

Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

Summary	
Application Ref: LA04/2023/4543/F	Committee Meeting Date: 17th June 2025
Proposal: Proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting.	Location: 885 Shore Road, Belfast, BT36 7DH
Referral Route: Council is Applicant	
Recommendation:	Approval
Applicant Name and Address: Stephen McCullough Belfast City Council 9 Adelaide 9-21 Adelaide Street Belfast	Agent Name and Address: James McMonagle, Gregory Architects 4 Crescent Gardens Belfast BT7 1NS
Executive Summary The application seeks planning permission for a proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting. The site is located at 885 Shore Road in North Belfast. Onsite there are sports pitches with small pavilions and associated parking. There are a number of trees throughout the site and around the site periphery. The key issues relevant to consideration of the application are: • Principle of the proposed use • Access and Transportation • Impact on amenity • Impact on the character and appearance of the area • Open space • Climate change • Health impacts • Environmental protection • Contaminated land • Natural heritage and protected species • Trees Statutory consultees have raised no objection, with the exception of NI Water, however final consultee responses from Environmental Health, DAERA: Natural Environment Division and Shared Environmental Services are outstanding.	

Recommendation

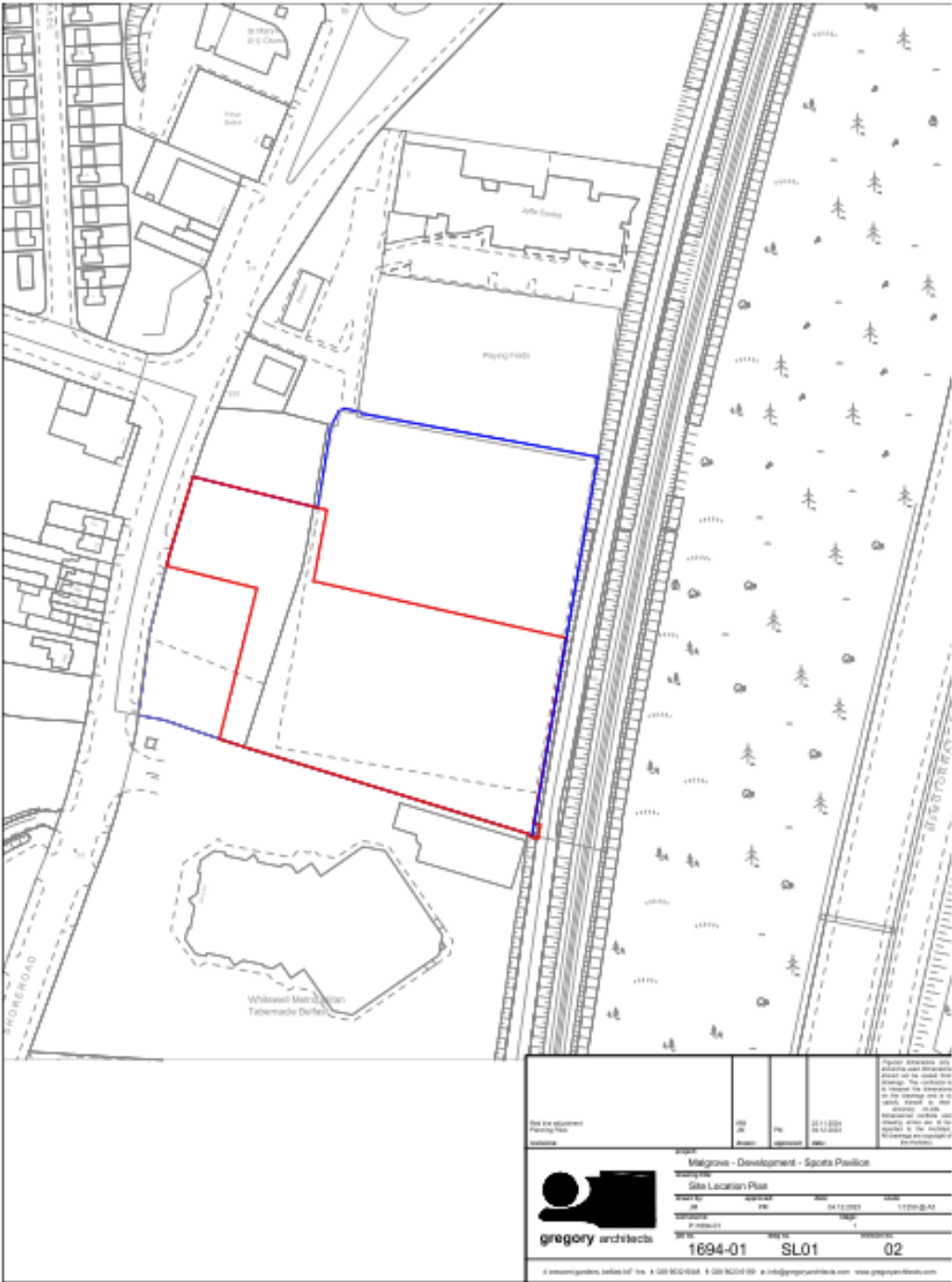
Having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal is acceptable.

It is recommended that planning permission is approved. Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to resolve final responses from Environmental Health, DAERA: Natural Environment Division (NED) and Shared Environmental Services, finalise the wording of conditions and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive.

Officer Report

1.0 Drawings

1.1 Site Location

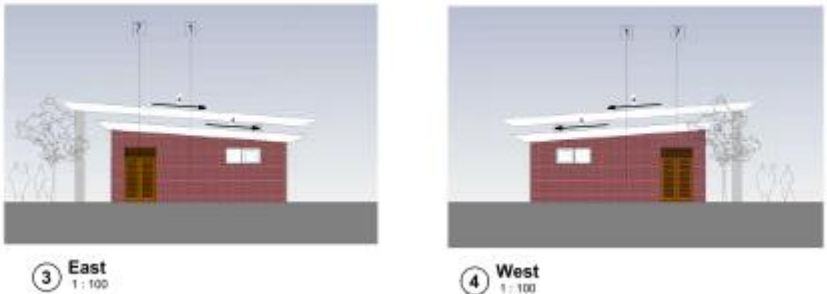


Proposed Site Layout



Proposed Elevations



	
2.0	Characteristics of the Site and Area
2.1	The site is located at 885 Shore Road, Belfast. The site encompasses playing fields and is enclosed with fencing. There are existing pavillions within the site. To the west of the site lies an existing NIE sub station and an area for car parking. Further north of the site is the Loughshore Education Resource Centre which is an education resource centre. To the south of the site is Whitewell Church. There are a number of trees throughout the site and around the site periphery. The site is zoned as land identified as open space designated in dBMAP.
3.0	Description of Proposal
3.1	The application seeks full planning permission for a proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting.
4.0	Planning Policy and Other Material Considerations
4.1	Development Plan – operational policies Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035
4.1.1	Policies in the Plan Strategy relevant to the application include the following: - Policy SP1A – managing growth and supporting infrastructure delivery - Policy SP2 – Sustainable development - Policy SP3 – Improving health and wellbeing - Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure - Policy OS5 – Intensive sports facilities - Policy OS7 - Floodlighting - Policy ENV1 – Environmental quality - Policy ENV2 – Mitigating environmental change - Policy ENV3 – Adapting to environmental change - Policy ENV4 – Flood Risk - Policy ENV5 – Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) - Policy HC1 – Promoting healthy communities - Policy GB1 – Green and blue infrastructure network - Policy OS3 - Ancillary open space - Policy TRE1 – Trees - Policy NH1 – Protection of natural heritage resources - Policy TRAN1 – Active Travel – Walking and Cycling

4.2	Policy TRAN2 – Creating an accessible environment Policy TRAN6 – Access to public roads Policy TRAN8 – Car parking and servicing arrangements Development Plan – zoning, designations and proposals maps Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) BUAP Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014) Regional Planning Policy Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) Relevant Planning History Z/2009/0086/F - Installation of temporary sports changing facilities (soccer), including erection of 1.8m high security fencing and upgraded pedestrian access path (bitmac) from existing car park. – Permission Granted 21/05/2009 Z/2012/0511/F - 3G pitch with floodlighting, dugouts and stand, 6no 5-a-side pitches and associated car parking (amended description, amended red line and amended plans received) – Permission Granted 17/04/2013 Z/2014/0557/F - New 3g pitch with floodlighting, dugouts, fencing and 200 seater stand. previously approved pitches to be altered slightly and associated car parking to be provided – Permission Granted 14/03/2017
5.0	Consultations and Representations
5.1	Statutory Consultations. NI Water – Refusal DFI Roads – No objection subject to conditions. Historic Environment Division (HED) – No objection DAERA – Comments outstanding Shared Environmental Service – To be reconsulted once DAERA comments returned Translink – No Objection DfI Rivers – No Objection
5.2	Non-Statutory Consultations Environmental Health – Comments outstanding Trees Belfast City Council – No objection subject to conditions.
5.3	Representations The Council has received no representations from neighbours or third parties.
6.0	PLANNING ASSESSMENT
6.1	Development Plan Context
6.1.1	Section 6(4) of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 states that in making any determinations under the Act, regard is to be had to the local development plan, and the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.1.2	Section 45(1) of the Act states that in determining planning applications, the Council must have regard to the local development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.
6.1.3	The Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP), when fully completed, will replace the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 as the statutory Development Plan for the city. The Belfast LDP will comprise two parts. Part 1 is the Plan Strategy, which contains strategic and operational policies and was adopted on 02 May 2023. Part 2 is the Local Policies Plan, which will provide the zonings and proposals maps for Belfast and has not yet been published. The zonings and proposals maps in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 remain part of the statutory local development plan ("Departmental Development Plan") until the Local Policies Plan is adopted.
6.1.4	Operational policies – the Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application, which are set out in section 4.0 of this report. The Plan Strategy replaces the operational policies previously provided by the Departmental Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). Those policies no longer have effect, irrespective of whether planning applications have been received before or after the adoption date (par. 1.11 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement).
6.1.5	Proposals Maps – until such time as the Local Policies Plan is adopted, the Council must have regard to the land-use zonings, designations, and proposals maps in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001, both versions of the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (v2004 and v2014) (draft BMAP 2015) and other relevant area plans. The weight to be afforded to these proposals is a matter for the decision maker. It is considered that significant weight should be given to the proposals map in draft BMAP 2015 (v2014) given its advanced stage in the development process, save for retail policies that relate to Sprucefield which remain contentious.
6.1.6	The site is zoned as land identified as open space in both dBMAP (v2004) and dBMAP (v2014).
6.2	Key Issues
6.2.1	The key issues to be considered in this application are: • Principle of the proposed use • Access and transportation • Impact on amenity • Impact on the character and appearance of the area • Open space • Climate change • Health impacts • Wastewater infrastructure • Flooding • Environmental protection • Contaminated land • Natural heritage • Protected species • Trees •
6.2	Principle of the proposed use Given the proposal retains recreational use, the use of the site has already been established. The proposal seeks to alter the playing surface from grass to an all-

6.3	weather surface. It is considered that the proposal, which will provide enhanced recreational facilities, provides a betterment for the community.
	Access and Transportation The scale of development and transport implications of the proposal were assessed by DFI Roads and considered to be acceptable. The proposal is considered acceptable having regard to Policies TRAN1, TRAN2, TRAN6, and TRAN 8, and relevant provisions of the SPPS.
6.4	Impact on Amenity: Policy CI1 relating to community infrastructure expresses that the Council will seek to protect and provide development opportunities for community health and leisure among other facilities based on local need. There should be no unacceptable impact on the amenities of people living nearby by reason of the siting, scale, extent, frequency or timing of the sporting activities proposed, including any noise or light pollution likely to be generated. The proposed new changing pavilions, turnstiles, ancillary facilities and floodlighting are not located immediately adjacent to any neighbouring dwellings for loss of light or overshadowing to occur. BCC Env H raised no concerns with regards to proposed floodlighting subject to conditions should approval be granted.
6.5	Character and Appearance of the Area: The proposed pavillions and floodlighting are considered sympathetic to the existing site and surrounding area, and not would have a negligible visual impact on the locality. Public views of the surface would read as green space/playing surface. The associated fencing and in particular floodlights would have a greater visual impact. However, public views of such structures would largely be limited to near distance views from Shore Road which is West of the site.
6.6	All structures are of a scale and character that would be reasonably expected at a sports facility. The proposed scale, form, massing, design and materials are considered acceptable and will not adversely impact on local character. It is considered that existing trees around the site periphery would also filter views of the structures and on balance, the proposal would not result in unacceptable detrimental visual impacts.
6.7	Open Space Policy OS5 relating to intensive sports facilities states that planning permission will be granted for the provision of new and extended intensive sports facilities where it is located within settlement limits, is accessible and there are no unacceptable impacts on the amenity of people living near-by.
6.8	The proposal complies with the policy, it is located within an accessible location within a settlement and will not impact on the amenity of near-by residents as for the reason previously stated.
6.9	Climate change Policy ENV2 states that planning permission will be granted for development that

	incorporates measures to mitigate environmental change and reduce greenhouse gases by promoting sustainable patterns of development. Policy ENV3 states that planning permission will be granted for development that incorporates measures to adapt to environmental change. The proposed building uses a fabric first design approach to reduce energy demand by minimising heat loss and optimising solar gain. The site waste management plan includes a BRE smart waste system which will be used to prevent waste, reuse where possible and recycle, and last resort put waste to landfill.
6.10	The proposed pitch is to include materials to that are natural and biodegradable demonstrated by the use of corn cobs, cork or olive pits filling. This will be secured via condition.
6.11	Policy ENV5 states that all built development shall include, where appropriate, SuDs measures to manage surface water effectively on site, to reduce surface water run-off and to ensure flooding is not increased elsewhere. The proposal naturally includes large areas of open green space and therefore complies with Policy ENV5.
6.12	Health Impacts Policy HC1 seeks to ensure that all new developments maximise opportunities to promote healthy and active lifestyles. New developments should be designed, constructed and managed in ways that improve health and promote healthy lifestyles. This will include supporting active travel options, improving accessibility to local service centres, reducing the use of private car travel, adequate provision of public open space, leisure and recreation facilities, high quality design and promoting balanced communities and sustainable neighbourhoods. The site is highly accessible and will provide an excellent community infrastructure that will help contribute to the health and wellbeing of the community over a long-term basis. The proposal is considered to satisfy the requirements of Policy HC1.
6.13	Wastewater infrastructure Policy SP1A requires that necessary infrastructure is in place to support new development. NI Water have recommended the proposal be refused due to network capacity issues. They highlighted the downstream catchment is constrained by overloaded sewage infrastructure including one or more downstream Unsatisfactory Intermittent Discharges (UID's) which are causing a negative impact on the environment. This part of Belfast catchment is constrained by lengths of downstream sewer operating above capacity. NI Water suggested the Applicant should liaise directly with them.
6.14	Policy SP1a requires that necessary infrastructure is in place to support new development. NI Water has objected to the proposal on grounds of network capacity issues. It advises that existing public waste-water infrastructure cannot currently support the proposal without significant risk of environmental harm and detrimental impact on existing properties. However, no clear evidence has been provided to demonstrate specific harm resulting from the development. Moreover, NI Water has a duty to connect committed development across the city to its waste-water infrastructure. Such development, which includes significant levels of residential and commercial floor space across the city, will not all come forward at once and some may not come forward at all.
6.15	

6.16	DAERA: Water Management Unit (WMU) also highlighted concerns with respect to sewage disposal and suggested this should be agreed in writing with NI Water or a Consent to Discharge granted prior to commencement of development.
6.17	DAERA: WMU requested further information relating to the maintenance and management of the 3G pitch. Details of the how the infill crumb will be prevented from entering the drainage system as well as a cleaning/maintenance schedule were forwarded and they responded with no further objections and directed BCC Planning towards DfI Rivers as the authoritative body with regards to flooding. The proposed pitch is to include materials to that are natural and bio degradable demonstrated by the use of corn cobs, cork or olive pits filling and this will be secured via condition.
6.18	For these reasons, it would be unreasonable for the Council to refuse planning permission on these grounds and the proposal is considered acceptable having regard to Policy SP1A of the Plan Strategy. A condition will be included to require full details of foul and surface water drainage be submitted and agreed prior to commencement of the development.
6.19	Flooding The site lies within the Q100 floodplain and development is not normally permitted within that. The proposal is considered an exception however (U4 as an exception within an undefended area) since it is the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation. Both a Flood Risk Assessment as well as Drainage Assessment were submitted in support of the proposal. DfI Rivers were consulted and are satisfied with the mitigation measures proposed and it is therefore considered that the proposal complies with policy and acceptable flood risk protections measures are proposed.
6.20	Environmental Protection Policy ENV1 states that planning permission will be granted for development that will maintain and, where possible, enhance environmental quality, and protects communities from materially harmful development. The proposed development has been assessed by Environmental Health in terms of contaminated land, air quality, noise and odour impacts. Whilst comments are outstanding currently in relation to the risk posed by contaminated land, previous comments confirm EHO have no objection to the proposal relating to all other aspects. Delegated authority is sought to resolve a final response
6.21	Contaminated Land The contaminated land reports provided with the application have been reviewed by Environmental Health and further information was requested. This was submitted and a further consultation was issued to Environmental Health. Delegated authority is sought to resolve a final response. Natural Heritage and protected species Policy NH1 relates to the protection of natural heritage resources. Policy NH1 and Policy OS7 relates to the protection of protected species. NIEA and SES were consulted on the proposal. At the time of writing comments from NED are outstanding. Initial comments returned raised concern regarding the impact of floodlighting on bats, as well as some tree felling. Additional information submitted by the Agent pertaining to this issue has been forwarded for review to NED. Once received SES will be

6.22	reconsulted. Delegated authority is sought to resolve the final responses from DAERA and SES subject to no substantive issues being raised. Trees The BCC Tree Officer requested additional information in order to fully assess the potential impact of the proposal. A tree protection plan as well as detailed landscaping details were submitted and forwarded for comments. Details submitted within the tree schedule show 9 x existing trees recommended to be removed due to poor condition, the 9 x trees are outside the boundary area. It is noted within the condition survey to notify the applicable landowner of their poor condition so appropriate action can be taken. 1 beech tree (TP27) to be taken to a monolith (reduced to its main stem) due to poor condition which will help retain future habitat value as non-living standing wood; 3 willow and 1 sycamore trees are to be removed to facilitate the proposal which are low in terms of public visual amenity value and young according to BCC Tree Officers. Any trees removed should be compensated with suitable and appropriate replacement tree planting along with additional landscaping features to help ensure future site privacy aspects are met. There should be a strong emphasis on the Southery boundary. 12 no trees are proposed as replacement planting and a final soft landscaping plan shall be conditioned be agreed in writing with the council prior to any works commencing on site.
6.23	The proposal would not cause an unacceptable loss of existing trees which contribute significantly to local environmental quality. Appropriate conditions are necessary to ensure the protection of existing trees and to secure appropriate planting of additional trees
7	Recommendation
7.1	Having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal is considered acceptable. It is recommended that planning permission is approved.
7.2	Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the approval reason and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive.
DRAFT CONDITIONS: 1.The development hereby permitted must be begun within five years from the date of this permission. Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. 2.No development shall commence on site (other than site clearance, site preparation, demolition and the formation of foundations and trenches) unless details of foul and surface water drainage, including a programme for implementation of these works, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The development shall not be carried out unless in accordance with the approved details, which shall be retained as such thereafter. Reason: To ensure appropriate foul and surface water drainage of the site. Approval is required upfront because the design of the drainage is an integral part of the development and its acceptability.	

3. The proposed pitch is to include materials that are natural and biodegradable (such as corn cobs, cork or olive pits filling).

Reason: In the interests of environmental protection.

4. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until hard surfaced areas have been constructed within the site in accordance with the approved plan. This area shall not be used at any time for any purpose other than for parking and movement of vehicles in connection with the approved development.

Reason: To ensure that adequate provision has been made for parking and traffic circulation within the site.

5. The vehicular access, including visibility splays, shall be provided in accordance with the approved plan, prior to the commencement of any other works or other development hereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure there is a satisfactory means of access in the interests of road safety and the convenience of road users.

6. The development shall not be occupied until secure and covered cycle parking facilities have been provided on the site. These facilities shall be permanently retained on the site.

Reason: To ensure acceptable cycle parking on the site and to encourage alternative modes of transport to the private car.

7. The hereby approved floodlighting scheme shall be installed in line with the submitted design scheme presented in the Ledture lighting report entitled: 'MALGROVE PAVILLION AND PITCHES', uploaded to the planning portal on 8th May 2024 to ensure compliance with the Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance on the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting at nearby houses.

Reason: Protection of Residential Amenity

8. The approved floodlighting scheme and the pitch shall not be operational between the hours of 22:00 and 07:00hrs on any day.

Reason: Protection of residential amenity

9. All trees and planting within the site shall be retained unless shown on the approved drawings as being removed. Any retained trees or planting indicated on the approved drawings which become seriously damaged, diseased, or dying, shall be replaced during the next planting season (October to March inclusive) with other trees or plants of a location, species and size to be first approved in writing by the Council.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity

10. No development shall commence on site unless a soft landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The scheme shall include details of all trees, hedgerows and other planting which are to be proposed; a planting specification to include [species, size (minimum heavy standard), position and method of planting of all new trees and shrubs]; and a programme of implementation.

Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the area, and to promote

sustainable drainage. Approval is required upfront because the landscaping is critical to the acceptability of the proposal.

11. Prior to any work commencing all protective barriers (fencing) and ground protection is to be erected or installed as specified in British Standard 5837: 2012 (section 6.2) on any trees / hedging to be retained within the site and must be in place before any materials or machinery are brought onto site for demolition, development, or soil stripping. Protective fencing must remain in place until all work is completed, and all associated materials and equipment are removed from site.

Reason: To ensure the protection of, and to ensure the continuity of amenity afforded by any existing trees to be retained within the site and on adjacent lands.

12. No storage of materials, parking of vehicles or plant, temporary buildings, sheds, offices or fires within the RPA of trees within the site and adjacent lands during the construction period.

Reason: To avoid compaction within the RPA.

DRAFT INFORMATIVES

1. This planning permission includes conditions which require further details to be submitted to and approved by the Council. Please read the conditions carefully so that you know when this information needs to be provided and approved. It could take a minimum of 8 weeks for the Council to approve the details, assuming that they are satisfactory, and sometimes longer depending on the complexity of the condition. You should allow for this when planning the timeline of your project.
2. The grant of planning permission does not dispense with the need to obtain licenses, consents or permissions under other legislation or protocols. The requirement for other authorisations may have been identified by consultees in their response to the application and can be accessed on the Northern Ireland Planning Portal website. The responses from consultees may also include other general advice for the benefit of the applicant or developer.
3. The applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation responses received by the Council in respect of this application. The responses can be viewed at <https://planningregister.planningsystemni.gov.uk/>.