evidence and put in place monitoring to ensure action is taken if unanticipated impact occurs.

Stage 2. Full Equality Impact Assessment Report

Stage 2 of the EIA process guides officers through the full impact assessment process, ensuring that research/consultation with relevant equality groups has been carried out and leads to an action plan aiming to minimise the negative impact/s.

Consultation involves engaging with representatives from equality groups who are likely to be affected by the activity. It could involve engaging with employees and Members, trade unions, other public bodies, voluntary and community groups. It is important to ensure sufficient time and resources are dedicated to the consultation process to encourage full participation. You should refer to the Consultation Toolkit to ensure your consultation follows good practice. The Focus system should also be used and is able to give you information relating to other consultation activities across the council as well as existing groups/volunteers you may be able to access.

Take a Proportionate Approach

Your approach to assessing the equalities impact of a policy, strategy or service should be proportionate to the likely impact it will have. Issues you should consider include:

- the number of people likely to be affected
- the size of the budget/amount of money involved
- the extent of the proposed change
- wider public policy implications

This means you will assess more rigorously policies which are likely to have a significant impact on the local community.

Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment

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Service: **Economic Development**

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Date of assessment: **13th July 2022**

Names & job titles of people carrying out the assessment: **Gavin Edwards, Performance & Improvement Specialist**

Name of policy, project: Folkestone – A Brighter Future.
Is this new or existing? New

Stage 1: Screening Stage

1. Briefly describe its aims & objectives

Wider Context:

The Folkestone Place Plan was approved at a meeting of the council's cabinet on 22nd September 2021 (Report reference: C/21/34). The Place Plan sets out a bold vision to guide the evolution of Folkestone Town Centre as well as future public and private sector investment in the years to come. The plan's development has been subjected to an extensive community engagement process and received input from industry experts to ensure it helps build on the current strengths of the town centre and enables a clear response to modern challenges.

The development of the Place Plan with a wide range of stakeholders has established a 'Grand Challenge': *'To overcome decline in Folkestone's Town Centre by embracing opportunity, addressing the climate emergency, celebrating what's already great and bringing the town's communities together'*. In order to respond to this 'Grand Challenge' six key missions have been identified as part of the plan:

- Mission 1: Celebrate what's great
- Mission 2: Town centre for the future
- Mission 3: A place for all voices
- Mission 4: Moving sustainably
- Mission 5: Access to opportunity
- Mission 6: Deliver sustainable quality

In order to support the above missions, the development of the Place Plan through the influence of public engagement has identified several priority projects as follows:

- Station arrival and town centre connections

- Improved gateway to the town centre including a new bus station layout
- FOLCA development scheme
- Sandgate Road town lab, public realm and 'Guildhall Square'
- F51 environs and Payers Park
- Harbour Line/ Tram Road
- Sunny Sands

The work of the Place Plan has a direct strategic link to the council's corporate plan 'Creating Tomorrow Together' 2021-30 with the six missions identified aligning with the following the four corporate service ambitions set out in the corporate plan: A Thriving Environment, A Vibrant Economy, Positive Community Leadership and Quality Homes & Infrastructure.

Folkestone Forward – Levelling Up Fund Bid

A report to the Council's Cabinet on 16th June 2022 (Report C/22/14) set out a progress update on work associated with the Place Plan and proposed the following three priority projects be approved for inclusion in a submission bid for funding from the second round of the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and will form the basis of this impact assessment:

- Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections
- Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square
- Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm

2. Are there external considerations? (legislation/government directive etc.)

National legislation and policy

Government Green Agenda

The Government ambition for Net Zero by 2050, which includes encouraging more greener and sustainable transportation methods in order to cut pollution (for example walking and cycling) are directly linked into the proposals set out in the three priority projects arising from the Place Plan.

The Government's strategy is set out in the '*Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener*', HM Government (October 2021). Key commitments include: "*Increase the share of journeys taken by public transport, cycling and walking*" and "*Invest £2 billion in cycling and walking, building first hundreds, then thousands of miles of segregated cycle lane and more low-traffic neighbourhoods with the aim that half of all journeys in towns and cities will be cycled or walked by 2030*" (page 152).

Levelling Up the United Kingdom

The Levelling Up Fund bid sits within the framework provided by the Government's White Paper '*Levelling Up the United Kingdom*' (February 2022).

The aim of the White Paper is to understand and put forward proposals to address geographical disparities across the UK. The White Paper notes that the UK's spatial

disparities are among the largest across advanced economies on a number of measures, including productivity and income per head (1.2.2). The findings of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities emphasise that *“geography is a key factor affecting equality of opportunity and social mobility”* (1.2.1). Geography is also relevant when considering disability: *“Disabled people are more likely to fall out of work and, once out of work, are less likely to return. Local authorities with the largest disability employment gaps tend to be concentrated within more deprived areas of the UK”* (3.3.2). These inequalities have been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic: *“The health impacts of COVID-19 have hit some of the most deprived areas of the UK hardest, and also disproportionately impacted ethnic minorities and people with disabilities”* (1.4.2). Sectors that were most affected by COVID-19 were more likely to employ younger people, females and people from ethnic minority backgrounds (1.4.2).

Section 3.2.3 of the White Paper sets out the Government’s mission: *“By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.”* The Government recognises the importance of transport in reducing inequalities: *“Transport can boost productivity by connecting people to jobs and businesses to each other. It also supports wider quality of life, positive health outcomes and local pride by helping to regenerate high streets and town centres, supporting people to increase their physical activity, socialise and access shops and services.”* As well as public transport improvements, the White Paper emphasises that the Government will spend a total of £2bn across the Parliament on improvements to cycling and walking. The new Executive Agency, Active Travel England, will work with local authorities on the detailed design of schemes.

Local Strategies and Policies

Local Transport Plan

Kent County Council (KCC) is the local transport authority for Folkestone & Hythe. KCC is currently reviewing its Local Transport Plan for the county, however, the current plan seeks to promote active travel as a county-wide priority, which the levelling up fund bid would help to deliver. ‘*Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031*’ states:

“We aim to make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent. Active travel means walking or cycling as a means of transport rather than for leisure purposes, and it can be undertaken for a whole journey or parts of it. It can benefit health and wellbeing by incorporating physical activity into everyday routine as well as reduce the number of vehicles on the road and improve air quality. By integrating active travel into planning, providing and maintaining appropriate routes for walking and cycling, and supporting people through training and building skills, we plan to establish Kent as a pioneering county for active travel” (page 23).

Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan

Folkestone & Hythe District Council has developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to enhance existing infrastructure and develop new walking and cycling networks across the district. The LCWIP is also used to support external funding bids for these infrastructure schemes and forms an important part of the Government’s strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by bicycle.

Folkestone & Hythe's LCWIP focuses on the built-up areas of Folkestone and Hythe, given the concentration of population and trips in the two towns. The analysis of cycling and walking routes in the LCWIP provides baseline evidence that has informed the Place Plan and levelling up fund bid.

Places and Policies Local Plan

Folkestone & Hythe's Places and Policies Local Plan, adopted in September 2020, sets the development framework for the district to 2031. The local plan contains a number of sites allocated for development, including in Folkestone town centre.

The plan also contains general development management policies to guide all development throughout the district. *Policy T1 – Street Hierarchy and Site Layout* requires that all proposals for major development satisfactorily demonstrates that attention has been paid to street design in accordance with six defined criteria. Active travel routes are to be provided as a priority, both within developments and linking sites to other services, community facilities and transport hubs. *Policy HW4 – Promoting Active Travel* seeks to ensure that development likely to give rise to increased travel demands will provide for sufficient integration and accessibility by walking and cycling through promoting and developing the cycling and walking network, by requiring that development provides new cycle and walking routes that connect to existing networks, including the wider public rights of way network, to strengthen connections between settlements and the wider countryside. It also protects and seeks improvement of existing cycling and walking routes and the provision of safe and direct routes to encourage short distances trips between home and centres of attraction, as well as to secure developer contributions towards new cycle and walking routes.

Core Strategy Review

Folkestone & Hythe's Core Strategy Review was adopted in 2022 and sets the development framework for the district to 2037. *Policy CSD6 – Central Folkestone Strategy* sets the strategy for the area covered by the levelling up bid's project. The Central Folkestone strategy promotes enhancements to cycle and pedestrian routes between Folkestone Central station and the town centre. Bouverie Place and the bus station site are identified as particular areas for regeneration for a mix of uses. The policy states that new development should: be of very high-quality design that contributes to and improves the existing character and townscape of the area; support the delivery of public realm and transport improvements, within the area and to the north; deliver investment in the daytime and evening economy through a mix of commercial, cultural, entertainment and educational uses; and enhance the physical environment and sense of security.

3. Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests?

The development of the Place Plan involved extensive public engagement with local residents and a wide range of stakeholders to ensure it is inclusive to a broad range of views. Stakeholders from a broad section of the local area were involved, including:

- Community and voluntary organisations
- Residents and residents' groups
- Educational institutions and youth networks
- Council and local ward members
- Landowners and developers

- Strategic stakeholders
- Local businesses, networks and organisations
- Transport, active travel, sport and environmental networks
- Heritage, religious and interest groups

The full list of the above-mentioned stakeholders engaged can be found on pages 9 and 10 of the document titled: *Folkestone Priority Projects – Engagement Summary (27.05.22)*.

4. What outcomes do we want to achieve and for whom?

The overarching vision for the Place Plan is: *‘To overcome decline in Folkestone’s Town Centre by embracing opportunity, addressing the climate emergency, celebrating what’s already great and bringing the town’s communities together’* and this is supported by six missions defined in section one of this assessment.

The component elements of the Folkestone - A Brighter Future project identified a set of outcomes that are designed to improve the appearance of the public realm, improve access to the town centre, encourage more greener and sustainable methods of transport (i.e. cycling and walking) that will help in improving the local environment as part of the wider response to the climate emergency and improve local employment opportunities, which will be to the benefit of all those that live, work and visit Folkestone:

The following outcomes for the three component elements of the bid are documented in the *‘Folkestone Priority Projects – Action Plans (27.05.22 Rev A1)’* document which was prepared by consultants during the development of the LUF bid.

Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections - Outcomes

- *Welcoming arrival spaces and streets with generous and quality space for pedestrians and safe provision for cyclists.*
- *Improved streets, that are easier to navigate for all modes of travel, with slower traffic speeds.*
- *Greening, tree planting, seating and wayfinding interventions as well as cycle parking and cycle lanes where possible and useful.*
- *Provision for sustainable transport and mobility options at the interchange from the station and initiatives to encourage residents to cycle.*

Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square -Outcomes

- *Generous and welcoming public spaces marking the entrance into the town centre.*
- *Streets at the northern edge of the town centre become welcoming for pedestrians and cyclist.*
- *An improved transport hub frees up Bouverie Square to become a new green space at the heart of the town centre that acts as a welcoming arrival space and provides green amenity, play provision and a place to dwell.*

- *The mobility hub provides more options for active and sustainable travel to residents and visitors.*

Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm - Outcomes

- *Guildhall Street becomes a thriving high street with a busy food market that supports other uses along the street, to enable delivery of improved and new market offer.*
- *Greenery softens and brings visual interest to the town centre as well as providing sustainable drainage to reduce flooding.*
- *The Town Hall, Museum and Cinema gain an improved setting for greater visibility.*
- *Town centre uses diversify beyond retail creating a new function and purpose for the high street and new uses for vacant sites.*
- *Folkestone's economy develops creating further employment opportunities for local communities.*
- *Footfall and spend at markets increases, benefiting other business and activating the town centre.*
- *Folca – medical centre and mixed-use scheme, including possible retail, leisure, business and learning space.*

5. Has any consultation/research been carried out or relied upon?

Yes - please provide details and outcomes:

The development of the Place Plan has been subjected to an extensive public engagement process to ensure a broad range of views were captured. This included focused workshops, one-to-one conversations, stakeholder meetings, a dedicated website and two webinars. A summary of the public engagement on the Place Plan is summarised as follows on page 8 of document titled: '*Folkestone Priority Projects – Engagement Summary (27.05.22)*':

- 17 workshops and public webinar events
- 150 surveys and email responses
- 167 detailed conversations
- 266 attended public webinar events

Pages 13 and 14 of the engagement summary sets out an overview of public feedback based on six themes and how this feedback has been incorporated into the Place Plan:

Town Centre Uses:

- *Testing a range of uses and integrating community spaces within the town centre.*
- *Identify a strategy for onwards engagement to identify possible new uses for the town centre area.*

- *Provision of green spaces in the town centre and enhancement of existing ones.*
- *Reinstating Bouverie Square as a key public space with possible provision of play spaces.*

Business Skills:

- *Opportunities for youth enterprise.*
- *Expanding the educational offer of “the Cube”.*
- *Using vacant units as ‘hubs’ for testing new uses.*

Heritage, culture and leisure:

- *Continuing to develop strategy to encourage evening uses and over-night stays.*
- *Improving connections to and from the Parish Church of St Mary and St.Eanswythe and the town centre.*
- *Provision of spaces for young people in the town centre, including improved facilities for Shepway Youth.*

Accessibility, safety and cleanliness:

- *Provision of Changing Place Toilets, in the town centre and harbour area.*
- *Public realm enhancements along with improvements to street lighting.*
- *Improve safety for pedestrians.*
- *Populating vacant units in the town centre to address the perceived sense of neglect.*

Transport and connectivity:

- *Proposals to ensure that the environment of those roads are more conducive to safe walking and safe cycling.*
- *Park and ride scheme and a mobility hubs at the station and harbour area.*
- *New vertical connection between the Old Town and the harbour.*

Further work and ongoing engagement:

- *Creating a long term strategy to ensure youth involvement in the Place Plan and in the development of the town going forward.*
- *Re-evaluating Mission 6 with a bolder approach to the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis.*
- *Making recommendations for long term engagement strategies.*

For the purposes of developing this levelling up fund bid targeted workshops have been

undertaken with stakeholders on the themes of 'Connections to the town centre' and 'Town Centre improvements' with full summary feedback set out on pages 17 and 18 of the engagement summary and from these the points emerged:

Connections to the town centre:

- *Many attendees expressed concern about shifting modes of travel and the need to accommodate an increase of pedestrians, cyclists and skaters with a decline in car use.*
- *The need for improved wayfinding along the route to the town centre from the station was raised, as well as the need for proposals to enhance the route along Cheriton Road, Cheriton Gardens and Station Approach.*

Town Centre improvements:

- *Attendees raised the issue of retail space prices and its hindering effect on charity groups. All in attendance were enthused by the prospect of FOLCA and the prospect of low cost programmable space. Discussion was had for how this would also enhance the retail performance of other shops in the town centre.*
- *Alongside the changes in retail/cultural offer, attendees told us that the public realm of Sandgate Road and Guildhall Street needs improvement. Attendees expressed support for a rejuvenated Guildhall Street and proposals for a "Civic Square".*

An in-person engagement event on the priority projects was also hosted on 31st March 2022 and feedback set out on pages 21-23 of the engagement summary relate to three components that constitute the Folkestone Forward projects. These have been considered as part of this assessment. The summary points are as follows:

1. Station Approach:

- *Improving the links to the town centre was welcomed by most people, and many expressed particular interest in ideas for transforming the disused railway platform, although some expressed their preference for using this as part of a "Remembrance Line" Tramway.*
- *Many residents raised the issue of safety in traversing town-to-station connections, specifically with time visibility and women's safety. Others highlighted the need to maintain accessibility when commuting alongside skaters, cyclists and scooters.*

2. Town Centre Gateway Connections:

- *Bouverie Square and the proposed bus station reforms provoked a wide range of responses, with an overall support for the proposals. Residents expressed support at how this proposal would prioritise the pedestrian and improve the townscape's presence for visitors. Others opposed the scheme due to concerns over accessibility of relocated bus stops.*
- *Safety for women and protection from environmental conditions were commonly emphasised, with particular concern over the prevailing wind along Middelburg Square / Shellons St.*

3. Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm:

- *The Town Centre proposals solicited positive responses, with many residents highlighting specific issues that town centre faces. Many pointed to the lack of greenery and recycling facilities present in the town centre, and the lack of community / small business space. Others expressed a desire for co-working/hot desk space, particularly within the old Debenham's building - Folca.*

6. Are there any concerns at this stage which indicate the possibility of inequalities/negative impacts? (Consider and identify any evidence you have - equality data relating to usage and satisfaction levels, complaints, comments, research, outcomes of review, feedback and issues raised at previous consultations, known inequalities) If so please provide details.

There are no concerns at this stage which indicate the possibility of inequalities or negative impacts. The information set out in question 5 demonstrates that an extensive range of public engagement has been undertaken with a variety of stakeholders and local residents on the development of the Place Plan and its supporting projects that will positively support the overarching vision of the plan for the benefit of all those who live, work and visit Folkestone.

In relation to the three component projects that are being put forward for the LUF bid, Folkestone Forward, the current accessibility and environmental issues that will be positively addressed through the proposals that are identified and set out in the document '*Folkestone Priority Projects – Action Plans (27.05.22 Rev A1)*':

Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections

The Station Arrival and Town Centre connections identifies a number of current key challenges notably:

- *Circuitous route from station exit to town centre due to traffic Islands and fast moving vehicles.*
- *Spaces around the station are relatively hostile for pedestrians.*
- *Wayfinding for pedestrians is limited to one counter intuitive route to the town centre.*
- *Confusing for pedestrians to know where fast traffic is coming from – change of priority in favour of pedestrians/cyclists would assist activation of active travel potential.*
- *Parking and ponding issues currently make footways difficult to navigate and cross side streets, especially for mobility impaired users and those with buggies.*
- *One way nature of many existing roads causes higher traffic speeds - making crossing for pedestrian hard/dangerous with reduced visibility caused by on street parking.*

In response to the key challenges of this project, the following positive actions have been identified:

- *Public realm upgrades and new public spaces: Upgrades to station arrival areas as a gateway into Folkestone.*

- *Mobility hub alongside train station: Potential to include cycle hire/ electric cycles*
- *Wayfinding and enhancing the cycling and walking experience: Cheriton Road, Cheriton Gardens and Castle Hill Avenue.*

The proposed actions to address the above challenges are reflected visually on page 6 of the document and demonstrate the accessibility improvements that will encourage more use of public transportation methods and reduced use of private vehicles, as well as environmental improvements that will lead to reduced air pollution and better air quality.

Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square

The Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square identifies a number of current key challenges notably:

- *Middelburg Square, Shellons Street and the bus station form a sequence of hostile, traffic-focused environments that act as a barrier to pedestrian movement to the north of the town centre, particularly when approaching from the rail station.*
- *Circuitous routes across existing town centre streets to access the bus station by pedestrians due to traffic Islands and fast- moving vehicles.*
- *Unwelcoming environment for pedestrians to use the underpass, which still lands pedestrians on the traffic island by Saga building.*
- *Confusing for pedestrians to know where fast traffic is coming from – change of priority in favour of pedestrians/cyclists would assist activation of active travel potential/slow traffic down in town centre area.*
- *Parking and ponding issues currently make footways difficult to navigate and cross side streets, especially for mobility impaired users and those with buggies.*
- *One way nature of many existing roads causes higher traffic speeds - making crossing for pedestrian hard/dangerous with reduced visibility caused by on-street parking.*

In response to the key challenges of this project, the following positive actions have been identified:

- *Reinstating Bouverie Square as an arrival space and focal point*.*
- *Improved gateway to the town centre including a new bus station layout*.*
- *'Mobility Hub' with cycle hire and storage.*
- *Parking review (already commissioned by FHDC).*
- *Overhaul of the legacy highway system: Cheriton Gardens & Cheriton Road redesign of junction to enable all directions of travel from this point.*
- *Redesign of road layout to improve all modes of travel and movement. Public realm improvements and crossings along Shellons Street*.*

The proposed actions to address the above challenges are reflected visually on page 13 of the document. The reform of the road layout with the proposed redesign of junctions and

directions of traffic flow, will assist with reducing higher traffic speeds associated with the current one-way system. This in conjunction with a new proposed pedestrian crossing in front of Middelburg square will enable safe pedestrian access crossing the road in order access the new green open space for people to use and gain access onwards to the town centre. The proposal to relocate the existing bus station to make way for the square's open green space will also bring environmental potential improvements for air quality.

Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm

The Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm identifies a number of current key challenges notably:

- *Larger retail spaces on Sandgate Road remain vacant.*
- *Long term decline in footfall and increasing vacancy, reflecting national trends in town centre retail.*
- *Narrow footways outside shops compared to widths of road and parking bays.*
- *On-street parking makes it difficult to cross unless at formal crossing points.*

In response to the key challenges of this project, the following positive actions have been identified:

- *Upgrades to Guildhall Street and improved market offer.*
- *Public realm and greening to Sandgate Road and service areas.*
- *'Guildhall Square' as a new civic square.*
- *New Silver Screen/ Museum/Town Council signage.*
- *Folca – medical centre and mixed- use scheme, including possible retail, leisure, business and learning space.*
- *Explore options to integrate cycling and skateboarding in the town centre.*
- *Market improvement programme.*

The proposed actions to address the above challenges are reflected visually on page 20 of the document.

7. Could a particular protected characteristic be affected differently in either a negative or positive way? (Positive – it could benefit, Negative – it could disadvantage, Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact or Not sure?)

	Type of impact, reason & any evidence
Disability	<p>Positive – All elements of the proposed projects will have a positive impact in improving accessibility for disabled people in the following ways:</p> <p>Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections</p>

The current station arrival and connections to the town centre identified in the *Folkestone Priority Projects – Action Plans (27.05.22 Rev A1)* highlights current issues including:

- *Confusing for pedestrians to know where fast traffic is coming from – change of priority in favour of pedestrians/cyclists would assist activation of active travel potential.*
- *Parking and ponding issues currently make footways difficult to navigate and cross side streets, especially for mobility impaired users and those with buggies.*
- *One way nature of many existing roads causes higher traffic speeds - making crossing for pedestrian hard/dangerous with reduced visibility caused by on street parking.*

The illustration set out on page 6 of the document shows the extent of the proposed footway upgrades from the station into the town centre, shared road space and removal of the one way traffic layout in Cheriton Gardens. This will benefit disabled people as the proposal is designed towards prioritising pedestrians over vehicular transportation.

Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square

The current gateway to the Town centre and Bouverie Square identified in the *Folkestone Priority Projects – Action Plans (27.05.22 Rev A1)* highlights current issues including:

- *Middelburg Square, Shellons Street and the bus station form a sequence of hostile, traffic-focused environments that act as a barrier to pedestrian movement to the north of the town centre*
- *Circuitous routes across existing town centre streets to access bus station by pedestrians due to traffic Islands and fast moving vehicles.*
- *Confusing for pedestrians to know where fast traffic is coming from – change of priority in favour of pedestrians/cyclists would assist activation of active travel potential/slow traffic down in town centre area.*
- *Parking and ponding issues currently make footways difficult to navigate and cross side streets, especially for mobility impaired users*

The illustration set out on page 13 of the document shows how the proposed upgrades will benefit those with disabilities as there will be a new large crossing point installed in front of the new Bouverie Square open space that will allow safe crossing of the road to access to this square and onwards access to the town centre. This

	<p>is currently not present due to the domination of the active bus station. The redesigning of the road to accommodate two way moving traffic will help to reduce traffic speeds to provide a safer environment for disabled people and pedestrians as a whole. The crossing point at Shellons Street will also provide an alternative access to an improved pedestrianised area in Guildhall Street in order to access the town centre.</p> <p>Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm</p> <p>The current Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm identified in the <i>Folkestone Priority Projects – Action Plans (27.05.22 Rev A1)</i> highlights current issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Narrow footways outside shops compared to widths of road and parking bays.</i> • <i>On-street parking makes it difficult to cross unless at formal crossing points.</i> <p>The illustration set out on page 20 shows the town centre as having good pedestrianised access that is accessible to those with disabilities due step- free access to the vast majority of shopping amenities. However, the proposed public realm upgrades to incorporate a shared space that will address the narrow footways and formal crossing point on the approach to the junction of Sandgate Road and West Terrace will compliment and improve access to the existing pedestrianised part of the town centre and will be of clear benefit to those who are disabled.</p>
Race (including Gypsy & Traveller)	None
Age	Positive – The public realm improvements will be of benefit to all age groups, but especially those who are elderly as the focus of prioritising the pedestrian through new crossing points, improving footways and revising road layouts will enable elderly people safer access to the town centre. They will also benefit young families through the increase in play provision, and young adults by expanding the skateboarding offer beyond F51 into the town centre.
Gender	None
Transgender	None
Sexual Orientation	None
Religion/Belief	None
Pregnancy & Maternity	Positive – The public realm improvements will be a benefit to those who are pregnant or mothers with young children as the proposed projects highlight improvements to footways and road layouts that will reduce traffic speeds in order prioritise pedestrian movement to help create a safer environment when accessing and moving

	around the town centre
Marriage/ Civil Partnership Status	None

8. Could other socio-economic groups be affected e.g. carers, ex-offenders, low incomes?

No – There are no other socio-economic groups that will be adversely affected by the Place Plan projects assessed as part of this EIA. The proposals are designed to make positive improvements to Folkestone for the benefit of all those who live, work and visit the area.

9. Are there any human rights implications?

There are no human rights implications associated with the three components of the Folkestone – A Brighter Future project, as documented in the Place Plan. The plan is designed to improve Folkestone Town Centre for the benefit of all those who live, work and visit Folkestone.

10. Is there an opportunity to promote equality and/or good community relations?

Yes

The Place Plan throughout its development has been subjected to an extensive public engagement process as referred to in question 5. The detail on the level of engagement with a variety of stakeholders is documented in the document titled: '*Folkestone Priority Projects – Engagement Summary (27.05.22)*' This engagement continued with the development of the projects and has helped to shape the LUF bid.

The implementation of projects within the Place Plan provides an excellent opportunity for the promotion of equality and good community relations because feedback from the public and supporting stakeholders is being utilised to shape the actions required to address the current challenges in and around the town centre. The success of the LUF application to provide funding for this investment will enable this to be demonstrated in real terms.

11. If you have indicated a negative impact for any group is that impact legal? (not discriminatory under anti-discrimination legislation)

There are no negative impacts identified.

12. Is any part of this plan to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?

No – The EIA has been completed internally. However, the Place Plan and the components of the Folkestone – A Brighter Future project considered as part of the EIA have been developed by the Council in conjunction with its consultant team led by 'We Made That' and have received input from a wide range of stakeholders as referred to in the: '*Folkestone Priority Projects – Engagement Summary (27.05.22)*'. Relevant stakeholders and landowners have been identified as part of each of the projects set out to ensure the proposals can become a reality.

Please note that normally you should proceed to a Stage 2: Full Equality Impact Assessment Report if you have identified actual, or the potential to cause, adverse impact or discrimination against different groups in the community. (Refer to Quick Guidance Notes at front of template document)

13. Is a Stage 2: Full Equality Impact Assessment Report required?

No – A stage 2 impact assessment will not be required as the component that comprise the LUF bid for Folkestone – A Brighter Future will be of benefit to all those who live, work and visit Folkestone. An extensive degree of engagement has been undertaken and documented on the proposals for the Place Plan that has been published in the public domain, as well as further engagement to support the development of the LUF bid.

14. Date by which Stage 2 is to be completed and actions

Not applicable

Please complete

We are satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out and a full impact assessment is not required.

Completed by: Gavin Edwards

Date: 13th July 2022

Role: Performance & Improvement Specialist

Signature:



Countersigned by Director/Chief Officer:

Date: 14th July, 2022

Signature:



Ewan Green – Director of Place

Please keep the signed hard copy with your team for auditing purposes and forward an electronic copy to policy@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk so that it can be published.