

**Local Development Plan Phase 1**

**Preferred Options Paper (POP) 2020-2035**

**Stage 7 Year 1 (2018) Monitoring Report**

**May 2018**



**Belfast**  
**City Council**

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## **Access to information**

As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. We would therefore be happy to provide any of the information in this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English). If required please contact:

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# 1. Background Information

## 1.1 Section 75

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Belfast City Council is required **to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity –**

- between persons of different
  - religious belief
  - political opinion
  - racial group
  - age
  - marital status
  - sexual orientation
- between men and women generally
- between persons with a disability and persons without and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to the obligations set out above, the Council is also required **to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.**

Schedule 9 of the Act sets out the detailed procedure for the implementation of this duty including the publication of an Equality Scheme and the conduct of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) of selected policies. In response to the Act, Belfast City Council prepared an Equality Scheme which was approved by the Equality Commission in March 2015. The Equality Scheme can be accessed on the Council's website at

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/council/equality/equality-scheme.aspx>

## **1.2 Belfast City Council and Planning Service**

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 Act (the 2011 Act) transferred responsibility for the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDP's) from the Department of Environment (DOE) (now known as Department for Infrastructure (DfI)) to councils and established a plan –led system which gives priority to the LDPs in the determination of planning applications.

LDPs guide the future use of land in their respective areas and inform developers, members of the general public, communities, government, public bodies, representative organisations and other interests of the local planning policy framework.

There are three stages in the development of the LDP:-

1. First stage in the LDP process is the publication on the Preferred Options Paper.;
2. Second Stage is the preparation of the LDP Plan Strategy (PS); and
3. Third Stage is the preparation of the LDP Local Policies Plan (LPP)

## **1.3 Screening of policies**

We have completed the documents to support the work on the first stages of the new Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) including the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and formal timetable for developing the Plan. Following approval of both documents by the Department of Infrastructure Planning Service developed the draft Preferred Options Paper (POP) which was published for formal consultation in January 2017.

The draft POP outlined the vision, objectives and key planning issues affecting the city, possible approaches to new development and planned growth, and the justification for the Council's Preferred Option for Belfast.

The main purpose of the EQIA on this document was to –

- consider the potential equality and good relations impacts of the LDP-Preferred Options Plan at a strategic level focusing on the key inequalities which the preferred options can help to reduce;
- provide an outline analysis of data and research on current major inequalities experienced by people in the Section 75 groups in relation to the key commitments under the Local Development Plan
- establish the positive equality impacts which the future Local Development Plan can make
- to shape equality screening going forward in stage 2 and stage 3 of the LDP.

The EQIA was prepared and issued for consultation in January 2017, the comments received and the Belfast City Council's response were set out in full in separate final EQIA report published in July 2017. These documents can all be accessed on the Council's website [www.belfastcitycouncil.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcitycouncil.gov.uk) together with a summary report of the whole process.

## **2. Stage 7 Monitoring Process**

- 2.1 In line with Stage 7 of the Equality Commission Guidance, the final EQIA report included a process for monitoring each policy to determine the future equality impacts, in the light of the changes made and the mitigating actions taken. The purpose of monitoring policies which have been subjected to EQIA is to determine whether the impacts predicted, particularly those which may have an adverse impact on anyone in the Section 75 equality categories, have occurred in practice and whether the impacts are greater or lesser than anticipated.

2.2 If the monitoring and analysis of results over a two year period show that the proposed policies result in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the Council is committed to ensuring that the policies are revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

### **3. Findings of the EQIA**

3.1 Three responses were received specifically on the EQIA. An overview of the responses correlated with the structure of the questionnaire and included responses to the key findings of the assessment, potential impacts on Section 75 groups and some suggestions about how they can be addressed through the plan. There was a broad view that the EQIA had identified most of the potential impacts, and that these issues raised could be addressed through the promotion of equality of opportunity which is at the core of the LDP.

3.2 In its broadest sense the delivery of the LDP is likely to have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups, both directly and indirectly by contributing to the economic, social and environmental regeneration and wellbeing of the city. There was general agreement with the EQIA's findings and conclusions:-

- The structure of the EQIA was also endorsed; and
- Respondents endorsed the scale and variety of engagement.

### **4. Results of Monitoring**

4.1 Since the publication of the final EQIA report in July 2017, there have been no reported incidents or issues raised to policies from the POP. Ongoing monitoring will continue to determine whether there is any effect over a longer period of time.

4.2 We therefore conclude that the actions taken have contributed positively to the promotion of equality of opportunity. We will however continue to monitor the policies and evaluate the results of monitoring at regular intervals.

## **5. Publication of the Results of Monitoring**

- 5.1 In line with the commitment in our Equality Scheme, we will make this report available on the Councils website at [www.belfastcitycouncil.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcitycouncil.gov.uk). It will also be available in printed form and we will make arrangements so that it can be made available on request and in a timely fashion in formats such as Braille, large print, disk and audiocassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.