

Appendix 1: Summary of EQIA

Relevant Background Information

The Department for Social Development (DSD) has published for consultation a draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the regeneration of Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Park. The draft EQIA consultation period will run from 30 October 2008 until 21 January 2009. The consultation will also include a number of public meetings.

A key part of assessing the impacts of the proposals is the consideration of evidence and information and DSD have invited interested groups to provide their views and comments on the draft EQIA. The Department would particularly welcome comments on any perceived adverse impact that this policy may have on a particular group.

The draft EQIA follows the Guidance published by the Equality Commission and sets out seven steps in the EQIA process:

- Defining the aims of the policy.
- Consideration of available data and research.
- Assessment of impacts.
- Consideration of:
 - measures which might mitigate any adverse impact; and
 - alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.
- Formal consultation.
- Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA.
- Monitoring for adverse impacts.

A final EQIA document will be prepared following consideration of the comments received during the consultation process.

Key issues

The vision of the draft masterplan for Crumlin Road Gaol/Girdwood Park is an 'inclusive and diverse environment which attracts present and future generations of people to live, work and visit'.

The draft EQIA sets out in Section 6 the potential impact of the policy on each of the nine equality categories under the following themes, which, for the purposes of the EQIA, are considered to reflect the needs of the communities as outlined in the draft Masterplan:

- Economic Development (Crumlin Road Gaol Redevelopment/Tourism)
- Leisure
- Mixed Use Development
- Housing Need in North Belfast
- Health (Mater Hospital)
- Education (St Malachy's College)
- Public Realm
- Accessibility – Arc Road
- Accessibility – Car Parking
- Development Sites.

The Department considers that out of a possible 90 categories, five categories may potentially be affected by an adverse or differential impact in regard to three themes. Under all other categories, it is considered that there is no evidence of adverse impact due to this proposal. The five categories and three related themes are set out below.

Leisure

The draft masterplan proposes the provision of high quality leisure facilities which could serve the local communities and be a regional attraction, drawing visitors into north Belfast from across Belfast and further afield.

During the consultations on the draft masterplan, concern was expressed that the proposed location of the leisure facilities could have an adverse impact on community usage because of perceived “ownership”. If a new leisure centre were to be identified with one community, the Department note that ***it is possible that a differential impact in relation to persons of different religious belief and political opinion could occur***. However, the EQIA notes also that evidence from Belfast City Council Leisure Services indicates “that most of the leisure centres in Belfast are used in varying degrees by both sections of the community” and thus does not support the above view.

Both communities agree that a new leisure facility should be in public ownership and accessible to the communities adjoining the site.

Whilst acknowledging the potential for a differential impact if the leisure facility were to become identified solely with one community or the other, both communities will experience positive impacts, according to the DSD, through the creation of job opportunities and the potential for peoples well-being to be improved by using leisure facilities. The Department will consider incorporating employment targets to assist and encourage people from the local communities to apply for work in the new leisure facility.

The Department conclude the section by asserting that, “It must be recognised that all communities should have equality in terms of access to all facilities and services available through leisure provision in the area” (36: 6.36). It is recommended that the body responsible for the proposed leisure facility must ensure that in delivering programmes, policies and projects it seeks to identify opportunities to promote equality of opportunity.

Housing need in north Belfast

The draft masterplan proposes that the housing development for the site would be progressive and creative in design and be an example for Belfast and Northern Ireland. Housing would be mixed tenure and mixed type to reflect the needs of different segments of the community and to build a future, sustainable society.

Housing is recognised as a “sensitive issue”. The preferred option of the Department is shared housing.

For the purposes of the EQIA, the Department considers ***that any differential impacts identified and conclusions made in respect of catholic and protestant religious groups are similar to differential impacts identified for the main political groups ie Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist/Republican***.

The Department recognise that cross-community dialogue is essential to the development of the site and towards that end a commitment is made to continue to work with political and community leaders to achieve a resolution that ensures that the equality needs of all communities are fully recognised and incorporated in this regeneration project.

Accessibility – Arc Road

A main element of the vehicular access strategy is the proposal for a new road, the 'Arc Route', linking the Antrim and Crumlin Roads and giving direct access to the heart of the site. The draft masterplan proposes that the new road should be designed to discourage excessive traffic and 'rat-running'.

The Department considers ***that there is the potential of an adverse impact by the proposed road to persons of different religious belief and political opinion.***

In its consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies, the Department may reconsider the 'draft masterplan proposals in relation to the roads and traffic flows and firm up on the detailed design to ensure traffic management measures will be put in place to ensure access for all communities.'

Summary

The Department's preference is explicitly stated: 'to provide shared housing and shared space on the site'; as well as its intention to 'work with the community and political leaders to achieve this' (p.51: 7.12). In reaffirming that vision, the Department acknowledges that the development of the site should seek to address the concerns and needs of all communities living in the area and to that end it recognises that further and ongoing cross-community dialogue is essential.

In order to achieve the objective of developing the site as shared space, the Department suggests that following measures may need to be considered:

1. Locating part or all of the housing accommodation to specific parts of the site.
2. Reconsider the draft masterplan proposals in relation to the roads and traffic flows and firm up on the detailed design to ensure traffic management measures will be put in place to ensure access for all communities.
3. First phase development could focus on economic development tourism at the gaol as a means of creating a shared space, job and wealth creation.
4. An employment and skills training outreach programme, encouraging people from the local communities to work on the site.
5. Setting up an implementation body, consisting of a range of stakeholders including the local community to develop the site.
6. Working with local communities and stakeholders to develop a shared housing scheme targeted at perhaps older people and families.
7. Emphasis on safety in the public realm for all sections of the community using and accessing the site with practical measures such as good street lighting and open spaces.

8. Improved public transport into and throughout the site (also providing social economy opportunities) as well as environmentally friendly and sustainable transportation routes.
9. Taking account of the views of young people in designing facilities and services.
10. Incorporating employment targets in the development of the site and provision of services for people who are unemployed.
11. Creating opportunities for social economy projects from both communities and cross community.
12. Creating a focal point for the provision of some community services and organisations required by all in the area.
13. Creating awareness of facilities and opportunities for communities through an education programme with local schools; conference and meeting facilities provided for local organisations.
14. Events provided or requested by organisations to serve the local communities.
15. Development Brief for private housing to stipulate that a percentage are affordable homes mainly targeting 'first time buyers'.
16. Other physical changes to the Masterplan.