

Maldon District Council Equality Impact Assessment

Please complete the questions below as fully as possible - the boxes will expand to accommodate your text. Please include the document version in the footer below.

Title Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) – Revised Strategy 2026: update to scope, mitigation package, cost modelling and RAMS tariff.	Date 07/05/2026	Officer Preparing Leonie Alpin, Principal Policy Planner – adapted from the EqIA prepared by the RAMS Delivery Manager.
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1. Background

1.1 Description of proposal / policy / service (Including aims, outcomes and in the case of an existing service how long it has been delivered in its current format)

The Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) provides a strategic, partnership-based approach to mitigating the in-combination recreational impacts of new residential and overnight accommodation development on internationally designated European sites along the Essex coastline.

The strategy enables Local Planning Authorities, including Maldon District Council, to meet their statutory duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) when determining planning applications, by securing developer contributions towards a coordinated package of mitigation measures.

The Revised Essex Coast RAMS (March 2026) replaces the 2018 strategy and responds to:

- Updated visitor survey evidence (2025);
- Significant increased planned housing growth (c. 148,309 dwellings) within the Zone of Influence;
- An expanded and more intensive package of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures, informed by improved understanding of recreational impacts and visitor behaviour;
- The need to secure strategic mitigation in perpetuity.

The revised strategy strengthens and expands the mitigation measures, including:

- A substantially expanded on-site ranger team to undertake wardening, monitoring and visitor engagement;
- Dedicated roles for dog engagement, education, communications and monitoring;
- Enhanced site-specific mitigation projects, including access management;
- Long-term monitoring and five-yearly strategy reviews.

To fund this enhanced and longer-term mitigation package, the RAMS tariff increases from £175.55 to £476 per net new dwelling (or qualifying unit). This figure is based on updated cost estimates and projected housing growth, and includes an allowance for in-perpetuity delivery.

The strategy enables Local Planning Authorities, including Maldon District Council, to continue determining development proposals lawfully, while ensuring no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites in accordance with the Habitats Regulations.

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1.2 Who are the users of the proposal / policy / service (Refer to data held about the users of the service i.e. numbers of users, demographic breakdown. Having this information is important to understand which sectors of the community might be affected. If that is not available refer to the demographic data held on the intranet.)

- **Internal:** Council-wide (planning decision-making).
- **External:** Developers, the Planning Inspectorate, residents of new developments, visitors to the Essex coast, local communities and land managers.

1.3 Have users been consulted with? (Have you carried out consultation with users or stakeholders while drawing up the proposal / policy / service? For example, have you carried out a formal consultation, discussed the issue with a Friends/User Group or consulted with stakeholders? If so, outline the results and how it has informed your plans. It's also important to show whether the target audience was reached during the consultation.)

- Visitor surveys undertaken in 2025 at 26 coastal locations (1,793 interviews).
- Workshops and formal meetings with Local Planning Authorities, Natural England, Essex Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and other stakeholders.
- Ongoing engagement through the Essex Coast RAMS Partnership and Bird Aware Essex.

1.4 If the analysis is regarding an existing Service, what are users' views of that Service? (Base your view on evidence such as satisfaction surveys, levels of compliments and levels of complaints).

Key findings:

- Increased recreational pressure linked to housing growth requires more intensive mitigation.
- Ranger-led engagement and education are effective in influencing behaviour.
- A strategic, coast-wide approach is more effective and equitable than site-by-site mitigation.
- No disproportionate impacts on protected groups were identified through engagement and discussion.

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2. Equality Aims – consider how the proposal / policy / service meets the three Equality Aims listed in the Equality Act.		
Aim	How does the proposal / policy / service meet the equality aim?	Action or addition needed in order that the proposal / policy / service meets the aim?
To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	The strategy is applied proportionately and consistently. No direct or indirect unlawful discrimination has been identified.	Maintain consistent implementation and monitoring across the project.
To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (This means removing or minimising disadvantages, taking steps to meet needs of different people and encouraging participation. It can involve treating people better than others, e.g. disabled people).	Ranger engagement, education and community outreach promote understanding between different users of the coast, support access to nature and encourage responsible behaviour. The project: • Includes education and engagement initiatives. • Improves safety and the environmental quality of public spaces through increased ranger presence. • Supports access to nature.	Maintain consistent implementation and monitoring across the project.
To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. If so, how? (This means promoting understanding between different groups and tackling prejudice)	Ranger engagement, education and community outreach promote understanding between different users of the coast, support access to nature and encourage responsible behaviour. The project: • Includes education and engagement initiatives. • Improves safety and the environmental quality of public spaces through increased ranger presence.	Maintain consistent implementation and monitoring across the project.

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Aim	How does the proposal / policy / service meet the equality aim?	Action or addition needed in order that the proposal / policy / service meets the aim?
	Supports access to nature.	

3. Equality Impacts – examine how the proposal / policy / service impacts on the community. Base the analysis on evidence. Attach additional documents if necessary.

Impacts	Positive impact (X)	Could adversely impact (X)	No impact (X)	How different groups could be affected: Summary of impacts	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
3.1 Age (What will the impact be on different age groups such as younger or older people?)	☒	☐	☐	- Improved access management, signage, ranger presence and education initiatives benefit people of all ages. - Funding for education and engagement (including schools) provides positive intergenerational benefits. - Educational outreach supports younger people and helps build awareness from an early age. - Clear routes and well-managed sites can support safer access for families and older people. The tariff applies to development proposals rather than individuals directly and does not discriminate by age.	Continue to use age-appropriate engagement materials. Maintain inclusive design standards for access infrastructure.

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Impacts	Positive impact (X)	Could adversely impact (X)	No impact (X)	How different groups could be affected: Summary of impacts	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
3.2 Disability (Consider all disabilities such as hearing loss, dyslexia etc as well as access issues for wheelchair users where appropriate)	☐	☒	☐	Potential indirect impact if not carefully managed: Some site-specific mitigation measures (e.g. fencing or changes to paths) could unintentionally restrict access for disabled users if they are not designed and implemented carefully. The tariff increase does not directly affect disabled people; however, it could indirectly influence the type, timing or pace of development delivered. The RAMS strategy is written in an accessible format.	Apply inclusive access principles when designing site-specific mitigation. Use ranger feedback and monitoring to identify and address any access issues. Ensure documents meet accessibility standards and can be made available in alternative formats on request.
3.3 Pregnancy and Maternity (Think about pregnancy, new and breastfeeding Mums)	☒	☐	☐	Improved visitor management, clearer routes and safer, better managed coastal environments benefit pregnant women and people visiting sites with young children.	Maintain consistent implementation and monitoring across the project.
3.4 Marriage or Civil Partnership (Could this policy discriminate on the grounds	☐	☐	☒	Increased ranger visibility and presence may improve perceptions of safety for some users.	Continue consistent delivery across the project.

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Impacts	Positive impact (X)	Could adversely impact (X)	No impact (X)	How different groups could be affected: Summary of impacts	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
of marriage or civil partnership)					
3.5 Sex (is the service used more by one gender and are the sexes given equal opportunity?)	☒	☐	☐	Increased ranger visibility and presence may improve perceptions of safety for some users.	Continue consistent delivery across the project.
3.6 Gender Reassignment (Is there an impact on people who are going through or who have completed Gender Reassignment?)	☐	☐	☒	Increased ranger visibility and presence may improve perceptions of safety for some users.	Continue consistent delivery across the project.
3.7 Religion or belief (Includes not having a religion or belief)	☐	☐	☒	Increased ranger visibility and presence may improve perceptions of safety for some users.	Continue consistent delivery across the project.
3.8 Sexual Orientation (What is the impact on heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual people?)	☐	☐	☒	Increased ranger visibility and presence may improve perceptions of safety for some users.	Continue consistent delivery across the project.
3.9 Race (Includes ethnic or national origins including Gypsies and Travellers, language barriers)	☐	☐	☒	Increased ranger visibility and presence may improve perceptions of safety for some users.	Continue consistent delivery across the project.

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Impacts	Positive impact (X)	Could adversely impact (X)	No impact (X)	How different groups could be affected: Summary of impacts	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
3.10 Socio-Economic Group (Will people of any particular socio-economic group be particularly affected? Accessibility to internet, single parents, carers, domestic abuse)	☐	☒	☐	Potential indirect impact on low-income, rural or digitally excluded people: The increased RAMS tariff applies to development rather than individuals, but it could indirectly influence housing delivery patterns. This may have secondary socio-economic effects, including on access to housing for some communities. Higher development costs could indirectly influence delivery rates or tenure mix. However, the tariff funds mitigation that protects the quality of coastal environments, which are an important free recreational resource for all. The strategy will be published digitally, which may disadvantage people who are digitally excluded.	The revised tariff reflects the full cost of the mitigation needed to support sustainable growth and, in doing so, supports long-term social and environmental wellbeing. The tariff is proportionate, evidence-based and subject to planning viability considerations. Continue to use planning viability mechanisms and monitoring to review impacts as part of future RAMS updates. Increased ranger visibility and presence enables face-to-face engagement and information sharing that does not rely on digital access. Communication materials (e.g. leaflets, information boards and the website) should remain inclusive and accessible. Provide the strategy in alternative formats where required.

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4. Is there a Cumulative Impact? (If the same group is the subject of many changes or reductions the overall impact is much greater. Consider what else is happening within Maldon District Council that may have an impact and also what we know is happening elsewhere (such as Essex County Council). See Guidance for further advice.)

The revised Essex Coast RAMS and increased tariff present a low risk of negative equality impacts, and any potential impacts are appropriately mitigated. The strategy supports statutory compliance, environmental protection and long-term public benefit, while meeting the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

5. Outcome

5.1 Consider all the analysis and evidence above and indicate

(1) No change needed ☒

(2) Change needed ☐

5.2 Adjustments

If option (2) above is selected please detail what adjustments are needed, who is responsible and how that will be reviewed. Also outline how that will be agreed (ie Committee, CMT).

5.3 Decision Making (How will this equality analysis be taken into account during the decision making process? For example will it be included with a report to Committee/CLT? Will it be considered at department level or by a Head of Service? How will community/stakeholders views be taken into account?)

The EqIA will accompany the report on the 2026 RAMS Strategy to the Strategy and Resources Committee and Council.

6.0 Next Steps

6.1 If there was a lack of evidence or data held on which to base this assessment, how will that gap be addressed for the future?

Not applicable

The updated Strategy and EqIA are supported by:

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- Updated evidence base.
- Substantially expanded mitigation package.
- Increased tariff to reflect long term and in perpetuity mitigation costs.
- Revised governance and monitoring framework.
- Essex Coast RAMS Visitor Survey 2025.
- Housing growth projections within RAMS Zone of Influence.
- Monitoring data from existing Bird Aware Essex delivery.

6.2 Summary of actions highlighted within this analysis (Include how this will be picked up within service/work plans)

Not applicable

6.3 Arrangements for future monitoring of equality impact of this proposal / policy / service

Equality impacts will continue to be monitored through future RAMS reviews and site-based feedback.

The equality implications of the RAMS tariff will be reviewed as part of future five-year strategy updates, alongside housing delivery, viability evidence and monitoring of mitigation effectiveness.

The Equality Impact Assessment will be reviewed at the next strategy review.

6.4 Approved by (Manager or Head of Service signature and date)



Mark Jaggard
Director of Place, Planning and Growth
11.05.2026