Public Health
Services provided by Leicestershire County Council

Health Impact Assessment Guidance Note

Produced by Leicestershire County Council Public Health
to support the Harborough District Council Local Plan

Autumn 2026

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Health Impact Assessment Guidance Note

Purpose of the Guidance Notes

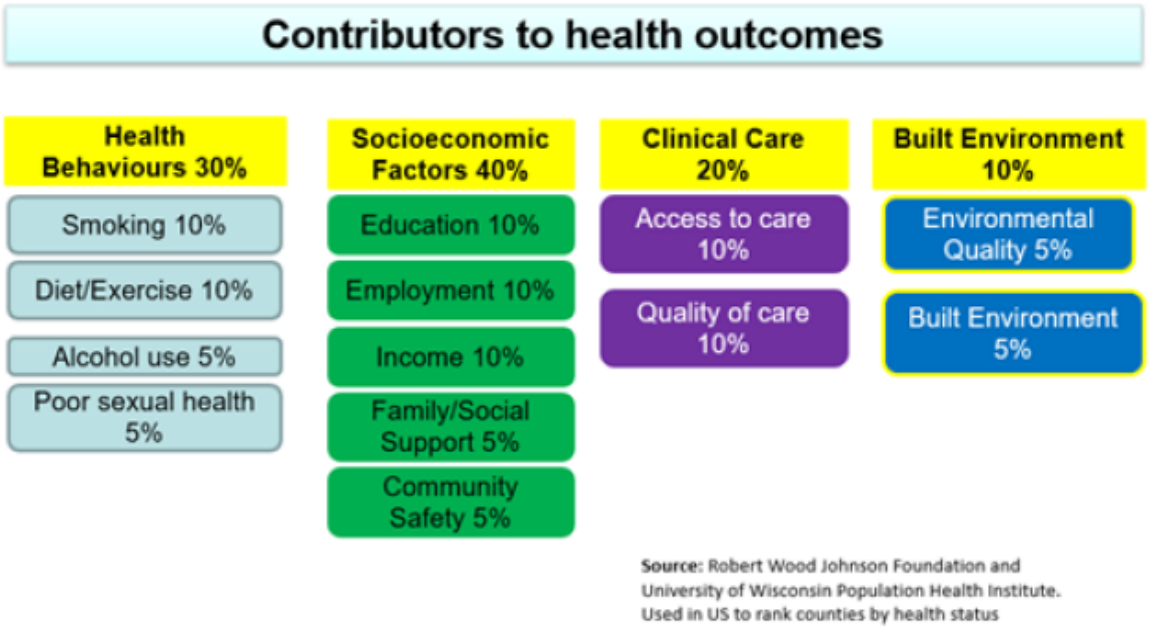
This guidance note has been produced by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Public Health team to support applicants in the preparation of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) using the LCC standard template (copy in Appendix 1). The guidance note covers what a HIA is, the status of a HIA, relevant national and local policy, how to undertake a HIA and what data to use when undertaking a HIA. A checklist associated with this guidance is contained in Appendix 2.

What is Health?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as '*a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'* and well-being as *'a positive state experienced by individuals and societies'* which encompasses *'quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose'.*

Health and wellbeing are determined by a range of factors. Commonly considered factors are access to and quality of health care services. While clinical care is important, 80% of contributors to health are influenced by a range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors known as the wider determinants of health and related health behaviours. Different factors impact on the extent to which individuals can meet their needs, identify and achieve goals and deal with changes to their circumstances. It is important to note that access to quality healthcare is therefore often only one of many influences on health outcomes. Figure 1 below summarises the outcomes of research by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, looking into the major contributors to health and wellbeing. This clearly shows the major impact of socioeconomic factors and the built environment along with behavioural or lifestyle factors.

Figure 1: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (LGA, 2016)



Health Promotion and the Prevention of Ill-health

Health promotion and the prevention of ill-health are important in reducing disease and its associated risk factors, as well as empowering people to increase control over their health. A HIA acts as a health lens in planning new places so that they promote good health and prevent ill-health by considering and positively planning for all contributors to health.

NHS England defines health inequalities as 'unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society' (NHS England 2024). Reducing health inequalities is a core objective of the HIA process, with a focus on promoting fairness and social justice by understanding how different groups may be affected and identifying opportunities to improve health outcomes for those experiencing the greatest disadvantage.

What is a Health Impact Assessment?

A HIA is used in the preparation of a new development proposal to identify positive aspects of a proposal (for example the delivery of specialist housing) and negative effects (for example air pollution potentially impacting vulnerable groups). The assessment puts people at the heart of the process and has a particular focus on how disadvantaged groups may be more disproportionately affected. Evidence-based recommendations are made to maximise positive health outcomes while mitigating actions are set to minimise negative effects and lower the risk of creating or widening inequality (for example implement a strategy to reduce air pollution during construction).

The aim of a HIA is to maximise positive health impacts, reduce adverse impacts, and identify opportunities to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. The assessment may recommend mitigation measures where necessary and provides an opportunity to refine the design of a proposed development to better support health and wellbeing for all sections of the community.

Findings and mitigation strategies identified in the assessment will inform decision-makers about the likely positive, negative and neutral health impacts of different aspects of a proposal. This enables informed decision-making to maximise health benefits, minimise or mitigate adverse impacts, and strengthen positive features before a proposal reaches its final stage.

HIAs can also identify opportunities and co-benefits for stakeholders. Recommendations can deliver benefits beyond solely impacting on health outcomes and reductions in health inequality such as social and economic benefits. A healthy development will not think just about implementing temporary or minimal measures but will think about the long-lasting built environment and supporting users to engage in healthy choices. Infrastructure as basic as benches can make a significant difference to the health of a community. A HIA is a key tool to identify and capture these opportunities.

How is a HIA Different to Other Assessments?

A HIA is different to other assessments associated with planning for new development (such as a Noise Impact Assessment, Environment Impact Assessment or Air Quality Impact Assessment) as a HIA starts with the project and predicts the impact on health of the population compared to other assessment which tend to focus on a single planning issue, often in a quantitative manner.

While there are some similarities in their aim to create knowledge about the potential and/or ongoing impacts of a development, a HIA looks at the whole-population and considering the wider impacts under a broad concept of health in its widest sense. A key distinction is that a HIA explicitly considers who

may be affected, how different groups may be affected, and whether the proposal could increase or reduce health inequalities.
Findings from other planning assessments may/will inform a HIA, and a successful HIA will consider health in its broadest sense.

Status of a HIA

The HIA informs the local planning authority on the acceptability of the proposal in relation to health. The findings of a HIA may be a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.

Proposals that would have an unmitigated negative impact on population health may experience a delay in the decision-making process or may be refused.

A poorly completed, incomplete or omitted HIA may result in a delay to the decision-making process of a planning application. The guidance provided in this document outlines how to complete a successful HIA.

National Policy Context

NPPF

The Harborough new Local Plan is being assessed against 2023 NPPF. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) sets out the role that planning policies and decision have in achieving healthy places. The NPPF recognises and supports the role of the built and natural environment as major determinants of health and wellbeing.

Para 135 f) specifically states that Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments '*create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience'*.

Chapter 16 'Promoting Healthy Communities' in the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework continues this commitment to healthy placemaking.

NPPG

The promoting healthy and safe communities National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) (last updated 2022) recognises the built environment as a major determinant of health, and the importance in creating environments that support, enable and encourage a healthy lifestyle. NPPG specifically supports the use of HIAs.

Local Plan Policy

Planning does and can prevent ill-health and combat localised health inequalities. X District Council's Local Plan Policy identifies the need for a HIA to reduce poor health and increase positive health outcomes from development.

Cross-boundary sites should consult with Leicestershire County Council's Public Health team to ensure policy compliance with applicable planning policies and HIA requirements.

The Harborough Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2026) outlines the requirement for the completion of a HIA in Policy DM02: Amenity and Wellbeing*:*

3. A health impact assessment is required for the following types of applications:

a) where the number of dwellings provided is 150 or more;

b) for all other uses where the site area exceeds 1,000 sqm; or

c) in areas of public health concern including areas vulnerable to worsening health inequalities.

Areas of public health concern are locations specifically vulnerable to worsening health inequalities. In Harborough District, the 2023 Health Inequalities JSNA identifies the Middle-layer Super Output Area (MSOA) Market Harborough Central.

All applications for new development or the change of use of an existing building in the above locations are required to complete a HIA.

For schemes below policy threshold requirements, the submission of a HIA is optional but will be considered if submitted voluntarily with a planning application.

How to Undertake a HIA

The first stage for completing a HIA is to access and download the LCC HIA template from the Council's website: Health Impact Assessments | Leicestershire County Council Professional Services Portal. All sections within the template must be completed. A HIA is only effective when covering a broad range of indicators.

For queries related to accessing the Leicestershire HIA template, please contact the County Council's Public Health team (HIA@leics.gov.uk).

The key components for completing a HIA are:

- *Screening***:** Determining whether an HIA is needed based on potential health impacts (via Local Plan policy requirement).
- *Scoping:* Identifying which health effects to consider, stakeholders to involve, and the level of the analysis needed.
- *Assessment:* Analysis of the potential health impacts, utilising data, and listening to the community.
- *Recommendations:* Suggesting ideas to promote positive health outcomes and minimise negative effects.
- *Reporting:* Preparing a document that summarises findings and recommendations.
- *Monitoring and evaluation:* Assessing the impacts of decisions and the effectiveness of recommendations over time.

Applicants may be able to undertake this work themselves or decide to commission the work by an experienced expert. The level of expertise of those competing the HIA must reflect the scale of development and type of HIA completed.

The completed HIA, including its recommendations and mitigating strategies, will be considered by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) under the policy requirement to have considered health within the development proposal.

The LCC HIA template is grounded in the wider determinants of health and wellbeing and promotes a systematic, evidence-based consideration of health, equity and sustainability. The template (also found in Appendix 1) requires the following six domains in the health impact assessment:

a) **Direct influences on health and behaviour** - this domain considers factors such as diet, physical activity, mental wellbeing, use of alcohol, use of cigarettes and substance misuse, sexual activity and any risk-taking activity.
b) **Community and Social Influences** - this domain considers factors such as family organisation and roles, citizen power and influence, social support and social networks, neighbourliness, sense of belonging, local pride, divisions in community, social isolation, peer pressure, community identity, cultural and spiritual ethos, racism, design for low crime and other social exclusion factors.
c) **Living environmental conditions potentially affecting health** - this domain considers factors such as built environment, neighbourhood design, diverse retail offer / healthy food, housing (affordable; warm; ventilation; specific needs; diverse types) indoor environment, noise, air and water quality, flooding risk, attractiveness of area, street furniture, shade and rest, green space, blue space, outdoor physical activity, community safety, smell/odour, waste disposal, road hazards / safety, community severance, cycling and walking facilities and infrastructure, public transport, prioritising pedestrians and cyclists, traffic calming, walkability including connectivity, mixed land use, compact neighbourhoods, injury hazards and the quality and safety of play areas.
d) **Economic conditions and links affecting health** - this domain considers factors such as unemployment, income, economic inactivity, type of employment and workplace condition.
e) **Access to and quality of services** - this domain considers factors such as medical services, other caring services, careers advice, shops and commercial services, food – access healthy food; limit fast food/space for allotments; growing projects, public amenities, transport including parking; public transport including stops, education and training and information technology.
f) **Macro-economic, environmental and sustainability factors** - this domain considers factors such as Government policies, gross domestic product, economic development, biological diversity and climate.

The assessment also considered the nature and scale of potential health impacts, including:

- The nature of impact on health (positive or negative)
- Likelihood of the health impacts (possible, probable, definite)
- Scale and distribution (different groups impacted in different ways)
- Timing (short, medium, long term)
- Severity (major, moderate or minor)

All six domains must be explored, evaluated and discussed in the completed HIA, along with the rating of nature and scale of impact. Where one of the domains within 6 domains has been scoped out of the assessment, this should be justified. Most major and all strategic sites will be expected to complete all 6 domains of a HIA in full.

Defining the Likelihood of an Impact

Table 1 below is an extract from Health Impact Assessment in Spatial Planning (October 2020) guidance on how to identify the likelihood of an impact occurring within specific population groups and its significance.

Table 1. Defining the likelihood of an impact.

Definite	Strong direct evidence (for example, from a range of qualitative and quantitative sources) or direct evidence from official statistics.
Probable	Good direct evidence (for example, from a range of qualitative and quantitative sources) to support the impact.
Possible	Direct evidence to support the impact but drawn from limited source(s) (for example grey literature, news articles, blogs or commentaries).
Unlikely	No direct evidence but issue highlighted as a potential impact.

Timing of an Impact

Health impacts may be short-term or temporary, related to construction, or longer-term, related to the operation and maintenance of a development.

The definitions below have been adopted locally, informed by WHO HIA guidance and the NHS London Healthy Urban Development Unit Rapid HIA Tool.

- Short-term (0-2 years)
- Medium-term (2-5 years)
- Long-term (5+ years)

Defining the Severity of an Impact

The impacts of a development can be positive (beneficial), neutral (no discernible change), or negative (adverse), direct or indirect, cumulative, permanent or temporary (short, medium or long term). The significance of an impact is determined by the expected magnitude of the health and wellbeing impact on specific population characteristics. Table 2 below is an extract from Health Impact Assessment in Spatial Planning (October 2020) guidance on how to define the severity of an impact.

Table 2. Defining the severity of an impact.

Major adverse	Major benefit	Significant based on: high exposure or scale; long-term duration; continuous frequency; severity predominantly related to mortality; majority of population affected; permanent change; and substantial service quality implications. Prevention measures will be required.
Moderate adverse	Moderate benefit	Potentially significant based on: low exposure or medium scale; medium term duration; frequent events; severity predominantly related to moderate changes in morbidity; large minority of population affected; gradual reversal; and small service quality implications. Prevention or mitigation measures will be required.
Slight adverse	Slight benefit	Not significant based on: very low exposure or small scale; short-term duration; occasional events; severity predominantly related to minor change in morbidity; small minority of population affected; rapid reversal; and slight service quality implications. Mitigation measures will be required.
Neutral		Not significant based on: negligible exposure or scale; very short-term duration; one-off frequency; severity predominantly relates to a minor change in quality-of-life; very few people affected; immediate reversal once activity complete; and no service quality implication.

Identifying What Type of HIA Should be Undertaken?

The completion of a HIA must be proportionate to the size, scale and type of the development, considering the location in which it is set. For example, impacts will differ in significance whether located in a rural or existing urban area.

The level of detail provided in the HIA will be linked to the scale of proposal. The HIA should provide a clear justification for the type of assessment undertaken and demonstrate that the approach is proportionate to the likely health impacts of the proposal.

There are three commonly recognised types of HIAs, each suited to different situations. They are:

- Desktop - for smaller schemes (not major development). This typically draws upon existing data, engages with a small number of stakeholders and can be completed quickly with limited resources.
- Rapid - an initial assessment to inform the completion of a comprehensive HIA. This involves a more detailed assessment of potential health impacts. It includes a much broader set of knowledge and evidence, some of which can be carried out through a stakeholder consultation and community involvement in the form of a small steering group, or wider workshop.
- Comprehensive - complex proposals, major schemes, and development targeting a population group with specific health needs. This is the most detailed form of HIA. Applicants are encouraged to consider relevant consultation and engagement findings when preparing a HIA, including engagement with local communities, service providers and relevant stakeholders where undertaken.

The applicant must demonstrate how the findings of the HIA have been considered in the final proposal details to mitigate negative impacts and maximise positive outcomes.

For comprehensive HIAs, engagement with Public Health prior to submission, or through an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Pre-application stage is encouraged to inform direction of a HIA and may enable a more efficient and effective completion of a HIA. The Public Health team are also available for general queries and support.

Data sets to inform your HIA

The breadth, scale and depth of data collection will be proportionate to the scale of the HIA. Sources of local data on health and wellbeing include:

- Office of National Statistics
- Tableau – Public
- Health Inequalities and Wider Determinants of Health
- LSR Health Profiles

Finding and using public health data for planning is a resource produced by The Town and County Planning Association that may also be useful to those completing a HIA.

Relevant Plans and Documents to Consider

The Leicestershire County Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy must be considered in the completion of a HIA. Other documents to consider are:

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Local Transport Plan 4 (2025-2030)
- Leicestershire Highways Design Guide
- Leicester & Leicestershire 2050: Our Vision for Growth
- Our Communities Approach (2022-2026)
- Environment Strategy (2018-2030)
- Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy (2023-2045)
- Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Growth Strategy (2021-2030)

Identifying the Health Make-up and Character of a Site

A community profile should be built to inform identification of impacts and characterise relevant population groups who may be affected by these impacts. It is encouraged that Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA), MSOA and Ward level data be considered. Data collated can involve but is not limited to:

- Deprivation
- Life expectancy
- Demographic makeup
- Health status of the local population including common health conditions
- Susceptible and socially excluded groups
- Local socioeconomic factors, such as employment, education, skills and training
- Consideration of local facilities and amenities in relation to the development

The purpose of undertaking a HIA is to minimise poor health impacts and not repeat or exacerbate existing poor environments. Considering this, whilst comparisons to national average can be useful to determine how an area is performing nationally, it does not necessarily mean achieving these averages is positive for health. Development should always aim for best practice and increase health outcomes above existing averages and not copy or maintain poor or average health. The latest Inequalities Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2023) is to be used in determining data for population groups.

Mitigating Development Impacts

Where a HIA identifies a development will benefit from or require adjustments and control measures, mitigation and enhancement measures are to be specific, proportionate and deliverable. Where possible, applicants should explain how identified measures will be secured through the development process and how they will be monitored to ensure long-term effectiveness.

Some recommendations may be proposed to be secured through S106 agreements, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), planning conditions or through management plans. Examples can include the securing of active travel routes, open space and community facilities through S106, and the securing of traffic management plans and air quality action plans through conditions. The timing of their delivery should be clearly laid out.

Monitoring Health and Wellbeing Impacts

Monitoring and evaluating ensures there are appropriate indicators and mechanisms to understand impacts of the development in real time, throughout and following the completion of a development.

If mitigation strategies have been incorporated into a development, a plan to monitor and report on progress must be included to ensure long-term effectiveness.

Timing of a HIA Submission

A HIA is most successful when considered early in the conceptualisation and design stage of a development proposal as the assessment will influence the proposal as it is being developed. A HIA should therefore be considered as early as the pre-application stage or prior.

When undertaken at the earliest stage of a project, a HIA can be utilised as a key tool for sustainable development with targeted intervention to improve health from the outset. An example of this in practice is the integration of walking, wheeling and cycle routes to a new school early in the master planning of a development so that even the dwelling furthest from the new school has good, fair choice of travel, rather than routes added later where their quality may be impacted. Drawing on the wider determinants of health and working across different sectors due to the lens provided by a HIA, a HIA can be an important tool in the delivery of sustainable development.

Applications will be required to submit a HIA to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) alongside:

- A full planning application (FUL)

or

- An outline planning application (OUT), followed by a Reserve Matters application

The scale of detail contained within the HIA must reflect the planning application stage, therefore, a HIA accompanying a FUL or REM application will contain a more in-depth assessment than that at OUT stage. Applicants engaging with Public Health prior to submission of a planning application, or at EIA and PREAPP stage, may proceed more successfully through the HIA process.

Summary

This document has set out how to complete a successful HIA. As covered in this document, the aim of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is to maximise positive health impacts, reduce adverse impacts, and identify opportunities to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

Should you have related queries on the completion of a HIA, please contact Leicestershire County Council's Public Health team (HIA@leics.gov.uk)

Appendix 1 – The Leicestershire Health Impact Assessment to use

A copy of the Health Impact Assessment template prepared by Leicestershire County Council Public Health team can also be found and accessed on the webpage as a Word document format. Health Impact Assessments | Leicestershire County Council Professional Services Portal

Health Impact Assessment Appraisal Tool: LCC Public Health

	Nature	Likelihood	Scale / distribution?	Timing	Severity
	How will the proposal affect health? Positive or Negative? *Please take in to account the health profile of the local population using links given on this site*	Possible/ Probable/ Definite *Are there any external factors that could affect this out of the control of the plan?*	Will different groups of people be impacted in different ways? *Impact on inequalities – how severe/beneficial?* *What can be done to negate this?*	Short/ medium/ long term	Minor/ moderate/ major *Are there any external factors that could affect this out of the control of the plan?*
Direct influences on health and behaviour					
Community and Social Influences					
Living environmental conditions potentially affecting health					
Economic conditions and links affecting health					
Access to and quality of services					
Macro-economic, environmental and sustainability factors					

Appendix 2 – The HIA Checklist

The checklist contained within Appendix 2 has been designed to support the submission of a HIA. It contains six major considerations following the guidance in this document. The checklist can be used as a starting point to determine if the HIA has met key requirements.

A HIA is considered complete when all 6 requirements have been fulfilled.

	Key requirements of the HIA	Fulfilled?
1	LCC standard HIA template on the LCC webpage has been used, and the standard set out in the relevant Guidance Notes	Yes/no/partially
2	All six domains in the health impact assessment template have been investigated to a satisfactory level	Yes/no/partially
3	The health make-up and character of the site have been laid out and considered to inform the HIA using appropriate data sources, including the Leicestershire JSNA. This also includes the identification of vulnerable groups as set out in the Leicestershire JSNA Health Inequalities 2023.	Yes/no/partially
4	Development aligns with local health priorities identified in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032	Yes/no/partially
5	The proposed development has clearly been informed by the findings and recommendations of the HIA, including mitigation and monitoring strategies	Yes/no/partially
6	Early engagement with LCC Public Health was undertaken, and the final HIA sent to Public Health for checking	Yes/no/partially