

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Template (RNIA)

Section 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority

Belfast City Council

1B. Please provide a short title, which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to the Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS)

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan for Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

Over the last 18 months, Belfast City Council together with commissioned external consultants AECOM have been working on the development of the BOSS with partners and stakeholders. The BOSS has been developed based on engagement internally with inter-departmental council officers and externally with statutory, community and voluntary organisations, a review of key strategies, policies and plans and a robust audit of open spaces across the city. The draft BOSS is a high-level document that sets out the vision, strategic principles, opportunities and headline actions for existing and future open spaces across the city. For the purposes of this strategy, open spaces are defined as: ***'land where the primary function is related to their community, amenity, recreation, play and sport value; whether in public or private ownership'. This includes parks, playing fields, play areas and civic space. These open spaces may also have secondary biodiversity benefits and form part of a wider 'green infrastructure' network.*** This includes parks, playing fields, play areas and civic space. Open spaces provide a range of health, economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits that help to make Belfast more sustainable and liveable.

The BOSS represents an over-arching strategy that will guide more detailed typology strategies, area planning approaches and action plans over time. The BOSS is not site specific, but it does set out some opportunities, examples and headline actions to be taken forward across a range of open space typologies.

The BOSS vision is that by 2035 *'Belfast will have a well-connected network of high quality open spaces recognized for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who live in, work in and visits our city'*. A suite of 7 guiding strategic principles (SP), providing the roadmap and identifying opportunities for achieving the vision. Belfast's open spaces will:

- SP1: Provide welcoming shared spaces
- SP2: Improve connectivity
- SP3: Improve health and well-being
- SP4: Support place-making and enhance the built environment
- SP5: Increase resilience to climate change
- SP6: Protect and enhance the natural environment
- SP7: Be celebrated and support learning

A range of opportunities and headline actions have also been identified that are currently underway or planned over the next five years, which are aligned to the strategic principles above. The delivery of the headline action plan will rely on existing budgets or sourcing external and partner funding over the life of the strategy. We will continue to work closely with our partners and stakeholders to help deliver the strategy.

The BOSS will be important for planning purposes and will help inform the Local Development Plan (LDP), deliver the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda, inform future area/ neighbourhood based plans and secure development contributions for investment in parks and open spaces. As a city level strategy, the BOSS seeks to improve open space accessibility, quality and connectivity for everyone in the Belfast area.

Section 2 – Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes No If the response is **NO GO TO Section 2E.**

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The BOSS is a high level strategy that sets out the vision, strategic principles and opportunities for the protection, improvement, creation, accessibility and connectivity of our open space network across the entire City Council area.

Whilst it is not spatially-detailed or site-specific, it includes current and future headline actions and examples across our open spaces. The BOSS is supported by a number of more detailed typology based strategies and/or actions plans for example Growing Communities Strategy and the Playground Improvement plan and in time by area-based plans and approaches and site level improvements and interventions.

Whilst Belfast City Council area is predominantly urban, it also contains countryside areas outside the urban settlement area, including the Belfast, Castlereagh and Holywood Hills and the Lagan Valley Regional Park. Belfast's rural area accounts for approximately 30% (40.75 km²) of the total Belfast City Council area.

The default definition of "rural" used in Northern Ireland is those settlements with populations of less than 5,000, together with the open countryside. The rural population of Belfast (2016 mid-year population estimates, NISRA) is approximately 1,484, including the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview.

Valuable feedback gleaned from pre-consultation with key partners and stakeholders identified positive opportunities and headline actions to support the creation of greenways and improve connectivity and accessibility across the open space network, including links to countryside areas and supports the creation of better pedestrian-cycle facilities within the countryside. The BOSS and the audit of existing open space key typologies is also important for planning purposes and will help inform the LDP and the GBIP, as well as developer contributions, open space investment decisions and area-based planning and approaches. Therefore, the impact of the BOSS will apply positively across the City Council area.

The Council are undertaking a public consultation exercise on the draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy from mid June 2019 and as part of our consultation plan we will build in engagement with residents living in rural areas. Feedback from the public consultation exercise will be used to update this assessment and identify any potential impacts on people in rural areas.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

As stated at 2B above, the BOSS is pitched at a high-level and generally applies across the Council area and therefore applies equally to urban and rural areas.

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2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

- Rural Businesses
- Rural Tourism
- Rural Housing
- Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas
- Education or Training in Rural Areas
- Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas
- Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas
- Poverty in Rural Areas
- Deprivation in Rural Areas
- Rural Crime or Community Safety
- Rural Development
- Agri-Environment
- Other (Please state)

Please note that a number of the above impacts may be secondary impacts of the DPS, such as transport/infrastructure, poverty, deprivation and crime.

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

N/A

Section 3 – Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes No If the response is **NO GO TO** Section **3E**.

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

N/A

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority

N/A

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

As stated in 2B above, the BOSS vision, strategic principles, opportunities and headline actions generally applies across the council area. The strategy and the open space audit can be used at an area/ neighbourhood level for planning purposes and will help inform development contribution decisions in urban or rural areas. The strategy supports the creation of greenways and encourages opportunities to improve connectivity and accessibility of open spaces right across the city, including the countryside. It therefore applies equally to urban and rural areas. Open spaces provide a range of health, economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits, which will benefit the entire City Council area.

The council has undertaken research to identify the social and economic needs of the city, including its rural area, as part of the LDP process. Although separate, the BOSS is aligned to the LDP. The draft LDP includes a planning policy and references the BOSS and other associated strategies or action plans. Therefore, whilst the research work was not carried out specifically for the BOSS, nor was it exclusive to the rural area, the socio-economic needs of the rural area have been considered through the LDP process.

The city wide audit of existing open space typologies is important for planning purposes and will help inform the LDP as well as future area action plans, development contribution decisions and capital programmes. The pre-consultation and consultation on the draft BOSS was citywide and will include 12 weeks public consultation on the draft strategy.

Section 4 – Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

N/A

Section 5 – Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **5C**.

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified?

N/A

If the response to Section 5A was YES GO TO Section 6A

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

As stated at 2B and 3E above, the BOSS generally applies across the council area and it applies equally to urban and rural areas. The primary purpose of the BOSS relates to the importance of improving accessibility, quality and connectivity of our open spaces across the city and that they are recognised for the range of health, economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits, they bring to the entire City Council area. Feedback from pre-consultation with partners and stakeholders identified the need to improve connectivity and accessibility across the open space network, including links to the countryside.

As set out at 3E above, the council has undertaken research to identify the social and economic needs of the city, including its rural area, as part of the LDP process. Extensive engagement and consultation has also taken place on the draft LDP. Whilst the BOSS is separate from the LDP, there is a linkage between the two. In this regard, the responses to the extensive public consultation on the first stage of the LDP (the Preferred Options Paper) were used to inform the development of the BOSS.

Therefore, the BOSS does not seek to specifically address either urban or rural needs.

SECTION 6 – Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Karen Anderson-Gillespie
Position / Grade:	Policy and Business Development Officer
Division / Branch:	City and Neighbourhood Services
Signature:	
Date:	18/02/19
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	
Position / Grade:	
Division / Branch:	
Signature:	
Date:	