

APPENDIX 3

MEETING:	Borough and Bankside Community Council	Date:	26 January 2012
ITEM TITLE:	West Square Conservation Area		
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SUMMARY OF CONTENT

A description of the effect of an existing designation of the West Square Conservation Area.

The ways that equalities issues may impact upon different groups of people have been highlighted.

KEY ISSUES

- The methods used to involve and engage people affected by the West Square Conservation Area need to be accessible to all.
- The existing West Square Conservation Area may impose additional planning requirements upon those seeking to make alterations to their properties, which may have an impact on those on lower incomes such as lone parents, disabled people, the BME community and the elderly.

DECISIONS REQUIRED:

- Comment on the main issues raised in this assessment
- Comment on the areas to be focused on at stage two.

PAGE'S WALK CONSERVATION AREA EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage One: Scoping

1. What policy, strategy or plan is this assessment addressing?

The West Square Conservation Area designated part of Borough and Bankside under the powers of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which was desirable to preserve or enhance.

The conservation area appraisal that is under consideration and that accompanies a designation must be in general conformity with national and regional guidance and policy and contribute towards meeting local needs. The council's policies and strategies must also be evidenced to ensure that they are robust, meet local needs and can be justified.

2. Is this a new or an existing policy/strategy?

This is a new policy. The published West Square Conservation Area appraisal will form part of the council's Local Development Framework, which contains all of the council's planning policies and will be used to guide the design and appearance of development in the designated area and in the determination of planning applications.

3. If existing, has the policy/strategy already been reviewed under the previous EqIA programme? If so, what were the findings to come out of this and has the agreed action plan been implemented? What has changed since the last assessment was undertaken (in terms of context, nature of the policy/strategy or the type of people affected by the policy/ strategy).

- No, this policy has not been previously reviewed under a previous EqIA.

This EqIA has been carried out in accordance with the Equalities Act (2010) which identifies the following groups with protected characteristics:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

4. What do you think are the main issues for your policy or strategy in relation to equality, diversity and social cohesion?

Community and Stakeholder Involvement

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 does not oblige the council to consult on its decision to designate a conservation area or an appraisal document however, the council will consult with the occupants of properties in the designated area in accordance the council's adopted Statement

of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI sets out how and when Southwark Council will involve the community in the preparation of planning documents and on applications for planning permission in the borough.

National policy states that if the evidence suggests that the heritage asset may have a special significance to a particular community that may not be fully understood from the usual process of consultation and assessment, then the local planning authority should take reasonable steps to seek the views of that community.

The council will endeavour to do this, however there are a number of issues to be considered in this regard:

Considerations:

- Certain groups may not be able to access information and consultations as easily as others i.e. disabled people, those who do not have English as their first language, young people, those who support vulnerable people such as women who are more likely to care for children, older people and those with limiting illnesses.
- Certain groups may not feel comfortable expressing their views in public due to fear of discrimination such as people from the LGBT community, faith groups, young people and the BME community.
- People may not feel safe in attending public information or consultation events at certain times of the day, in particular after dark, such as older people and women
- Events may clash with times of religious observance and therefore we need to take into account people's faiths.
- Information may not be presented in a way that engages people effectively, such as material only printed in English, or information presented in a complicated format or language.
- Certain groups may not understand the relevance of West Square Conservation Area appraisal to them and therefore they do not become involved in the process.
- Certain groups may have a negative perception of the council or disappointing experiences of community consultations which stop them becoming involved in the process.
- If people do not feel that they can access information at an early stage or have problems accessing it, they may become disillusioned in the process and lose interest i.e. BME groups, young and elderly people and disabled people.
- Some people may not be aware how to express their views or how these will feed into the process i.e. children and young people.
- There may be differences in the needs and aspirations between different groups which may result in conflict.
- People may feel as though certain groups are having a greater influence on how development within the West Square Conservation Area.

We propose to consult in a way that will prioritise the needs of people in the area including direct communication with the occupants of properties in the proposed conservation area, local groups and businesses in the area

Design and Heritage

The existing West Square Conservation Area may impose additional planning requirements for those seeking to make alterations to their property. The West Square Conservation Area was originally designated because we value its distinctive historic character. Consideration should be given to the following issues in the development and implementation of policies for design and heritage:

Considerations

The pattern of development

- The conservation of features of the area for heritage and conservation purposes may change the pattern of development because, in addition to new development within the conservation area, traditional features and existing buildings will need to be preserved which may provide a different range of opportunities for creating new jobs and housing for those that are seeking employment or better quality housing.

Improved quality of design

- High quality design standards will improve the appearance of the area but may result in higher costs for SME businesses i.e. by having to provide high quality shop fronts.

Improved public realm and environmental quality

- Improvements to the public realm and the environmental quality of the area will widen access to the area and will help to address the needs of people who continue to feel threatened walking through the area such as members of certain faith groups, members of the BME community, young people, disabled people, older people and women.

Stage two: Assessment of Impacts

Part A: Feedback from the Equalities and Diversity panel

1. What feedback did the panel give you at stage one

The West Square Conservation Area has not been presented to the Equalities and Diversity panel as it was not considered to be a necessary requirement. There is no statutory obligation on the council to consult on the designation of a new conservation area. This document will be consulted on in line with the council's adopted SCI and will also be subject to its own equalities impact assessment.

Part B: Purpose and aims of policy/strategy

2. What is the overall purpose of the policy/ strategy?

The West Square Conservation Area Appraisal will be part of Southwark's Local Development Framework. This will be an important document which will be used for deciding what sort of development should take place within the conservation area.

3. What are its aims?

The purpose of the statement is to provide an account of the West Square Conservation Area and is a clear indication of the Council's approach to its preservation and enhancement. It is intended to assist and guide all those involved in development and change in the area, and will be used by the Council in assessing the design of development proposals.

4. Could these aims be in conflict with the Council's responsibility to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote community cohesion and good relations between different groups

Stage 1 of this EQIA identifies a number of key considerations which have been acknowledged and addressed in the stage two assessment as follows:

The pattern of development

- The built environment and the public realm may continue to ignore the needs of disabled people which results in creating barriers to inclusion in the wider community and opportunities to decent housing, jobs and access to leisure and community facilities. The designation of a conservation area will not restrict improvements to buildings and the public realm to meet the needs of disabled people from the wider community.
- Existing larger houses within the conservation area will be protected helping to ensure that families can stay within the area alongside its wider regeneration

Improved quality of design

- The protection of areas for heritage and conservation purposes may limit development which may limit the opportunities for creating new jobs and housing for those that are seeking employment or better quality housing. The purpose of the conservation area is to maintain a wide choice in housing stock and will help to ensure all people will have access to suitable housing stock and this includes all groups with protected characteristics.

Improved public realm and environmental quality

- i.e. If the public realm and the environmental quality of the area remain poorly designed, certain groups may continue to feel threatened walking through the area such as members of certain faith groups, members of the BME community, young people, older people and women.
- Different groups may have different priorities for how buildings and the public realm is designed to meet their needs. Tensions could arise if there is the perception that one groups needs are being prioritised over others i.e. older people and young people. The designation of a conservation area will mean that public realm improvements will need to be more widely consulted and will require better quality materials and finishes which will benefit all local residents including all groups with protected characteristics

5. Does the documentation relating to this policy/strategy include specific reference to the Council's responsibility (as set out above) and a commitment to work to meet this?

While the council's responsibility for eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and social cohesion are not specifically referred to as part of the process for designating a new conservation area, the aim of this process is to create attractive and distinctive places for all which are safe, easy to get around and a pleasure to be in by valuing the distinctive historic environment of the Elephant and Castle.

Part C: Application of this policy/strategy

6. What steps are you taking or will you take to ensure that the policy is or will be implemented consistently and fairly?

The appraisal sets out how planning applications for developments within conservation area, will need to 'preserve or enhance' the character and appearance of the West Square Conservation Area. New development will need to respect the context of the conservation area, having regard to the content of the conservation area appraisal, propose appropriate materials, preserve traditional features of the area and do not introduce design features or materials that are out of character with the area.

7. Could the way that this policy/strategy is being or will be implemented be discriminating against any particular individuals or groups or be potentially damaging to relations between different groups?

The existing West Square Conservation Area will contribute to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting social cohesion and good community relations.

8. What changes could you make to either the policy/strategy itself or the way it is applied to improve the positive outcomes for all groups and to reduce or eliminate any negative outcomes?

The findings of the EqlA scoping have been considered and this has informed the stage 2 assessment. The stage 2 assessment sets out those areas where the extension of the West Square Conservation Area may have differential impacts and where appropriate mitigation measures are proposed to address these.

9. What information do you collect or do you plan to collect to monitor the impact of this policy/strategy on different groups?

Monitoring of planning applications

Planning applications are monitored by the council in its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). This includes, among other things, the area of the borough that is designated as a conservation area.

Annex 3: Related projects and EQIAs

The Southwark Plan

Key findings:

- Provision of small local businesses which are easily accessible by local communities encourages the closure of development gaps for the local communities through an increased sense of belonging, redressing disadvantage and equality of access to services.
- By ensuring that new developments are safe and secure, disadvantage is addressed, community relations are improved and equality of opportunity is promoted.
- Protection of residential accommodation reduces discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity through providing inclusive and accessible housing for communities within the borough.
- Provision of accommodation other than houses and flats recognises the diverse needs of communities within the borough and promotes equality of opportunity since communities that will benefit are frequently the marginalized.
- The protection of transport impacts creates a sustainable, inclusive and accessible borough for its residents, future residents, users and occupiers.
- Public transport improvements assist in the creation of an accessible and inclusive borough by focusing on sustainable forms of transport as well as being socially inclusive. Accessible and inclusive transport links promote equality of opportunity and prevent barriers of exclusion and discrimination.
- Mini cab offices in the borough make transportation in the borough accessible to those who may not have access to public transport or private car use.

Core strategy

Key findings:

- By requiring the maximum amount of affordable housing possible across the whole of the borough, this should have a positive impact on all equality groups and help to promote equality of opportunity by offering affordable housing across the whole of Southwark.
- Allowing student housing only in the town centres and in areas with good access to public transport services, this may promote cohesion between different groups as student housing will be located in the areas most suitable to accommodate it.
- Setting out criteria for how we may allocate gypsy and traveller sites in the future may improve community cohesion and good relation by making sure that new sites are located in suitable areas.
- Protecting employment sites should have a positive impact on discrimination and opportunity by increasing the amount of jobs in the borough and protecting the jobs already there. Through our employment and enterprise strategies we will work to ensure that these jobs are suitable for all of the different groups in the community.

- The Core Strategy aims to facilitate a network of community facilities that meet the needs of local communities. This should help to improve community cohesion and ensure that community facilities are easily accessible so that everyone can benefit from access to a range of community facilities.

Southwark 2016

Key findings:

- Migration in and out of the borough is high: this makes it difficult to measure the success of interventions (because the beneficiaries may have moved on and another, more disadvantaged group, taken their place). It also makes it more difficult to predict the composition of the borough over the next 10 years.
- Southwark's population will continue to grow so that by 2016 it could be between 286,000 and 301,000. That means anything from 14,000 to 20,000 more households than in 2001.
- By 2016 around 43% of the population is expected to be from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, with many different faiths and cultures.
- Southwark's population ranges from those who enjoy significant affluence to those in severe poverty. Southwark is becoming more socially and geographically divided.
- We have a 10% gap in the numbers of people of working age (16-74) in Southwark who are in employment compared to the national average. In that age group, 65% have no or first level NVQ qualifications, rising to over 80% for people of Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean origin.
- 39% of local authority homes and 40% of private rented properties do not yet meet the decent homes standard.

Elephant and Castle SPD

Key findings (Scoping report only)

- Redevelopment and regeneration of areas may result in potential displacement of local businesses from the Elephant and Castle shopping centre and surrounding area. This may have a disproportionate impact on black and ethnic minorities of which a larger percentage work in the existing SME businesses. This could also have a negative impact on older people who have less opportunity to re-train in other areas and would be forced to move elsewhere if their current employment was removed.
- Transport improvements could have a disproportionate impact on different groups with protected characteristics. The EqlA identified that the needs of those with disabilities, young families and older people will need careful consideration to ensure safe and accessible routes through new development. Increased pedestrian and cycle routes can have a positive impact on those with lower incomes, promoting more sustainable means of travel for no cost which can lead to health improvements and increased access to employment. Safe and reliable public transport can

also have a beneficial impact on more vulnerable groups such as older people, women and black and minority ethnic groups.

- Improvements to the public realm and open spaces is likely to have a positive impact on all groups with protected characteristics however the needs of disabled people and people with young families will need to be considered to ensure everyone has equal access to these spaces.