



# Belfast Local Development Plan

**Equality Impact Assessment – LDP Plan Strategy**

**Stage 7 Report (Year 1): May 2024**

## **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. This document is available in different languages and formats on request, please contact:

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## Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland 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 or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

We are committed to the discharge of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with.

Within the Council's Equality Scheme, the council gave a commitment to apply screening to all new and revised policies and where necessary and appropriate to subject new policies to further equality impact assessment. This includes the Community Plan (Belfast Agenda) and Local Development Plan. [Link to BA EQIA](#)

## Background

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 transferred responsibility for the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) from central government to councils and established a plan-led system that gives priority to the LDPs in the determination of planning applications.

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

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

Each stage of the LDP process has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). Belfast City Council undertook the first LDP (POP) stage during 2017, including formal public consultation that commenced in January 2017. Data and research gathered in the POP EQIA was considered in the development of the next stage – the PS.

The City Council has completed the second LDP stage with the adoption of the PS in May 2023. The public consultation on the PS, including the PS EQIA, was undertaken in summer/autumn 2018. As the PS is now adopted, the planning policies contained in it have been in effect from May 2023 and form the basis of planning application decision-making by the Council.

### Stage 7 Monitoring

In line with Stage 7 of the Equality Commission Guidance, an EQIA includes a process for monitoring to determine equality impacts, in the light of any changes made and any 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.

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.

### PS EQIA Monitoring

The PS EQIA ([link](#)) found that there is unlikely to be any adverse impact against Section 75 groups associated with the implementation of the strategic and

operational planning policies. It revealed that, generally, the PS policies will have a positive or neutral impact upon the entire population and will improve the overall quality of life for those who live in or visit Belfast. It noted that some Section 75 groups in particular will be positively impacted upon by the implementation of some of the PS policies, including in relation to affordable, adaptable and specialist forms of housing and access for all measures.

The PS EQIA concluded that all nine S75 groups will benefit from the policies through the provision of a broader mix of housing, more jobs, access to green infrastructure, including open space, walking and cycling routes and improved access to services and facilities.

Since the adoption of the Plan Strategy in May 2023, the strategic and operational planning policies now form the basis of all planning application decisions taken by the Council. As set out above, some positive impacts are anticipated and no unintended or negative impacts have been identified to date.

In line with Stage 7 of the Equality Commission Guidance, monitoring of the policies for adverse impacts is required over a 2-year period. This is the Stage 7 Monitoring Report for year 1. Ongoing monitoring will continue to determine whether there is any effect over a longer period of time. A Stage 7 (Year 2) Report on the PS EQIA will be required in May 2025.

During this time the development of the LDP will continue with the Local Policies Plan (LPP), which will align with the PS.