

Equality Screening Template



The Council has a statutory duty to screen. This includes our strategies, plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as the introduction, change or end of an existing service, grant funding arrangement or facility. This screening template is designed to help departments consider the likely equality impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

Before carrying out an equality screening exercise it is important that you have received the necessary training first. To find out about the training needed or any other queries on screening, contact the Equality and Diversity Officers (job-share) Stella Gilmartin or Lorraine Dennis on extension 6026/7 or by email equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

The accompanying **Screening Guidance** note provides straightforward advice on how to carry out equality screening exercises. Detailed information about the Section 75 equality duties and what they mean in practice is available on the Equality Commission's website¹.

The screening template has 4 sections to complete. These are:

Section A - provides details about the policy / decision that is being screened

Section B – gives information on the consultation process, supporting evidence gathered and has 4 key questions outlining the likely impacts on all equality groups.

Section C - has 4 key questions in relation to obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order

Section D - is the formal record of the screening decision.

¹ <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>

Section A

Details about the policy / decision to be screened

1. Title of policy / decision to be screened:-

Belfast Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan (draft)

2. Brief description of policy / decision to be screened:-

The draft Belfast Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP) sets the strategic vision and principles for a green and blue infrastructure network for the City Council area. It provides an overall framework for the consideration of “green & blue” assets, such as parks, countryside, gardens, trees, ponds, rivers and SuDS measures and it acknowledges the importance, multi-functionality and multiple benefits of these. It represents an over-arching strategy that will guide more detailed strategies and action plans over time. The GBIP is not spatially-detailed or site-specific, but it does set out examples and potential opportunities for future actions across a range of green and blue typologies.

It should be noted that the Council’s Local Development Plan (LDP) Draft Plan Strategy includes planning policies that reference green and blue infrastructure generally and the GBIP in particular. The Draft Plan Strategy, as the statutory development plan for the city, was subject to full EqlA.

3. Aims and objectives of the policy / decision to be screened:-

The GBIP is high level and sets a strategic vision, framework and key principles for the delivery and enhancement of a network of green and blue assets. It considers the green and blue network in a more holistic approach and it provides examples of best practice.

The GBIP Vision is “*by 2035 green and blue infrastructure will be strategically planned to enhance ecosystem services that benefit all living, working in and visiting Belfast.*”

This vision is supported by 5 strategic principles:

1. Biodiverse – Although not all green and blue infrastructure assets will be delivered and managed primarily for biodiversity, all green and blue infrastructure should help enhance biodiversity.
2. Planned, interconnected networks – To maximise the benefits of green and blue infrastructure it needs to form an interconnected network. Doing so requires strategic planning

to target delivery against the needs of the local communities.

3. Integrated into the urban environment – As with all urban systems, green and blue infrastructure should not be seen as independent. It needs to form an integrated part of the urban fabric of the city.

4. Well designed and managed – To work effectively, all infrastructure, including green and blue assets, need to be well designed and regularly maintained.

5. Appropriately funded – Green and blue infrastructure brings considerable value to the city. This value needs to be recognized and used to help attract sustainable funding to ensure the benefits continue to be felt.

The GBIP will be supported in due course by more detailed strategies and/or action plans that focus on specific types of green and blue infrastructure, such as open space and biodiversity.

4. On whom will the policy / decision impact?

Consider the internal and external impacts (both actual or potential) and explain:-

Staff	YES/NO
Service users	YES/NO
Other public sector organizations	YES/NO
Voluntary / community groups / trade unions	YES/NO
Others, please specify	YES/NO

The GBIP, as an over-arching framework of key principles, can be used to aid planning and investment decision-making, including encouraging consideration of potential opportunities to enhance and expand the green and blue infrastructure network through new development. It can therefore have an impact on those proposing development, including developers, individuals, public authorities and community/voluntary groups. It will also be used by the planning authority as a general informative in the assessment of planning applications within the Belfast area.

5. Are there linkages to other Agencies/ Departments?

The GBIP sets out key principles rather than policy. It is based around existing national planning policies. Linkages include the Regional Development Strategy, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) and other relevant Planning Policy

Statements, all of which fall under the remit of the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI).

In addition, a number of the key principles support other national and regional policy, including those relating to biodiversity, flood risk, active travel, air quality, environmental resilience and climate change. Therefore, the draft GBIP has linkages to the draft Programme for Government and the policies of the NI governmental departments.

Section B

Information on the consultation process, supporting evidence gathered and has 4 key questions outlining the likely impacts for equality and good relations

6. Outline consultation process planned or achieved

It is intended that the draft GBIP will be launched for a 12 week public consultation exercise, beginning 17th June 2019. The consultation exercise will be conducted in line with existing council consultation policy and will have regard to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

Engagement has previously taken place with key stakeholders in framing the draft GBIP, including a workshop with relevant government departments, state agencies and environmental organisations.

7. Available evidence

What evidence / information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Set out all evidence below to help inform your screening assessment.

It is important to record information gathered from a variety of sources such as: monitoring information; complaints; research surveys; consultation exercises from other public authorities.

As outlined above, the draft GBIP does not introduce any new policy, but instead sets out key principles and the Council's approach to encouraging consideration of opportunities to enhance and expand the green and blue infrastructure network through new development. This is in line with existing national planning policy, including the SPPS.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

A final Equality Screening report was published alongside the SPPS in September 2015. As the high level strategic planning policy statement for NI, there are no specific policies within the SPPS that directly infringe upon the draft GBIP for Belfast. However, the SPPS states that Local Development Plans (LDPs) “*should seek to identify and promote green and blue infrastructure where this will add value to the provision, enhancement and connection of open space and habitats in and around settlements.*” In this regard, the Council’s LDP Draft Plan Strategy includes planning policies that reference green and blue infrastructure generally and the GBIP in particular. The Draft Plan Strategy was subject to full EqIA.

The SPPS EqIA screening report notes that the SPPS, and the planning system generally, “*is for securing the orderly and consistent development of land across Northern Ireland under a two-tier planning system*”. It concludes that “*it will be uniformly applied across all section 75 categories without prejudice*” and, therefore, it will not positively or negatively discriminate towards any Section 75 groups. It concludes that “*the SPPS is expected to equally benefit all Section 75 categories.*”

Other Relevant Planning Policies

There is also a range of other regional Planning Policy Statements and guidance that have helped to inform the draft GBIP. These documents have been prepared by public bodies that are subject to the general equality duty that s75 places on a public body. The Equality Screening for the SPPS highlights similarities between the SPPS and the existing suite of PPSs, noting that as high level, strategic policies that it is unlikely that there will be any adverse impacts on the equality of opportunity or promotion of good relations for any section 75 group.

Belfast Local Development Plan Research

In addition to the above policy context, and in tandem with the preparation of the new Belfast LDP, research papers have been prepared over a wide range of topics, including some that are relevant to the GBIP. These include environmental protection & resilience, flood risk, air quality, natural heritage and open space. These include evidence of the current state of affairs in Belfast and also highlight key issues to be considered and addressed in the LDP. A further research paper was prepared to consider the city’s population and demography, including by reference to section 75

categories. All research papers were initially prepared in late 2016 and have been updated and published in summer 2018.

Summary

Having regard to all the above, it is considered that the draft GBIP will impact equally on all section 75 categories and this impact will be beneficial across the entire population. The benefits will include greater city resilience, environmental quality, health and wellbeing, connectivity and economic attractiveness. These impacts are considered to be minor, generally being medium to longer term and consequent on development proposals being granted permission and implemented.

8. What is the likely impact (indicate if the policy impact is positive or negative) on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? What is the level of impact?

Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including those with different religious beliefs.	Minor
Political opinion	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including those with different political opinions.	Minor
Racial group	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including those from different racial groups.	Minor
Age	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including those from different age groups.	Minor
Marital status	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including those with different marital status.	Minor
Sexual orientation	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including those of different sexual orientations.	Minor
Men and women generally	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including men and women generally.	Minor

Disability	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including those with a disability.	Minor
Dependants	This draft GBIP is expected to impact positively across the entire population, including those with dependants.	Minor

9. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

Any impacts of the GBIP are consequent on development proposals being granted and implemented. The spatial location of the development and any consequent GBIP improvements may be anywhere across the City Council area and, therefore, it is not possible to say whether the GBIP may provide opportunities to better promote quality of opportunity for section 75 categories until the planning or investment decision is being made and implemented.

Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief		No – see above
Political opinion		No
Racial group		No
Age		No
Marital status		No
Sexual orientation		No
Men and women generally		No
Disability		No
Dependants		No

10. To what extent is the policy likely to impact (positive or negatively) on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? What is the level of impact?

Good relations category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief	A key principle of the GBIP is the creation of well-designed and well-managed places, where everyone feels welcome and safe. Therefore, as measures are delivered as a consequence of planning and investment decisions, the GBIP offers the potential to have a positive impact on good relations through the creation of shared spaces and improved connectivity. However, the nature and location of such measures is related to the location of the development and, therefore, any impacts are likely to be within the prevailing local demographic context.	Minor
Political opinion		
Racial group		

11. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	As stated above, as GBIP measures are delivered as a consequence of planning and investment decisions, there is a potential opportunity promote good relations through shared spaces and better connectivity.	None
Political opinion		
Racial group		

Section C

Belfast City Council also has legislative obligations to meet under the Disability Discrimination Order and Questions 12-13 relate to these two areas.

Consideration of Disability Duties

12. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for the Council to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

This draft GBIP doesn't provide an opportunity to promote positive attitude towards disabled people, over and above that provided for in the existing planning system.

13. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life?

This draft GBIP doesn't provide an opportunity to actively increase the participation of disabled people in public life.

14. Multiple Identities

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy with multiple identities

N/A

15. Monitoring Arrangements

Section 75 places a requirement the Council to have equality monitoring arrangements in place in order to assess the impact of policies and services etc; and to help identify barriers to fair participation and to better promote equality of opportunity.

Outline what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties.

Equality	Good Relations	Disability Duties
<p>The impact of development on equality, good relations or disability duties will be addressed, in accordance with relevant legislation and prevailing planning policies, as part of the planning application process. The GBIP will help to inform planning decisions made by the City Council, including those assessed against the Council's new Local Development Plan, which will incorporate policies on green and blue infrastructure and the GBIP. It is proposed that annual monitoring will be undertaken setting out the number and nature of planning decisions made that have secured the incorporation of G&B infrastructure, including where legal agreements are entered into. This annual report will also include a section which highlights any equality implications of planning decisions made and legal agreements entered into in the previous year.</p>		

Section D

Formal Record of Screening Decision

<p>Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (Draft)</p>

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for –

x	equality of opportunity and good relations
x	disabilities duties

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is – *(place an X in the appropriate box below)*

	* <u>Screened In</u> – Necessary to conduct a full EQIA
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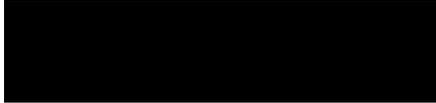
x	<p>* <u>Screened Out</u> – No EQIA necessary (no impacts)</p> <p>Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached:</p> <p>The GBIP is an over-arching framework of key principles encouraging the consideration of opportunities to enhance and expand the green and blue infrastructure network through new development. It will be used by the planning authority as a general informative in the assessment of planning applications within the Belfast area.</p> <p>The draft GBIP will impact equally on all section 75 categories and this impact will be beneficial across the entire population. The benefits will include greater city resilience, environmental quality, health and wellbeing, connectivity and economic attractiveness. These impacts are considered to be minor, generally being medium to longer term and consequent on development proposals being granted permission and implemented.</p>
	<p>* <u>Screened Out - Mitigating Actions</u> (minor impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached: • Explain what mitigating actions and / or policy changes will now be introduced:

Formal Record of Screening Decision (cont)

Screening assessment completed by (Officer level) –

Name: Dermot O’Kane

Department: Place and Economy



Screening decision approved by –

Name: Keith Sutherland

Department : Place and Economy



Please save the final version of the completed screening form and forward to the Equality and Diversity Officer – equality@belfastcity.gov.uk. The screening form will be placed on the BCC website and a link provided to the Council’s Section 75 consultees.

For more information about equality screening contact –

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