

Local Development Plan Phase 1

Preferred Options Paper (POP) 2020-2035

Stage 7 (2019) Final Monitoring Report

May 2019



**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:

Stella Gilmartin/ Lorraine Dennis **Equality and Diversity Officer**

Legal & Democratic Services

Belfast City Council

Cecil Ward Building

4-10 Linenhall Street

Belfast

BT2 8BP

Direct Line: 028 90270511

Freephone: 080 0085 5412

Text phone: 028 9027 0405

Email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

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 (LDPs) 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; and
- to shape equality screening going forward in stage 2 and stage 3 of the LDP process.

The EQIA was prepared and issued for consultation in January 2017. The comments received and the City Council's response were set out in full in a separate final EQIA report published in July 2017. These documents can all be accessed on the Councils website www.belfastcitycouncil.gov.uk.

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 that 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 of the POP. These 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 LDP. There was a broad view that the EQIA had identified most of the potential impacts, and that these 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 Final 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. In this regard, and in line with the preparation process of the LDP, the POP has helped to inform the draft Plan Strategy. Once the draft Plan Strategy has been prepared, the POP represents a background document that helped to shape its policies. The draft Plan Strategy (published August 2018) itself has been subject to EQIA which included further consideration of potential equality issues against each draft planning policy.
- 4.2 As set out above, the POP stage of the LDP has been completed and the further consideration of equality issues will be undertaken through the equality impact assessment of the (Stage 2) draft Plan Strategy and (Stage 3) Local Policies Plan. Both of these LDP documents (when adopted) will provide the

basis for determining planning applications in the Council area. The future monitoring arrangements for these documents will be in line with the relevant EQIA which will help to ensure that we meet our commitments under the Council's Equality Scheme and Equality legislation. In particular the monitoring of planning decision making based on the policies and proposals contained in the adopted LDP will mean that equality issues will be identified and addressed accordingly.

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 Council's website at 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.