

Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)



Please fill this out on the computer as a Word document or complete the form on SurveyMonkey – find the link on the Intranet.

This tool helps the Council ensure that we fulfil legal obligations of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Guidance on how to complete this tool can be found on the Cambridge City Council intranet. For specific questions on the tool email Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223 457046. Once you have drafted the EqIA please send this to equalities@cambridge.gov.uk for checking. For advice on consulting on equality impacts, please contact Graham Saint, Strategy Officer, (graham.saint@cambridge.gov.uk or 01223 457044).

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service:

Empty Homes Policy 2017 (Reviewed)

2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)

N/A

3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

- Return a target number of empty homes to use annually.
- Raise public awareness of the Council's approach to empty homes and the importance of reporting them to the Council.
- Provide positive support and assistance to owners and people within the city affected by empty homes.
- Be proactive through enforcement action where owners are unable or unwilling to return property to use, in line with the City Councils enforcement policy.
<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/enforcement-policy>
- Maximise the potential of empty homes.
- Increasing the availability of affordable housing.
- To link the Policy to the Empty Loans Policy 2017
<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/.../Appendix%20A%20Empty%20Homes%20Lo>

4. Responsible Service

Environmental Services

5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick those that apply)

- Residents of Cambridge City
- Visitors to Cambridge City
- Staff

Please state any specific client group or groups (e.g. City Council tenants, tourists, people who work in the city but do not live here):

- People who own empty homes in Cambridge.
- Those whose homes or communities are impacted by empty homes due to statutory nuisance or anti-social behaviour.

6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this? (Please tick)

- New
- Major change
- Minor change

7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)

- No
- Yes (Please provide details):

This is the corporate Empty Homes Policy, mentioned within the document is the planning department as they have powers to take enforcement action in regards to empty homes (and land) under S215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Councils leasehold services are referred to as they can potentially buy back an empty property from the owner if it had been purchased under Right To Buy.

Town Hall Lettings (THL) are involved in the delivery of this policy, as owners are referred to them if they wish to let their property, also if an I EDMO was used against an owner it would be THL that would manage the property.

8. Has the report on your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service gone to Committee? If so, which one?

Due to go to Housing Scrutiny Committee January 2017.

9. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

The evidence for this Policy has been based on continuing and regular communication through the Empty Homes Officer with members of the community directly impacted by or owning empty homes. We issue questionnaires to empty home owners to ensure ongoing feedback, as well as regular written correspondence.

Annually 'Empty Homes Week' brings empty homes to the public's attention and encourages them to tell us about empty homes and the impact they are having on their local community.

These actions demonstrate that we do come into contact with community members who are members of the protected characteristics.

10. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

(a) Age - Any group of people of a particular age (e.g. 32 year-olds) , or within a particular age range (e.g. 16-24 year-olds) – in particular, please consider any safeguarding issues for children and vulnerable adults

Empirical research from the Empty Homes Officer has identified that empty home owners are unlikely to be young people, in the age bracket of 16-24, therefore, the policy will have more impact on people aged over 24.

If an empty home owner was vulnerable due to age related poor health, the policy positively impacts as it is designed to offer support and assistance. For example liaising with the independent living services if they are working with an older person, referring to appropriate agencies and being confident in safeguarding referrals if appropriate.

With regards to communities affected by empty homes, these homes can pose a threat to safety, and can become a magnet for anti-social behaviour which can impact on all ages. Therefore, the policy has a positive impact on all groups by helping address disrepair and dereliction that can make areas feel unsafe.

Empty Homes being returned to use as a positive impact on the community as it can provide additional housing for all ages.

(b) Disability - A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

Empty home owners who have a disability will be positively impacted on as the policy provides support and advice on a case by case basis. By working in this way additional needs will be swiftly identified, support and signposting will be tailored to these needs. Actions can include home visits, liaising directly with support services with owners consent when appropriate.

Those in the community with a disability could be positively impacted on by the provision of additional housing in Cambridge. Additionally, the policy can arguably prevent long-term health issues for neighbours where empty homes cause damage to their adjacent properties through lack of maintenance, particularly issues around excess cold, damp and mould.

Empty Home owners can suffer from a hoarding disorder, which can often relate to underlying mental health issues. Many people with this disorder realise they have a problem but they are reluctant to seek help because they feel ashamed, humiliated or guilty. The empty homes policy would have a positive impact on this group as the Empty Homes Officer would signpost them to support that could assist them with their hoarding disorder in a sympathetic and understanding way. Eventually the support could assist the owner to bring their property back to a standard that it could be lived in again.

(c) Sex – A man or a woman.

There is no statistical data regarding the sex of empty home owners and no impacts specific to men or women have been identified in relation to this policy. Both sexes could be positively impacted on by the provision of additional housing in Cambridge city.

(d) Transgender – A person who does not identify with the gender they were assigned to at birth (includes gender reassignment that is the process of transitioning from one gender to another)

There is no statistical data regarding the gender status of empty home owners. No impacts have been identified in relation to this policy that will impact in a specific way on people who identify themselves as Transgender.

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

The empty homes officer would offer support if an empty home owner identified their pregnancy as a barrier to bringing their empty home back into use.

Those who are pregnant could be positively impacted on by the provision of additional housing in Cambridge city.

(f) Marriage and civil partnership

There is no impact from this policy regarding marriage and civil partnership. Part of our general procedure is to establish ownership of a property and ensure that all parties they own the house are informed of the options available to them and the enforcement action we can take. Also within the Empty Home Loan policy we would not accept a sole application if the empty home was jointly owned.

(g) Race - The protected characteristic 'race' refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

If an empty home owner or the empty homes officer identified that language barriers could be an impediment to their bringing their home back into use, they would ensure that steps are taken such as offering translated information or an interpreter interview if required.

There is no research on 'race' related to empty home owners' nationwide or locally, only research relating to owners occupiers. <http://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/populationanddemographics/ethnicity>

Those in the community with the protected characteristic of 'race' could be positively impacted on by the provision of additional housing in Cambridge city.

(h) Religion or belief

The empty homes officer would ensure they offer appropriate support, considering when to make appointments, taking into account dates of religious festivals.

A possible positive impact, the Empty Homes Loan Scheme (details of which are within the policy) could be suitable for owners who follow Sharia law as it forbids usury and the empty homes loan is interest free.

(i) Sexual orientation

There is no impact from this policy regarding sexual orientation.

There is no statistical data regarding the sexual orientation of empty home owners.

(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular – please consider the impact of any changes on low income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty

Though empty home owners may own a property, they could still be cash poor. Empty homes can become costly to maintain that can lead to a loss of potential income. The Empty Homes Loan is on offer to owners to assist them to renovate their homes if they cannot raise that money themselves.

Those in the community suffering inequality could be positively impacted on by the provision of additional housing in Cambridge city, especially if empty property owners utilise the Empty homes loan and allow their properties to be rented as affordable housing.

11. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqIA accordingly.)

Review policy every 3 years.

As part of ongoing case management, ensure that the Empty Homes Officer records any issues that have been identified by empty home owners that have prevented them from taking steps with their empty homes. If the barrier to bringing their home back into use relate to being from a protected characteristic, reviewing what steps were undertaken in line with the policy and what did or didn't work. Following this, if there was a recurring issue for a protected characteristic group and it was felt that the Empty Homes Policy exacerbated it, immediately undertake a review this section of the policy

Take into account any changes to demographics following Census 2021 and the impact this may have on the policy.

12. Do you have any additional comments?

Additionally, unsightly properties can often impact on their immediate neighbours and the wider community in which they are situated. Therefore, the empty homes policy can contribute to preventing degeneration.

The empty homes policy aims to help the council meet our vision of Cambridge as “a city which strives to ensure that all local households [of all equalities groups] can secure a suitable, affordable local home, close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities.”

13. Sign off

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment:

Danae Evans – Empty Homes Officer

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted:

Philip Winter Projects Officer, Town Hall Letting & Lease Hold Services

Date of EqlA sign off: 14th December 2017

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment:

Sent to Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer?

Yes

No

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website (if known):