

Policy Screening Form

Policy Scoping

Policy Title: Empty to Occupied Programme

Brief Description of Policy (please attach copy if available). Please state if it is a new, existing or amended policy.

The Scheme is a grant scheme which aims to encourage vacant commercial property owners to invest in their buildings, attract tenants and reduce long term vacancy.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (the 'Council') have committed to deliver the Scheme to support property owners and occupiers in bringing vacant properties back in to commercial or residential use. The scheme will create opportunities for tenants, those seeking employment and improve the vitality and vibrancy of our towns and villages for the benefit of users and visitors.

Property owners wishing to undertake external and internal property improvement works to enhance the lettable, functionality and appearance of their property will be able to apply for grant assistance through the Scheme.

Intended aims/outcomes. What is the policy trying to achieve?

The Scheme outcomes will:

- Tackle prominent long-term vacant properties within the Borough's 'Settlement Development Limits'
- Impact positively on the streetscape of our cities, towns and villages.
- Provide good high specification buildings.
- Create buildings that are fit for purpose and ready to occupy.
- Create potential to attract meanwhile or long-term tenants.
- Bring floor space back into use.

Policy Framework

Has the policy been developed in response to statutory requirements, legal advice or on the basis of any other professional advice? Does this affect the discretion available to Council to amend the policy?

This policy is not in response to any statutory requirement or legal advice etc. The aim of this project is to encourage vacant commercial property owners to invest in their buildings, attract tenants and reduce dereliction and long term vacancy, thereby improving the vitality and vibrancy of our towns and villages.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, please outline.

The Council will not consider applications from Applicants that discriminate against Section 75 groupings.

A key objective of the scheme is to encourage investment in old building stock in the borough. The scheme requires that all statutory approvals (e.g. planning permission and building control approval) are obtained and this should ensure that improvements to the accessibility of existing buildings are delivered through the works undertaken. This will improve opportunities for persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependants and persons without.

Who initiated or wrote the policy (if Council decision, please state). Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

Who initiated or wrote policy?	Who is responsible for implementation?
The policy was initiated by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council's Regeneration Department.	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and a team of professional advisors.

Are there any factors which might contribute to or detract from the implementation of the policy (e.g. financial, legislative, other)?

Financial – availability of funding
Legislation – Unlikely to affect the implementation of the scheme

Main stakeholders in relation to the policy

Please list main stakeholders affected by the policy (e.g. staff, service users, other statutory bodies, community or voluntary sector, private sector)

The main stakeholders affected by the policy will be council officers and the business community.

Are there any other policies with a bearing on this policy? If so, please identify them and how they impact on this policy.

Yes, there is both local and regional policy that has a bearing on this policy. They are:

- Community Plan for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 2017-2030
- Regeneration & Development Strategy for Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council 2015-2020
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council- Corporate Plan 2018-2023
- NI Regional Development Strategy 2035
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland
- Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework 2013

Available Evidence

Council should ensure that its screening decisions are informed by relevant data. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Consultation Method	Dates
Engagement with regeneration team, other teams within council	Various engagement over 2020 and 2021 with Estates, Procurement, Legal and Regeneration and comments considered and incorporated.
Consultation workshops with Elected Members	Consultation undertaken at DEA Town Centre Task Force Meetings
Reports to Economic Development and Regeneration Committee	10 March 2020 and 12 January 2021
DEA Town Centre Task Force consultation	Throughout February 2020 and November 2021

Religious belief	The 2011 Census showed that 43% of the population in the Borough were either Catholic or brought up as Catholic and 52% belonged to or were brought up in Protestant, other Christian or Christian-related denominations. A further 1% belonged to or had been brought up in other religions, while 5% neither belonged to, nor had been brought up in, a religion.
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Political opinion	<p>Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council has 41 elected members, the breakdown of seats by political party is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Unionist Party – 11 • Ulster Unionist Party - 10 • Sinn Fein - 10 • Social Democratic and Labour Party - 6 • Alliance - 3 • Independent – 1 <p>A total of 79,309 votes were polled in the borough from an eligible electorate of 147,977 giving a turnout of 53.6%. This breakdown is taken as an approximate representation of the political opinion of people within the Borough.</p>
Racial group	<p>The 2011 Census showed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98.5% of the usually resident population of the Borough were White and 1.5% were from minority ethnic groups. The main ethnic minorities were Mixed (605 individuals), Chinese (528 individuals) and Other Asian (463 individuals). • 89.0% of residents in the Borough were born in Northern Ireland. The Borough had 5.4% of residents or 10,846 individuals who were born outside the United Kingdom or Republic of Ireland. • 4.1% of residents aged 3+ years or (7,896 individuals) spoke a language other than English or Irish as their main language. Apart from English and Irish, the most common other main languages were Polish (2,919 residents aged 3+ years), Lithuanian (1,736) and Portuguese (834). Of those whose main language is not English or Irish, 34% cannot speak English or cannot speak it well (based on the three legacy council areas).
Age	<p>The population of the Borough was estimated to be 216,205 at 30 June 2019. The profile by age group is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-15 years - 23% • 16-39 years - 30% • 40-64 years - 32% • 65+ years - 16% <p>The Borough has a growing and ageing population. The population of the Borough is projected to increase by almost 8% or 16,675 people over the next 10 years to 2029. The largest percentage increase is projected in the 65 and over age group (29%). Within this age group the number aged 85 and over are projected to increase by an extra 1,781 people (46%).</p>
Marital status	<p>The 2011 Census provides information on the marital status profile of those aged 16 and over in the Borough:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single (never married or never registered a same-sex civil partnership) - 34% • Married - 51% • In a registered same-sex civil partnership - 0.1%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a same-sex civil partnership) - 4% • Divorced or formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved - 5% • Widowed or surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership - 7%
Sexual orientation	<p>The 2011 Census did not include a question on sexual identity. The Continuous Household Survey provides results on the sexual identity of persons aged 16 and over. In 2017/18 - 2019/20, 98% of respondents to the survey identified as Heterosexual/Straight, 1% as Gay/Lesbian and 1% as Bisexual in the Borough. Note figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.</p> <p>Results from the 2019 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey showed for adults aged 18 and over in NI overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am 'gay' or 'lesbian' (homosexual) - 2% • I am heterosexual or 'straight' - 90% • I am bi-sexual - 1% • Other answer - 1% • I do not wish to answer this question – 7% <p>Note figures may not sum due to rounding.</p>
Men and women generally	<p>The 2011 Census showed that in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 49% (98,713) of usual residents were males and 51% (100,980) were females.</p> <p>Population estimates for 2019 show the borough is made up of 107,540 (49.7%) males and 108,665 (50.3%) females.</p>
Disability	<p>In 2011, one fifth (20%) of people (or 39,861 individuals) in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough had a long-term health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities.</p> <p>The Family Resources Survey showed, using data for 2015/16 to 2017/18, 19% of individuals in the Borough were disabled, similar to the level in NI overall (21%).</p> <p>Benefit statistics from the Department for Communities showed as of May 2020 there were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,120 or 4.4% of under 16 population and 6,070 or 18.1% of 65 and over population claiming Disability Living Allowance • 5,550 or 16.6% of 65 and over population claiming Attendance Allowance • 15,130 Personal Independence Payment claims in payment (experimental statistics).
Dependants	<p>The 2011 Census showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36% or 27,287 households in the Borough contained dependent children. • 12% of the population (or 23,101 individuals) provided unpaid care. Of those who provided unpaid support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% provided 1-19 hours per week, • 17% provided 20-49 hours per week, and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% provided 50+ hours per week. • <p>Benefit statistics from the Department for Communities show that at May 2020, there were 7,940 claimants or 4.7% of 16 and over population claiming Carer's Allowance in the Borough.</p>
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Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information gathered above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories in relation to this particular policy/decision?

Section 75 category	Needs, experiences and priorities
Religious belief	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this specific section 75 group.
Political opinion	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this specific section 75 group.
Racial group	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this specific section 75 group.
Age	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this specific section 75 group.
Marital status	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this specific section 75 group.
Sexual orientation	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this specific section 75 group.
Men and women generally	There is no evidence of any different needs, experiences or priorities for this specific section 75 group.
Disability	The scheme will ensure that improvements to buildings will comply with building control regulations and are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. This will improve access for those with disabilities and those with dependants
Dependants	The scheme will ensure that improvements to buildings will comply with building control regulations and are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. This will improve access for those with disabilities and those with dependants

Screening Questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy for each of the Section 75 categories?

Category	Policy Impact	Level of impact (Major/minor/none)
Religious belief	The policy aims to improve the vitality and vibrancy of our City towns and villages it	None

	is not felt that the policy will have an adverse impact on people with different religious beliefs	
Political opinion	The policy aims to improve the vitality and vibrancy of our City, towns and villages it is not felt that the policy will have an adverse impact on people with different political opinions	None
Racial group	The policy aims to improve the vitality and vibrancy of our City towns and villages it is not felt that the policy will have an adverse impact on people from different racial/ ethnic groups	None
Age	The policy aims to improve the vitality and vibrancy of our City towns and villages it is not felt that the policy will have an adverse impact on any age groups	None
Marital status	The policy aims to improve the vitality and vibrancy of our City towns and villages it is not felt that the policy will have an adverse impact on people of different marital status	None
Sexual orientation	The policy aims to improve the vitality and vibrancy of our City towns and villages it is not felt that the policy will have an adverse impact on people of different sexual orientation	None
Men and women generally	The policy aims to improve the vitality and vibrancy of our City towns and villages it is not felt that the policy will have an adverse impact on people of different gender	None
Disability	The scheme will ensure that improvements to buildings will comply with building control regulations and are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. This will improve access for those with disabilities and those with dependants	Positive minor

Dependents	The scheme will ensure that improvements to buildings will comply with building control regulations and are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. This will improve access for those with disabilities and those with dependants	Positive Minor
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2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities
Political opinion	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities
Racial group	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities
Age	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities
Marital status	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities
Sexual orientation	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities
Men and women generally	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities
Disability	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities
Dependents	No	Applied equally to all individuals and communities

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group?

Category	Details of Policy Impact	Level of impact (major/minor/none)
Religious belief	Applied equally to all individuals and communities	None
Political opinion	Applied equally to all individuals and communities	None
Racial group	Applied equally to all individuals and communities	None

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

Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief	Applied equally to all individuals and communities	None
Political opinion	Applied equally to all individuals and communities	None

Racial group	Applied equally to all individuals and communities	None
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Multiple Identity

Generally speaking, people fall into more than one Section 75 category (for example: disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; young lesbian, gay and bisexual people). Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant s75 categories concerned.

N/A

Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006

Is there an opportunity for the policy to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

N/A

Is there an opportunity for the policy to encourage participation by disabled people in public life?

N/A

Screening Decision

A: NO IMPACT IDENTIFIED ON ANY CATEGORY – EQIA UNNECESSARY

Please identify reasons for this below

The Empty to Occupied Programme aims to improve the physical environment for all its users. It is considered that the scheme will not have an adverse impact on any of the Section 75 groups. In fact the scheme will ensure that improvements to buildings will comply with building control regulations and are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. This will improve access for those with disabilities and those with dependants.

The Council will not consider applications from Applicants that discriminate against Section 75 groupings.

The aim of this project is to encourage vacant commercial property owners to invest in their buildings, attract tenants and reduce long term vacancy, thereby improving the vitality and vibrancy of our towns and villages for all users.

B: MINOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA NOT CONSIDERED NECESSARY AS IMPACT CAN BE ELIMINATED OR MITIGATED

Where the impact is likely to be minor, you should consider if the policy can be mitigated or an alternative policy introduced. If so, an EQIA may not be considered necessary. You must indicate the reasons for this decision below, together with details of measures to mitigate the adverse impact or the alternative policy proposed.

C: MAJOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA REQUIRED

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

Not Required

Timetabling and Prioritising

If the policy has been screened in for equality impact assessment, please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3 with 1 being the lowest priority 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	
Social need	
Effect on people's daily lives	

The total rating score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the council in timetabling its EQIAs.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? If yes, please give details.

N/A

Monitoring

Effective monitoring will help the authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy. It is recommended that where a policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced to mitigate adverse impact, monitoring be undertaken on a broader basis to identify any impact (positive or adverse).

Further information on monitoring is available in the Equality Commission's guidance on monitoring (www.equalityni.org).

Identify how the impact of the policy is to be monitored

The response to the implementation of this programme will be monitored, Furthermore, there will be a commitment to continue to monitor through each stage of implementation, and to keep a register of any complaints that may attach to section 75 considerations. Where issues attaching to section 75 grounds are identified then they will be remedied accordingly.

Approval and Authorisation

A copy of the screening form for each policy screened should be signed off by the senior manager responsible for that policy. The screening recommendation should be reported to the relevant Committee/Council when the policy is submitted for approval.

Screened by	Position/Job title	Date
Laura McGahan	Development Officer	19 February 2021
Approved by	Position/Job Title	Date
Samuel Dalzell	Development Manager	30 March 2021

Please forward a copy of the completed policy and form to:

mary.hanna@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

who will ensure these are made available on the Council's website.

The above officer is also responsible for issuing reports on a quarterly basis on those policies "screened out for EQIA". This allows stakeholders who disagree with this recommendation to submit their views. In the event of any stakeholder disagreeing with the decision to screen out any policy, the screening exercise will be reviewed.