

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CRUMLIN ROAD GAOL/GIRDWOOD PARK,
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

1. Do you consider that any of the policy impacts adversely on any of the Section 75 groups?

Section 75 Groups are:

- persons of different religious belief;
- political opinion;
- racial group;
- age;
- marital status;
- sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

YES

2. If the answer to question 1 is "Yes", please tell us:

- Which groups do you think the policy affects? and
- How do you think these groups would be adversely affected?

Persons of different religious belief / political opinion / men and women generally.

The consultation document specifically states that 'Housing stress in the Catholic community cannot be catered for within current and projected housing provision' and that 'housing stress within Protestant areas in North Belfast can be accommodated within existing plans.'
(6.50)

We are extremely disappointed that the wording of 6.49 – 6.51 seems to effectively preclude either the possibility or even the desirability of Protestant social housing – the assumption being that there is a right for the Catholic population to have housing in a particular location, and that Protestants can be housed elsewhere (presumably in their own areas too).

The EQIA implications of this policy, if implemented, are that it will substantially increase the perception that the WHOLE of the site is a largely Nationalist area, and that since very few Protestants can be expected to live there (as suggested / implied by the analysis in EQIA), employment opportunities will be hugely lessened for the Loyalist / Unionist community.

We would challenge the Department to give good examples of areas in Belfast where there is a substantial amount of Nationalist social housing and where workers from a Protestant background work and integrate readily.

In a word, housing allocation and policy in and around the Girdwood site will, in practice, be a major determinant of the accessibility of all sections of the community to employment / leisure opportunities, and that unless it is a specifically inclusive policy, it will impact adversely on those excluded.

3. What alternative action might mitigate or lessen any adverse impact on these groups?

We have 4 main proposals. The common thread is to make the whole area a place where a diverse range of people wish to move TO. A whole new community should be sought for the residential element of this site (both social and private), not just a tapping into existing demand.

(a) That housing be built on the site for the staff of the Mater hospital (who are very mixed, both ethnically and in terms of religious affiliation) and for others employed on the site (eg Gaol)

(b) That social housing be moved away from Cliftonpark Avenue towards the inner regions of the site, so that there is no possibility of an interface developing.

(c) That the frontage on Cliftonpark Avenue be re-designed to take account of (b) above

(d) That the areas contiguous to the whole site be subject to careful and parallel re-development to ensure that there is maximum buy-in from all sections of the community to the redevelopment of the central Girdwood site. We regard this as being very important.

4. What changes to the policy might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations?

The almost total absence in the masterplan of the desire to build a NEW community in and around the site is very disappointing – especially given the emphasis on the potential of international tourism to benefit the area.

The emphasis in the plan must be on building a new future, not just on better facilities for the existing population.

Such a change of emphasis would be a huge contribution to promoting and actually achieving equality of opportunity and good relations.

5. Do you agree or disagree with the overall conclusions in the Equality Impact Assessment?

Disagree (If you disagree, please say why)

Given the Panel's lack of agreement on the housing issue (7.10), and our own deep concerns about this matter, it is premature to suggest that all the other conclusions are satisfactorily resolved.

If there cannot be agreement on who will physically occupy the land involved, it is not possible to express full confidence in many of the other conclusions.

SIGNED: (Rev) Norman Hamilton

ORGANISATION: on behalf of the North Belfast Presbytery of Presbyterian Church in Ireland

DATE: 20 January 2009