SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING FORM – Preliminary

This form should be used for all new or amended policies. It has five parts.

Part 1 – Policy scoping – provide details about the policy being screened and the available evidence to help assess the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Part 2 – Screening questions – look at the extent of the likely impact of the policy on each of the Section 75 categories.

Part 3 – Screening decision – the information provided in the previous sections is used to decide whether there is a need to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

Part 4 – Monitoring – sets how the effects of the policy will be monitored.

Part 5 – Authorisation and approval – the completed screening form must be signed by the officer who carries out the screening and the relevant Director/Section Head. The file reference and details of the approval by Committee and ratification by Council must also be included.

PART 1 – POLICY SCOPING

Set out the background, context, aims and objectives for the policy being screened. This will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and to work through the screening process on a step-by-step basis.

NB Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the Council), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, serviced by the Council).

Information about the policy

Policy name Draft Planning Validation Checklist
Is this an existing, revised or a new policy? New guidance
What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes) On 1 October 2024, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) made legislation which enables a council to publish a Validation Checklist, under the Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024. The purpose of

a Validation Checklist is to extend the minimum level of information for a planning application to be legally valid so as to improve the quality of planning applications on submission. This will enable the Council to process applications in a more efficient and effective manner, and in turn improve performance against statutory KPIs.

The aim of the Validation Checklist is to address 'poor quality' or 'incomplete" applications entering the planning system. A Validation Checklist provides guidance about the level and type of information required to be submitted with a planning application, in order to provide a degree of certainty and clarity to assist applicants as well as making the process clear and transparent. The requirements should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the development proposal, and there is officer discretion built into the process as to whether the information is ultimately required.

It is envisaged that the Validation Checklist process will:

- address delays in the processing of applications for planning permission, by front-loading applications with all the evidence and information deemed necessary to determine the applications.
- lead to improved statutory consultee response times,
- reduce the need to re-consult statutory consultees,
- improve the time taken to reach decisions, and
- result in better quality decisions and outcomes.

The introduction of validation checklists to planning applications will result in extra up-front costs to applicants, in that it will require all necessary evidence and information needed to determine the proposal, to accompany the application at the time of its submission. There are no procurement implications to this policy.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy? If so, explain how.
No

Who initiated or wrote the policy?
Planning Section of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Who owns and who implements the policy?
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Implementation factors
Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

If yes, what are they (please tick box)

	Financial – Yes, there may be a temporary drop in fee income if planning applications are not validated
	Legislative – No
	other, please specify

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon? (please tick box)

	Staff - yes
	service users - yes
	other public sector organisations - yes
	voluntary/community/trade unions - yes
	other, please specify Elected Members, staff within other areas of the Council - yes

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?

  None

- who owns them?

  N/A

Available evidence
What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category	**Details of evidence/information**
Religious belief	Officers reviewed information collated through the following sources: On-going work with Elected Members and performance data on planning application processing times. The guidance was selected on the basis that the improvements would enhance a more efficient planning application process for the benefits of all citizens, the environment and the delivery of efficient services for the Council.
Political opinion	
Racial group	
Age	
Marital status	
Sexual orientation	
Men and women generally	
Disability	
Dependants	

Needs, experiences and priorities
What are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category	**Details of needs/experiences/priorities**
Religious belief	No evidence of adverse impact.
Political opinion	No evidence of adverse impact.
Racial group	No evidence of adverse impact.
Age	No evidence of adverse impact.
Marital status	No evidence of adverse impact.
Sexual orientation	No evidence of adverse impact.
Men and women generally	No evidence of adverse impact.
Disability	No evidence of adverse impact.
Dependants	No evidence of adverse impact.

PART 2 - SCREENING QUESTIONS

Taking into account the evidence from Part 1, consider and comment on the likely impact of the policy on equality of opportunity and good relations for each of the equality and good relations categories. Use the screening questions given below and indicate the level of impact on each category, i.e. minor, major or none.

Consideration of level of impact

In favour of a 'major' impact

a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;

b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;

c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalized or disadvantaged;

d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;

e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;

f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;

b) The policy or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;

c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;

d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;

b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? minor/major/none		
Section 75 category	**Details of policy impact**	**Level of impact? minor/major/none**
Religious Belief	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category.	None
Political opinion	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category.	None
Racial Group	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category. However, mitigation has been incorporated into both the consultation process and the format the checklist will/can be provided to support diverse groups who reside within our Borough.	None
Age	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category. However, mitigation has been incorporated into both the consultation process and the format the checklist will/can be provided to support people of all ages who reside within our Borough.	None
Marital Status	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category.	None
Sexual orientation	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category.	None
Men and women generally	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category.	None
Disability	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category. However,	None

	mitigation has been incorporated into both the consultation process and the format the checklist will/can be provided to support people with different disabilities who reside within our Borough.	
Dependants	There is no evidence that the proposed introduction of a Planning Application Validation Checklist will have any specific impact on this Section 75 Category. However, mitigation has been incorporated into both the consultation process and the format the checklist will/can be provided to support people with dependents who reside within our Borough.	None

2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?		
Section 75 category	**If YES, provide details**	**If NO, provide reasons**
Religious Belief		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.
Political opinion		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.
Racial Group		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.
Age		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.
Marital Status		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.
Sexual orientation		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.
Men and women generally		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.

Disability		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.
Dependants		There is no opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity through the Planning Application Validation Checklist.

3 To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? minor/major/none

Section 75 category	**Details of policy impact**	**Level of impact? minor/major/none**
Religious Belief	The validation checklist is designed to enhance the quality of service via improved documentation and as such has no remit to better promote good relations.	None
Political opinion	The validation checklist is designed to enhance the quality of service via improved documentation and as such has no remit to better promote good relations.	None
Racial Group	The validation checklist is designed to enhance the quality of service via improved documentation and as such has no remit to better promote good relations.	None

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

Section 75 category	**If YES, provide details**	**If NO, provide reasons**
Religious Belief		The validation checklist is designed to enhance the quality of service via improved documentation and as such has no remit to better promote good relations.
Political opinion		The validation checklist is designed to enhance the quality of service via improved documentation and as such has no remit to better promote good relations.
Racial Group		The validation checklist is designed to enhance the quality of service via improved documentation and as such has no remit to better promote good relations.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity
People can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?
(*For example – disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people)*.

Key Section 75 groups can provide feedback as part of the consultation process and any mitigation measures can be addressed. The needs of individuals with multiple identities has already been considered in the mitigation measures implemented. However, if the consultation identifies any additional measures, these will be carefully considered and implemented as appropriate.

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

Young men with caring responsibilities have the option to meet with Officers online, while older, disabled women with caring responsibilities can request a paper copy of the documentation and return it with a freepost envelope provided. Muslim women can request that a female officer handle their case. Individuals of all genders are encouraged to share their views and opinions on the validation checklist by providing feedback in any of the available formats.

Disability
Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), the Council is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life

Will the policy encourage disabled people to participate in public life or promote positive attitudes towards disabled people? **No**

Comments
Key disability representatives and other Section 75 groups can provide feedback as part of the consultation process and any mitigation measures can be addressed.

PART 3 - SCREENING DECISION
The responses to the screening questions in Part 2 should be considered in order to decide whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment.

If the conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the recommendation may be to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, details should be given of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

(See section on mitigation which follows.)

Is an EQIA recommended? No

If the recommendation **is not** to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

All sections of the community can participate in the submission of information in the planning application process. It allows for others to submit information on their behalf where they consider it difficult to do so themselves.

If the decision **is** to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Not Applicable

Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in the Equality Commission publication "Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment".

Mitigation
When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations? **Yes**

If yes, give the reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

Mitigation measures have already been added to the process, however, if the consultation identifies any additional measures, these will be carefully considered and implemented as appropriate.

Timetabling and prioritising of policies screened in for an EQIA
If the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine the priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1 – 3, with 1 being the lowest and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority Criterion	**Rating (1 – 3)**
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	N/A
Social need	N/A
Effect on people's daily lives	N/A
Relevance to a public authority's functions	N/A

NOTE: The total rating score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This will assist in timetabling. Details of the Council's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the Quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? **No**

If yes, please provide details.

N/A

PART 4 - MONITORING
The Equality Commission recommends that where a policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, public authorities should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (see the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities, July 2007, Page 9 – 10, paragraphs 2.13 – 2.20).

Effective monitoring will help identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the Council to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

What data are required in future to ensure effective monitoring?

The guidance will be reviewed every two years following implementation. An issues log will be maintained so that a review can be carried out.