

**Development Management Officer Report  
Committee Application**

<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Committee Meeting Date:</b> 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	
<b>Application Ref:</b> LA04/2025/1692/F	
<b>Proposal:</b> Extension of existing ball stop fencing from 5m to 8m along three sides. This will total 220m in length.	<b>Location:</b> Existing soccer pitch at Marrowbone Millenium Park (approx. 25m north of No. 8 Ardoyne Court), Ardoyne Avenue, Belfast.
<b>Referral Route:</b> The application is made by Belfast City Council and on lands to which the Council has an estate (as per the Scheme of Delegation paragraph 3.8.5 (a) and (b))	
<b>Recommendation:</b> Approval subject to condition	
<b>Applicant Name and Address:</b> Michael Small Cecil Ward Building 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BP	<b>Agent Name and Address:</b> Michael Small Cecil Ward Building 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BP
<b>Recommendation</b>	Approval
<b>Date Valid:</b> 21/10/2025	
<b>Target Date:</b> 03/02/2026	
<b>Contact Officer:</b> Lisa Walshe (Principal Planning Officer)	
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <p>The application seeks planning permission for the installation of 1 no Ball stop fence along three sides with a total length of 220m x 8m (height). This will increase the height of the existing fencing from 5m to 8m.</p> <p>The site is located within Marrowbone Millennium Park, off the Old Park Road.</p> <p>The playing fields are a Council operated site which offers sport pitches and open space for nearby residents. The site comprises of one soccer pitch and playground. Within the pitch there is an existing changing room. The topography of the site is broadly level with areas of trees outside the site boundary. An area of hardstanding to the front of the park serves as the entrance.</p> <p>The proposed works are due to take place to the east of the existing soccer playing field. The areas to the northern and southern sides of the site are predominantly residential.</p> <p>The site is partly located within the Oldpark Local Landscape Policy Area. The site is situated within the development limit as designated under both versions of dBMAP (2004 &amp; 2014).</p>	

The key Issues relevant to consideration of the application are:

- Principle of Development
- Impact on amenity
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Other considerations

There is no objection from Environmental Health, and no representations have been received.

**Recommendation**

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

Having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations, is recommended that planning permission is approved. Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive

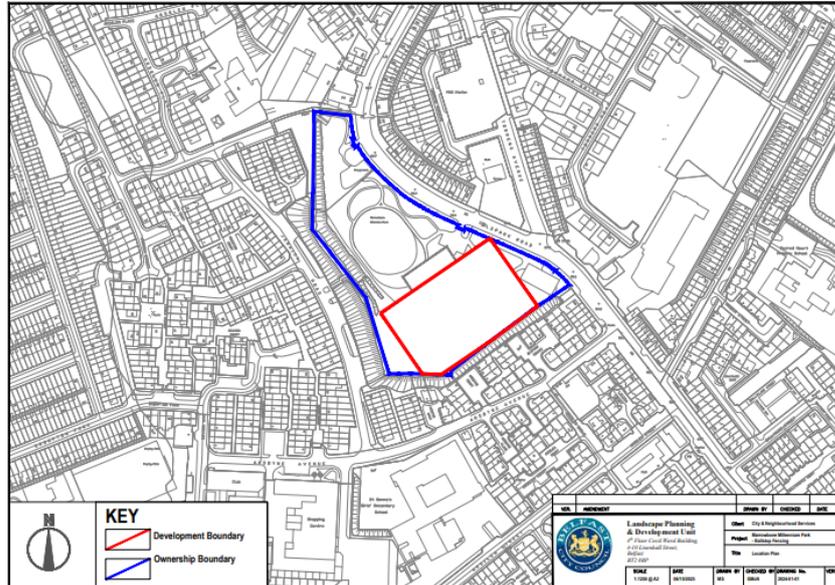
**Officer Report**

1.0

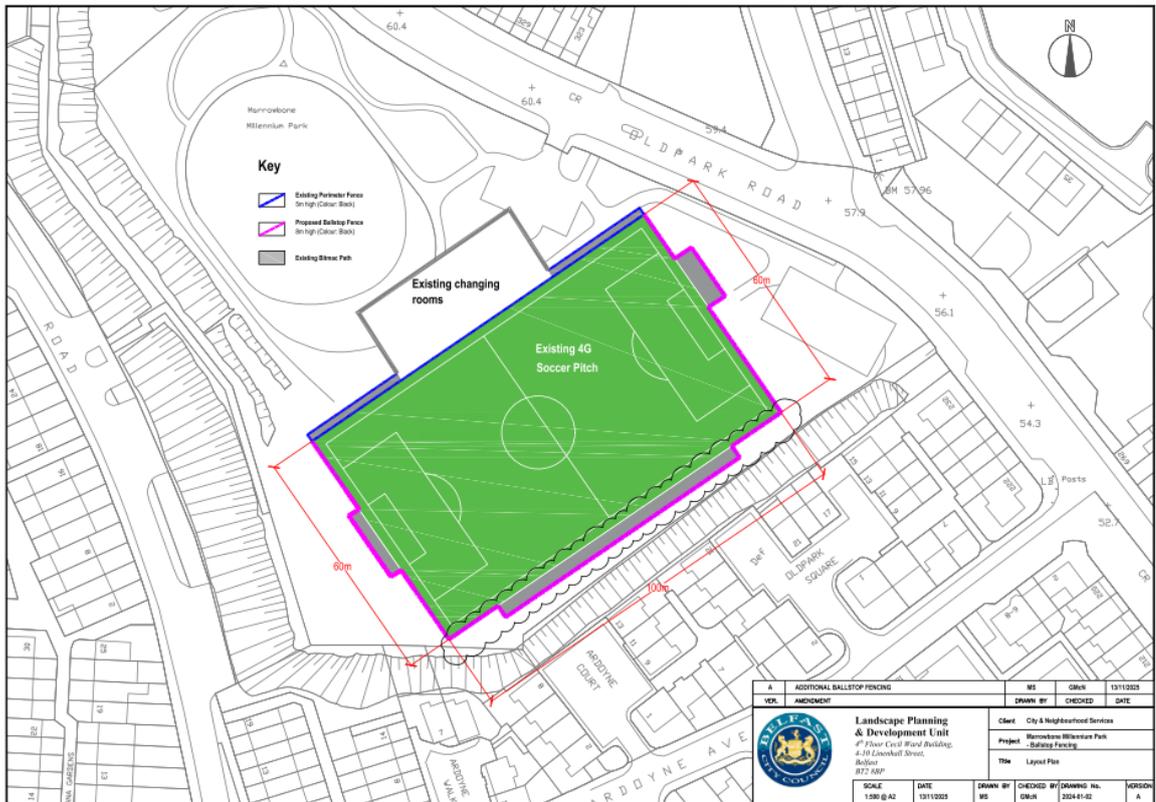
**Drawings**

1.1

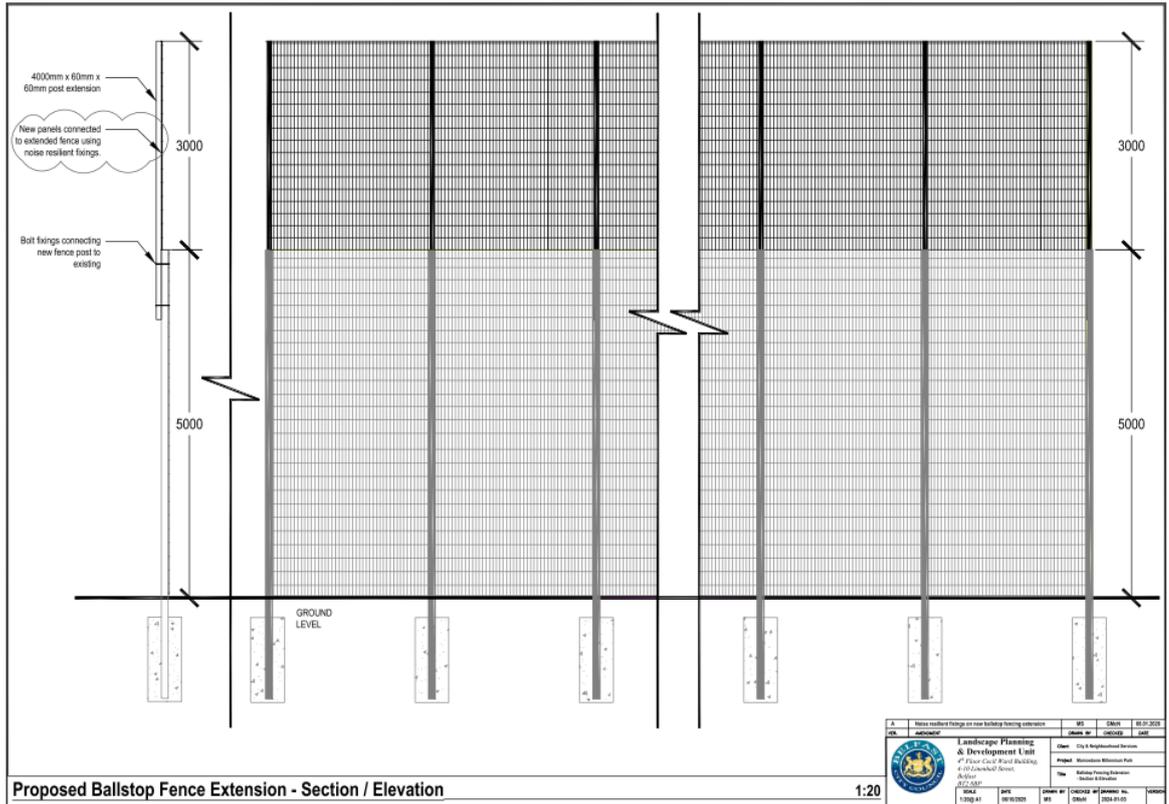
**Site Location**



**Block Plan**



**Proposed Elevations**



**Proposed Ballstop Fence Extension - Section / Elevation**

1:20

**2.0 Characteristics of the Site and Area**

2.1 The site is located within Marrowbone Millennium Park, off the Old Park Road. The playing fields are a council operated site which offer a 4G sport pitch and a multi-use games area. The site has been recently redeveloped under planning permission LA04/2020/1593/F. The site benefits from a wide range of community infrastructure, which includes a playground and outdoor gym facilities.

2.2 The sports pitch is in close proximity to the pedestrian entrance. Changing rooms and outdoor seating area has been provided and backs onto the event space of Marrowbone Millennium Park.

**3.0 Description of Proposal**

3.1 The planning application is seeking permission for a new ball stop net system which faces onto three sides of the 4G pitch. The northern elevation has an existing 5m high Ball Stop fence

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Planning Policy and Other Material Considerations</b>
4.1	<b>Development Plan – Plan Strategy</b> Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035
4.2	Policies in the Plan Strategy relevant to the application include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy GB1 - Green and Blue Infrastructure network.</li> <li>- Policy HC1 – Promoting Healthy Communities</li> <li>- Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure</li> <li>- Policy TRE1 – Trees</li> <li>- Policy OS5- Intensive Sports Facilities</li> </ul>
4.4	<b>Development Plan – zoning, designations and proposals maps</b> Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) BUAP Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014)
4.5	<b>Regional Planning Policy</b> Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) Edition 2
4.6	<b>Relevant Planning History</b> LA04/2020/1593/F - Marrowbone Millennium Park Oldpark Road Belfast BT14 6QS. Refurbishment works to existing park, comprising: revised accesses from Jamaica Road and Old Park Road; extension of existing 3G pitch; refurbishment of existing flood lighting; a replacement 405m2 GFA changing pavilion incorporating community facilities and a shelter for up to 101 spectators; new MUGA; new multi-use community event space; new street furniture, outdoor gym equipment and park lighting; new inclusive/multi-age playground; new 2.4m boundary fencing; rationalisation of existing path network including resurfacing; new SUDS pond/wetland wildlife area; landscape interventions including planting, woodland management, entrance improvements and all associated works. Decision Approval Date: 09/08/2021.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Consultations and Representations</b>
5.1	<b>Non-Statutory Consultations</b> Environmental Health – No objections subject to conditions.
5.2	No representations were received.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>PLANNING ASSESSMENT</b>
6.1	<b>Development Plan Context</b>
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	<b>Operational policies</b> – the Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application, which are set out in the following section of this report.).
6.1.5	<b>Proposals Maps</b> – 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	<b>Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001</b> - The site is located within the settlement development limit in the BUAP and is not zoned for any use.
6.1.7	<b>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (2004)</b> - The site is located within the settlement development limit in the BUAP and is not zoned for any use.
6.1.8	<b>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014)</b> - The site is located within the settlement development limit in the BUAP and is not zoned for any use.
6.2	<p><b>Key Issues</b></p> <p>The key issues to be considered as part of this assessment are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle of Development</li> <li>• Impact on amenity</li> <li>• Impact on the character and appearance of the area</li> <li>• Other considerations</li> </ul>
6.3	<p><b>Principle of Development</b></p> <p>The principle of open space / recreational development has already been established and is deemed acceptable at this location. The proposal retains the use as existing open space and supports the continued use as a pitch as per Policy OS1. The proposed ball stop system supports the continued use of the site as an intensive sports facility under Policy OS5. The principle of the development is acceptable subject to further considerations below.</p>
6.4	<p><b>Impact on Amenity</b></p> <p>The proposed ball stop net fencing is to the south, east and west sides of the pitch, which is closest in proximity to Old Park Square. These structures are 8m in height and 220m in length. It is considered that the separation distances to existing residential properties will assist in mitigating noise impacts. Officers consider that noise levels will not increase from the existing situation.</p>
6.5	Allowances under permitted development are also a significant consideration in relation to the pitch-side fencing. In summary, the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area, or landscape.

6.6	<p><b>Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area</b></p> <p>The proposal is incidental to an existing use within an area of open space. The proposed ball stop net fencing is considered appropriate for the operation this pitch. The design of these structures will result in limited visual impacts. Public views of the ball stop net fencing would largely be limited to near distance views from Marrowbone Millennium Park and the junction from old park road which splits into Torrens Avenue. It is also considered that the existing trees around the site periphery will filter views of structures and on balance, the proposal would not result in detrimental visual impacts.</p>
6.7	<p><b>Other Considerations</b></p> <p>The proposal would not cause any loss of existing trees and therefore complies with Policy TRE1.</p>
8.0	<p><b>Recommendation</b></p>
8.1	<p>Having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal is considered acceptable. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.</p>
8.2	<p>Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive.</p>
<p><b>DRAFT CONDITIONS:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.  Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</li> <li>2. The panels of the ball stop fencing hereby permitted must be securely fixed using noise resilient fittings, as shown in drawing from Landscape Planning &amp; Development Unit, titled 'Ballstop Fencing Extension - Section &amp; Elevation', drawing number 2024-01-03 Drawing no. 03A and dated 06/10/2025, with the noise resilient fittings to be maintained and retained thereafter.  Reason: Protection of residential amenity</li> </ol>	