

## Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Committee Meeting Date:</b> 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2024	
<b>Application ID:</b> LA04/2023/4405/F	
<b>Proposal:</b> Redevelopment of existing storage sheds, temporary office structures and yard area to provide new replacement Analytical Services Laboratories.	<b>Location:</b> Westland House, 40 Old Westland Road, Belfast, BT14 6TE
<b>Referral Route:</b> Application for Major development	
<b>Recommendation:</b> Approval subject to conditions	
<b>Applicant Name and Address:</b> NI Water Ltd, 40 Old Westland Road, Belfast, BT14 6TE	<b>Agent Name and Address:</b> Resolve Planning, Pearl Assurance House, 1 Donegall Square East Belfast, BT1 5HB
<b>Date Valid:</b> 15.11.2023	
<b>Target Date:</b> 17.07.2024	
<b>Contact Officer:</b> Lisa Walshe, Principal Planner	
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <p>This application relates to an area of the Northern Ireland Water (NIW) Headquarters site at No.40 Old Westland Road, located in North Belfast. The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of three buildings with parking, service yards and surrounding landscaping.</p> <p>The proposal involves the removal of existing storage sheds, temporary office structures and includes redevelopment of the yard area within the site to provide new replacement Analytical Services Laboratories and associated ancillary works.</p> <p>The key issues for consideration of the application are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle of Development</li> <li>• Demolition / Removal of Structures</li> <li>• Design, Character and Appearance</li> <li>• Impact on Amenity</li> <li>• Flood Risk &amp; Drainage</li> <li>• Health Impacts</li> <li>• Access, Movement and Parking</li> <li>• Natural Heritage / Biodiversity</li> <li>• Noise, Odour, and other Environmental Impacts including Contamination.</li> </ul>	

- Climate Change, Trees, and Landscaping
- Developer Contributions and Employability and Skills
- Open Space
- Pre-community Consultation

Statutory Consultees, as well as BCC Environmental Health, Landscape and Development team and BCC Trees team were consulted and have raised no objections subject to conditions.

No third-party representations have been received.

The site falls within the development limits of Belfast in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP) and both versions of the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004 and v2014) (dBMAP). The entire NIW site at Westland is shown in dBMAP as open space. This is not a formal zoning but is illustrated on the mapping for information only. The NIW site also has a similar designation in BUAP – where it is identified as “lands reserved for landscape, amenity or recreational uses”. Given the current identification of the lands as existing open space in these development plan maps, until such times when the Local Policies Plans has formally been adopted, the zoning within previous development plan maps will hold weight and be a material consideration in the assessment of this proposal.

Given the current identification of the lands as existing open space in the BUAP and dBMAP, Policy OS1 is a policy consideration that must be addressed in this proposal. Policy OS1 operates a presumption against the loss of existing open space. Whilst designated as open space, in reality the site has been used for many years for buildings, storage and hard standing and the proposed redevelopment will result in a betterment in terms of visual amenity, landscaping and SuDs. Landscaping provided will result in a net gain and improvement to the overall visual and biodiversity of the area. On balance, taking account of the considerable benefits of the proposal, it is deemed acceptable.

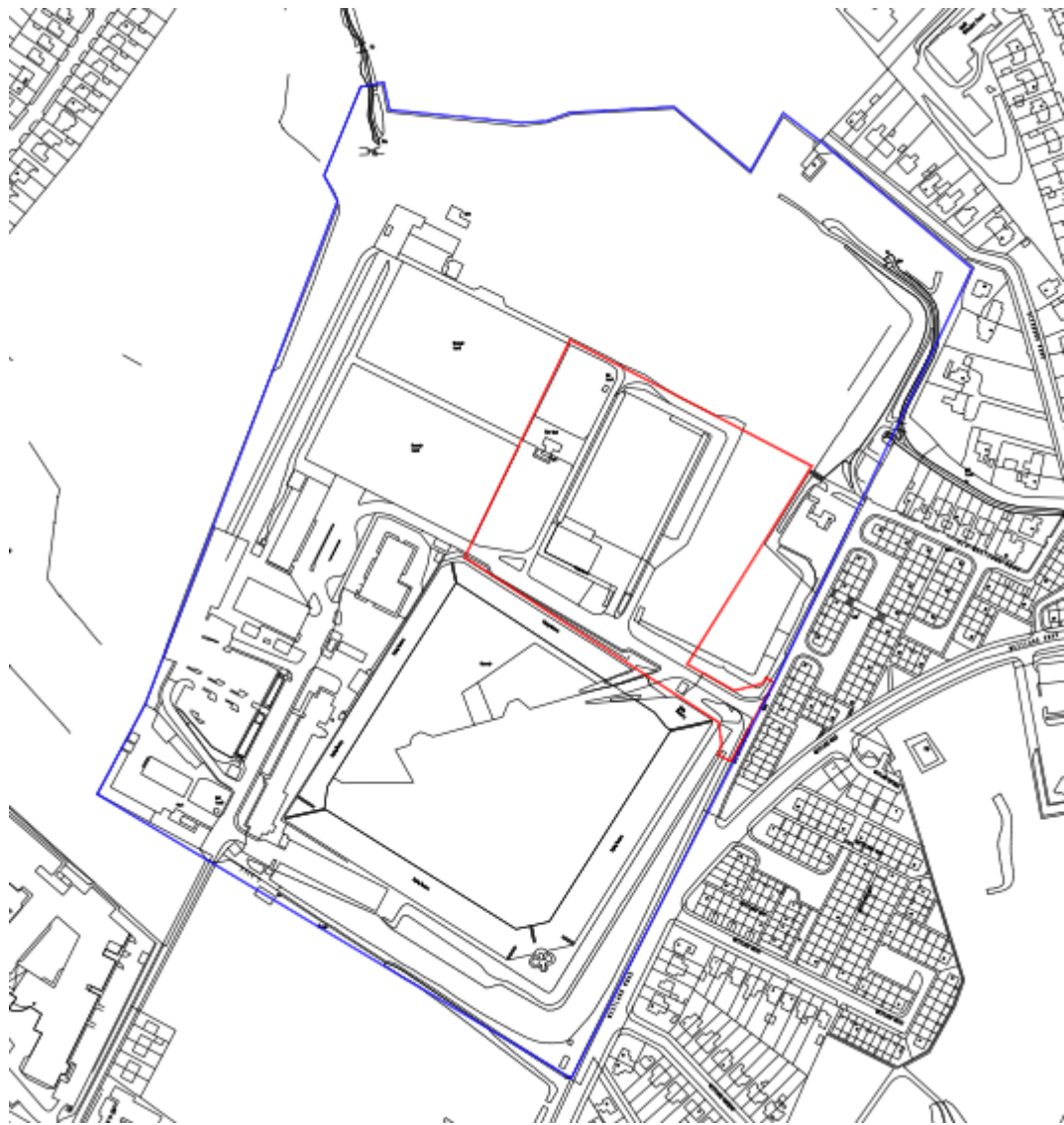
The development represents a major investment in NI Water facilities that will provide the layout, space and resilience required for current and future activities. The current facilities are outdated, and the redevelopment is required to support the analytical services which are presently carried out on site and to provide a modern and fit-for-purpose replacement facility. The principle of development of the proposal for these purposes is acceptable.

The design of the proposal is considered in keeping with the area. Sufficient parking would be provided and there will be no unacceptable impacts on nearby residential properties.

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.

Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions, and deal with any other matters that arise prior to issuing the decision provided they are not substantive.

**1.0 Drawings**  
**Site Location Plan**



### Proposed Block Plan



### Aerial image





## Proposed Elevations (South & West)



1 Clean Elevation - South  
A-1101 Scale: 1 : 125



2 Clean Elevation - West  
A-1101 Scale: 1 : 125

## Proposed Elevations (North & East)



2 Clean Elevation - North  
A-1101 Scale: 1 : 125



1 Clean Elevation - East  
A-1101 Scale: 1 : 125

1	1:125	Plot Area
2	1:125	Plot Area
3	1:125	Plot Area
4	1:125	Plot Area
5	1:125	Plot Area

<p><b>2.0</b></p> <p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p>	<p><b>Characteristics of the Site and Area</b></p> <p>The application site measures approximately 2.8 hectares and is located within the Settlement Development Limits of Belfast as set out in both the Belfast Urban Area Plan and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan. The site is identified as an area of existing open space in both the statutory BUAP and draft BMAP but neither constitute a formal zoning.</p> <p>The site currently constitutes a large hard-standing area currently used for car-parking and office development formed by a series of mobile units and large portal-framed sheds currently used for the storage of an alternative water supply. The application site also includes an area used for the storage of waste-material that currently makes a negative contribution to the general amenity and character of the site. The alternative water supply building will be relocated to NI Water’s site at Kennedy Way, which received planning permission in April 2023 (Ref LA04/2022/1479/F).</p> <p>The site is accessed via the Old Westland Road and is heavily screened by dense trees and vegetation. Adjacent to the site entrance (east) is a row of residential terraces which are set down off the main Old Westland Road. The NI Water site is surrounded by Carr’s Glen Local Landscape Policy Area and Cliftonville Golf Club to its north, south and west. The context of the site location is in a mixed-use area that includes extensive residential areas, schools, shops, parks, and other amenity areas.</p> <p><b>Description of Proposed Development</b></p> <p>Full planning permission is sought for the redevelopment of existing storage sheds, temporary office structures and yard area to provide new replacement Analytical Services Laboratories with associated landscaping and ancillary works.</p>
<p><b>3.0</b></p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p>	<p><b>Planning Assessment of Policy and Other Material Considerations</b></p> <p><b>Development Plan – operational policies</b> Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035</p> <p><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)</p> <p><b>Regional Planning Policy</b> Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)</p> <p><b>Other material considerations</b> Developer Contribution Framework (2020) Belfast Agenda (Community Plan)</p> <p><b>Relevant planning history</b></p> <p>Z/2010/0715/F – Erection of portable modular buildings for new office accommodation – Approved for a period of 3 years – 16/08/2010.</p> <p>There is no other recent relevant planning history on site other than a Pre-Application Discussion (PAD) LA04/2021/2237/PAD linked to this proposal.</p>

3.6	<b>Consultations and Representations</b>
3.7	<p><b>Statutory Consultees</b>  DFI Roads – No objection (<b>awaiting final conditions</b>)  NI Water – No objection  DfI Rivers – No objection  SES – No objection  NIEA – No objection</p>
3.8	<p><b>Non-Statutory Consultees</b>  BCC Environmental Health – no objection subject to conditions.  BCC Tree Officer – No objection subject to conditions.  BCC Landscape, planning and development – No objection.</p>
3.9	<p><b>Representations</b>  The application has been neighbour notified and advertised in the local press. No third-party representations have been received.</p>
4.0	<b>Planning Assessment</b>
4.1	<b>Development Plan Context</b>
4.2	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.
4.3	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.
4.4	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 until the Local Policies Plan is adopted.
4.5	<p><b>Operational policies</b> – the Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application. These are listed below.</p> <p>Policy SP1 – Growth strategy  Policy SP1a – Managing growth and supporting infrastructure.  Policy SP2 – Sustainable development  Policy SP3 – Improving health and wellbeing.  Policy SP5 – Positive placemaking  Policy SP6 – Environmental resilience  Policy SP7 – Connectivity  Policy SP8 – Green and blue infrastructure network</p> <p>Policy SD1 – Settlement hierarchy  Policy SD2 – Settlement Areas</p> <p>Policy DES1 – Principles of Urban Design</p>

	<p>Policy DES2 - Master planning approach for major development Policy HC1 – Promoting Healthy Communities</p> <p>Policy EC1 – Delivering inclusive economic growth.</p> <p>Policy ENV1 – Environmental Quality Policy ENV2 – Mitigating environmental change. Policy ENV3 – Adapting to environmental change. Policy ENV4 – Flood Risk Policy ENV5 – Sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS)</p> <p>Policy TRAN1 – Active Travel – Walking and Cycling Policy TRAN2 – Creating an accessible environment. Policy TRAN6 – Access to public roads Policy TRAN8 – Car parking and servicing arrangements Policy TRAN10 – Design of Car Parking</p> <p>Policy TRE1 – Trees Policy NH1 – Protection of natural heritage resources</p> <p>Policy OS1 – Protection of open space Policy OS2 – New open space within settlements Policy OS3 – Ancillary open space Policy LC1 – Landscape Policy LC1C - LLPAs</p> <p>4.6 <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 maps 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. The relevant zonings are set out below.</p> <p>4.7 <b>BUAP 2001</b> – The site is within the BUAP and is identified as “lands reserved for landscape, amenity or recreational uses”.</p> <p>4.8 <b>dBMAP (v2004)</b> – The site is identified as an area of existing open space.</p> <p>4.9 <b>dBMAP2015 (v2014)</b> – The site is identified as an area of existing open space.</p> <p>4.10 <b>Key issues</b></p> <p>The key issues to be considered in the assessment of this application are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle of Development</li> <li>• Demolition / Removal of Structures</li> <li>• Design, Character and Appearance</li> <li>• Impact on Amenity</li> <li>• Flood Risk &amp; Drainage</li> <li>• Health Impacts</li> <li>• Access, Movement and Parking</li> <li>• Natural Heritage / Biodiversity</li> </ul>
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4.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noise, Odour, and other Environmental Impacts including Contamination.</li> <li>• Climate Change, Trees, and Landscaping</li> <li>• Developer Contributions and Employability and Skills</li> <li>• Open Space</li> <li>• Pre-community Consultation</li> </ul> <p><b>Principle of Development</b></p>
4.12	<p>The proposed development represents a significant investment in Belfast City and is of key importance to NI Water Ltd. The redevelopment will deliver greater environmental benefits to the site through the creation of a modern science facility on an existing industrial site. The proposal will also bring significant economic and social benefits.</p>
4.13	<p>The proposal seeks to provide a layout, space and resilience required for current and future activities. The current facilities are now outdated, and the redevelopment is required to support the analytical services which are presently carried out on site and to provide a modern and fit-for-purpose replacement facility.</p>
4.14	<p>The proposal seeks to demolish and remove existing site structures and introduce new Analytical Services Laboratories. The proposed development is comprised of three buildings with parking, service yards and surrounding landscape, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Science Centre</b> – This is the main building accommodating laboratories, laboratory support space, write up and meeting spaces, canteen, ancillary space, and service space.</li> <li>• <b>Trade Effluent Building</b> – Small building adjacent to the main building keeping trade effluent activities separated from the main building; and</li> <li>• <b>Chillers Building</b> – Small louvered building housing stores and building chillers.</li> </ul>
4.15	<p>In line with the aims of the RDS 2035 to strengthen the role of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) as the regional economic driver, the proposal would create several economic benefits through increased investment. Below is summary of the key economic benefits the project will create:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £18.6 million construction cost (£6.5 million Gross Value Added)</li> <li>• Approximately 105-job years created.</li> <li>• 55 no. NI Water staff will be based at the proposed Science Centre, Westland. The remaining staff are remote mobile operatives, managed by science centre staff, and attending the premises as required, for short periods of time only.</li> </ul>
4.16	<p>The proposal is considered to meet the aims of the RDS 2035, by creating a development which would bring substantial economic benefits and investment to underutilised sites within the BMUA, while making use of the existing infrastructure within the surrounding area. There would be significantly improved biodiversity and landscaping improvements and a better use of an underused and deteriorating site that has significant potential. Having regard to these factors, the proposals are acceptable in principle and welcomed.</p> <p><b>Demolition / Removal of Structures</b></p> <p>The application site does not include or is adjacent to protected heritage or buildings. The existing structures on this site do not hold any significant value regarding design or character. The site comprises a large hard-standing area currently used for car-parking, an office development formed by a series of mobile units, and large portal-framed sheds</p>

	for the storage of an alternative water supply. The application site also includes an area used for the storage of waste-material that currently makes a negative contribution to the general amenity and character of the site. The alternative water supply building will be relocated to NI Water's site at Kennedy Way, which received planning permission in April 2023 (under LA04/2022/1479/F).
4.17	The demolition / removal of these existing structures is acceptable with regards to the visual amenity of the site and area and are not listed or within a Conservation Area or Area of Townscape Character. The key issues are the potential impact the demolition / removal will have from an environmental and biodiversity perspective.
4.18	Policy ENV2 states that for environmental reasons, development proposals should, where feasible, seek to avoid demolition and should consider how existing buildings or their main structures could be reused. In this case the existing structures on site temporary in nature and their materials and construction are therefore not suitable for reuse. The reuse of these materials would not hold any environmental substance and new measures to aid environmental sustainability are proposed to off-set any potential lack of reuse.
4.19	The application is supported by an Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP). The site preparation works, and main contract works phase will be developed and will refer to legal compliance and environmental good practice which includes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No serious pollution incidents.</li> <li>• Minimise outputs of pollutants to the atmosphere and aquatic systems.</li> <li>• Protect biodiversity.</li> <li>• Minimise disturbance of wildlife</li> </ul>
4.20	Taking account of the supporting documentation and environmental response, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with Policy ENV2.
4.21	<b>Design, Character, and Appearance</b>  The proposal was subject to a detailed PAD process and amendments during the processing of the planning application which have refined the design.
4.22	The proposal is comprised of 3no. buildings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the main building known as the science centre,</li> <li>- a trade effluent building adjacent the main science centre, and</li> <li>- a chiller building, which is a small louvered building housing stores and building chillers.</li> </ul>
4.23	<u>Science Centre Building</u>  The Science Centre is the main operational building and will generate the most activity. The height of the building has been limited to two stories (9.95m height), in keeping with other buildings on the site, with all the occupied rooms at ground floor and the plant room servicing the building situated on the level above (level 1). The building is approximately 39m in width and 63m in length with an approximate overall footprint of 2,512m <sup>2</sup> floor space.
4.24	The building is predominately constructed of buff brick at a lower level with grey lightweight cladding located above ground level. Grey PPC metal louvres on galvanised steel frames surround the level 1 plant room. Grey panels make up the fascia and soffits

	<p>and brick piers along the elevations provide visual interest along the long elevation. The internal courtyard elevations are glazed to allow maximum daylighting into the building, and the roof has been kept flat to limit the overall height and therefore visual impact of the building.</p>
4.25	<p>The area designated for the science building is at a lower ground level from the main access road within the site. The building will not be an overbearing feature within the area as it is set off the Old Westland Road by approximately 110m and the boundary of the site is densely screened by tall vegetation acting as an effective privacy screen.</p>
4.26	<p>The scale and form of the science building is considered appropriate in the context of the site and surrounding area. The design of the building is high quality and fitting of the proposal. It is considered that the proposed building would make a welcomed enhancement to the site and character of the area.</p>
4.27	<p><u>Trade Effluent Building</u></p> <p>This is a small building adjacent to the main science centre, which seeks to keep trade effluent activities separate. The building reflects the form and design of the science centre building utilising buff brick finish and is 4.2m in height to reflect the ground level of the science centre. The trade effluent building is seamlessly connected via a buff brick header creating uniformity. The plan dimensions of this building are 4.4m width x 5.5m length, creating approximately 24.2m<sup>2</sup> floorspace. There is only one access point to this building which is located to the front (south elevation) via solid entrance doors. This building complements the ancillary use of the main building and is consistent in design.</p>
4.28	<p><u>Chillers Building / Stores</u></p> <p>This is a small louvered building housing 2no. stores and a chiller room. The building is located adjacent to the north facing elevation of the main science centre building. It is constructed to reflect level 1 of the main building, housing plant. The finish of the building is grey PPC metal louvres on galvanised steel frames. The plan dimensions are 12m length x 6.6m width, providing approximately 79.2m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace. The 2no. stores are accessed via 2no. solid doors to the front (south elevation) and the chiller entrance is accessed via the rear (north elevation) of the building. This building complements the ancillary use of the main building and is consistent in design.</p>
4.29	<p><u>Additional &amp; Ancillary Site Works</u></p> <p>The application sets out a range of additional / ancillary site works and improvements to the design and layout of the existing site. A new paved public entrance will be provided adjacent to the internal NIW access road which will allow improved access to the new science centre building. The cycle shelter and parking will be situated at this location. The existing retaining wall perimeter of the site on the west facing area will be landscaped to provide shrubs and planting to clean up the sites appearance while enhancing the biodiversity of the area. A 1m high Armco barrier will be implemented along this area to provide protection of the landscaped area. To the rear of the science centre building will be a large, landscaped paving and grass area which will provide a mix of shrubs and species rich grass laid lawn. This will replace an unsightly and underused concrete hardstanding area.</p>
4.30	<p>Towards the rear of the new science building adjacent the North and East facing elevations, a new set of 3m high paladin security fencing and gates will be implemented to control vehicular and pedestrian flow from entering the service yard. A retaining wall</p>

	will be constructed at this location to ensure the adequate arrangements on site to a high standard.
4.31	Other additional / ancillary elements of the proposals which include access and parking, landscaping and biodiversity will be adequately referenced in specific sections throughout this report. The proposals in their entirety are considered compliant with Policies DES1, DES2 of the LDP and are deemed acceptable. The new buildings will have a positive contribution towards placemaking by way of its carefully considered design.
4.32	<p><b>Impact on amenity</b></p> <p>The proposed development would not impact unduly on the nearby residential amenity of Old Westland Road. The application site is a sufficient distance from all other public amenity areas including Cliftonville Golf Club and landscape areas. The proposed scale, massing and design of these functional buildings are considered acceptable for the site and surrounding area.</p>
4.33	<p><b>Flood Risk &amp; Drainage</b></p> <p>The applicant has provided a comprehensive analysis of the existing and proposed flood risk and drainage within the site.</p>
4.34	The Buildings Research Establishment (BRE) Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is a widely used sustainability assessment method and rating system which sets the standard for best practice in sustainable design. The BREEAM assessment process evaluates projects against targets that are based on performance benchmarks and is independently certified. Section POL 03 of the BREEAM Scheme Document for New Construction: Non-Domestic Buildings Technical manual relates to Surface Water Run-off, Flood Risk, and Minimising Water Pollution. There are five available credit points within this section. The proposal has been awarded 4 points out of 5. Two points awarded relate to flood risk, 1 point related to surface water run-off and 1 point for minimising water pollution.
4.35	The conclusion from the BREEAM assessment regarding flood risk demonstrates that the proposed development has a low annual probability of flooding from tidal and fluvial sources. No fluvial or tidal flooding on the site is shown on DFI Rivers mapping. With consideration of this, a detailed Flood Risk Assessment was not deemed necessary as there is no risk of Fluvial or Tidal Flooding to the site. DFI Rivers have been consulted as part of the overall assessment and have no objections to the proposal and agree with the logic of the analysis presented to the council.
4.36	The findings regarding surface water run-off indicate that the existing hardstanding areas will be maintained within the site and include a decrease due to proposed landscaping measures. Flood risk from pluvial flooding will be managed at the development and will not increase the runoff elsewhere. Calculations are presented that show the proposed development will reduce current run-off rates to Greenfield rates with the inclusion of appropriately sized storm water attenuation and associated flow control. The proposed storm drainage network is designed to discharge reduced flows to the existing network which discharges locally to the Glenburn stream. Foul sewerage is proposed to discharge to the NI Water foul sewer which traverses the site.
4.37	NI Water has confirmed that there is available capacity and as such there is no objection to the proposal. DfI Rivers raises no objection in respect of drainage or flood risk. Accordingly, the proposal complies with Policies SP1a, ENV3, ENV4 and ENV5.

4.38	<p><b>Health Impacts</b></p>
	<p>Policy HC1 states that the Council will seek to ensure that all new developments maximise opportunities to promote healthy and active lifestyles.</p>
4.39	<p>The site is within a sustainable location on the Old Westland Road, linked to the main Westland Road. This road network is linked to the Cavehill Road and Antrim Road which are designated arterial routes to the city centre. There is good access to public transport. The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement and a Traffic Statement / Transport Assessment Form. These assessments conclude that the proposal site will promote active travel and alternatives to car use. There will be available car parking on site as exists currently. Cycle parking and storage is proposed as the site is approximately 2.9 miles from the city centre. These measures have been adequately designed to meet the standards of modern travel patterns.</p>
4.40	<p>The proposed buildings are of a high-quality design with good quality realm space, hard and soft landscaping. This will provide a pleasant and attractive environment for employees and visitors to the site, as well as enhancing the wellbeing of the workers / visitors. The proposal is considered compliant with Policy HC1.</p>
4.41	<p><b>Access, Movement and Parking</b></p>
	<p>The proposal has been assessed against Policy TRAN 8 ‘Car Parking and Servicing Arrangements’. The existing layout provides 36no. spaces which currently do not have designated disabled spaces. The proposed parking layout has marginally increased to 38no. spaces as 2no. disabled bays have been introduced. The proposed layout is a welcomed improvement to the existing layout. Parking is provided to the front and side of the main building and designates 2no. accessible disabled parking bays. Designated cycle parking with protective shelter has been provided to encourage sustainable active travel. Policy TRAN 10 has been met in that the design of car parking meets the following criteria:</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. It respects the character of the local townscape/landscape</li> <li>b. It will not adversely affect visual and residential amenity</li> <li>c. Provision has been made for security, and the direct and safe access and movement of pedestrians and cyclists within the site; and</li> <li>d. Provision has been made for accessible parking bays which facilitate safe, convenient access for people with a disability or impaired mobility.</li> </ul>
4.42	<p>The means of access to the development would be safe. There is sufficient parking available having regard to the location and sustainability of the site. It is also considered the proposal complies with Policies TRAN 6 and TRAN 8. There will be no change to the access to this development. The main entrance is situated off the Old Westland Road, the entrance to the proposed site is on a managed internal NIW road which is approximately 110m off the main Old Westland Road NIW entrance.</p>
4.43	<p>DfI Roads were consulted and are satisfied that access and parking arrangements are acceptable and is unlikely to have a significant impact on the local road network in terms of traffic and road safety and is subject to the inclusion of relevant planning conditions.</p>
4.44	<p><b>Natural Heritage / Biodiversity</b></p>
	<p>A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA), Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) and an Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (OCEMP) have been submitted as part of the comprehensive investigation and analysis into this proposal. These investigations had been advised at the Pre-Application Stage (PAD)</p>



	(LA04/2021/2237/PAD), and the competent authorities have been consulted on this proposal. NIEA: Natural Environment Division have reviewed the conclusions and are content with the findings and have no objections subject to conditions. Shared Environmental Services have also been consulted as part of this proposal and have confirmed they are content that the proposal is unlikely to have any significant effect on designated European sites and hold no objections to the proposals.
4.45	The proposals have been assessed against Policy NH1, the protection of natural heritage resources. In assessing the proposal, the council seeks to ensure that new development will not have an unacceptable effect, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively, on sites, habitats, species, or ecosystems and networks that are important for their nature conservation, biodiversity, or geodiversity value.
4.46	Based on the information provided, the Council are satisfied there will be no adverse impacts on protected species subject to conditions. The proposed development is considered to comply with Policy NH1. Within the development area the biodiversity value of the site will be enhanced by the proposal.
4.47	Belfast City Council in its role as the competent Authority under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), and in accordance with its duty under Regulation 43, has adopted the HRA report, and conclusions therein, prepared by Shared Environmental Service, dated 26/06/2024. This found that the project would not be likely to have a significant effect on any European site.
4.48	<b>Noise, odour, and other environmental impacts including Contamination.</b>  A Generic Quantitative Risk Assessment (GQRA), Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA), Air Quality Screening Report and Site Lighting Arrangement have been submitted relating to noise, air pollution, general amenity, ambient air quality, contaminated land, and other considerations. Belfast City Council Environmental Health and NIEA: Regulation Unit have been consulted as part of this proposal and offer no objection subject to conditions.
4.49	The proposal is therefore considered acceptable regarding all matters listed above. Having regard to the advice from NIEA and Environmental Health, the proposals are considered to accord with Policy ENV1.
4.50	<b>Climate Change, Trees, and Landscaping</b>  Policy ENV2 of the Plan Strategy 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. The development proposals seek to demonstrate the highest feasible and viable sustainability standards in the design, construction, and operation.
4.51	In line with ENV2 the applicant has demonstrated that the development incorporates measures to mitigate environmental change and reduce greenhouse gases through the following measures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Building design and energy efficiency</li> <li>2. Transport and Access</li> <li>3. Water Efficiency</li> <li>4. Materials Selection and Substitution</li> </ol>

4.52	<p>In line with ENV3 the applicant has demonstrated that the development incorporates measures to adapt to environmental change through the following measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Green Infrastructure</li> <li>2. Water Sensitive Design</li> <li>3. Design for Thermal Comfort</li> <li>4. Resilient construction</li> </ol>
4.53	<p>The proposal is considered on balance to satisfy the requirements as set out in ENV2, ENV3 and ENV5 of the Plan Strategy. Pre-commencement conditions are proposed to ensure that soft landscaping within the site introduces SUDS measures to meet ENV3 and comply with ENV 5.</p>
4.54	<p>The majority of the existing trees are being retained, except for 5no. individual trees to facilitate a new car park by the main access road. There will be a net gain of 20 (new, heavy standard) trees, four of which will be planted close to the trees that require removal to provide direct replacement tree cover in this area of the site. It is considered this will assist in mitigating and adapting to climate change in compliance with Policy TRE1.</p>
4.55	<p>Trees will be planted at the main entrance of the new car park to provide visual amenity and strengthen canopy cover along the main entrance road, and along the northern boundary in open space to offer a connection between existing canopy cover to the west and east of the application site. The style of tree planting is in keeping with tree planted areas of open space adjacent to the site.</p>
4.56	<p>Furthermore, the site will have a net gain in permeable surfaces due to the introduction of green spaces throughout to replace existing hardstanding. There will also be wildlife friendly ground cover, species-rich grass seeded areas. Within the internal courtyard of the main building; seating areas with sensory planting will enhance the environment further.</p>
4.57	<p>A detailed assessment has been carried out and as a result the applicant has submitted an Arboricultural Report, Tree Constraints Plan, Tree Impact Protection Plan, Tree Schedule, Landscape Management Plan, and a Landscape plan. The proposals seek to provide a net gain in trees and provide a host of landscaping measures within and surrounding the site to enhance the sites visual setting and more importantly its ecological footprint.</p>
4.58	<p>As part of this assessment, Belfast City Council Tree Officer and the Belfast City Council Landscape Planning and Development team have been consulted to provide analysis and feedback. Both competent authorities responded positively with no objection as the protection of existing trees and new proposed landscaping (increase in net gain) within the site should help promote a site which offers increased visual amenity, offers improvements for biodiversity to thrive and planting of native trees is welcomed. For the reasons stated above and the evidence provided to the council, it is deemed the proposal complies with Policy TRE1 of the LDP.</p>
4.59	<p><b>Developer Contributions/Employability and skills</b></p> <p>Para 5.69 of the SPPS states that ‘Planning authorities can require developers to bear the costs of work required to facilitate their development proposals’. As the site is self-contained and used by a statutory provider, it not considered necessary to require any such mitigation. The non-speculative nature of the development means that specific employment details can be provided without the need for generic calculation based on published Employment Densities. It can be confirmed that 55 no. NI Water staff will be based at the proposed Science Centre, Westland. The remaining staff are remote mobile operatives</p>

	<p>managed by science centre staff, and attending the premises as required, for short periods of time only.</p>
4.60	<p>As the current development site has a mobile building, this is unused and staff previously using to mobile have been relocated elsewhere within the Westland site. As a result, the development will not result in the displacement of any jobs from the application on site.</p>
4.61	<p>The submitted Planning Statement confirms that the development of the proposals for a new Science Centre at Westland is of critical importance to provide the layout, space and resilience for current and future activities associated with water analytical services. As such Employability and Skills interventions are not required through the planning process, having regard to the Council's Developer Contribution Framework.</p>
4.62	<p><b>Open Space</b></p> <p>The application site is located within the settlement limit of Belfast in the 2004 version of dBMAP and is identified as an area of existing open space. No other relevant 2004 dBMAP designations apply.</p>
4.63	<p>The application site is located within the settlement limit of Belfast in the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) and is identified as being on "lands reserved for landscape, amenity or recreational uses". No other relevant designations apply to the application site.</p>
4.64	<p>Policy OS 1: Protection of Open Space of the LDP seeks to support the retention and improvement of existing open space and will adopt a presumption in favour of retaining all such land and uses. The designation of the site forms part of an area of existing open space however it has been used for buildings and storage for many years and the applicant proposes to improve the landscaping and amenity.</p>
4.65	<p>The policy facilitates an exception where a development proposal can demonstrate that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It will have no significant impact on the amenity, character, or biodiversity of the area.</li> <li>2. It will improve the provision of open space within the site, resulting in no detriment.</li> </ol>
4.66	<p>The existing area has had buildings and hard standing for quite some time. The proposal results in a positive change given its size, attractiveness, landscaping, safety and quality.</p>
4.67	<p>The proposal seeks to remove outdated office buildings and storage units to enable the development of a modern and fit-for-purpose laboratory building for activities related to public water infrastructure. The proposal would therefore provide substantial benefits which should be afforded significant weight. The proposal would result in substantial improvements to the overall character and appearance of the site and locality by removal of an existing and unsightly storage yard located immediately to the south-east of the proposed laboratory building that is currently used for the storage of waste material. A landscaping scheme will improve landscape setting for the site and wider open space zoning. This will provide grassland areas, vegetated mounds, and new shrub beds which will provide biodiversity benefits.</p>
4.68	<p>The proposal will result in significant landscaping and amenity improvements to the site consistent with its open space designation. All existing areas of open space within the boundary of the site will be upgraded and new areas of open space extending to approximately 6,250 sqm will replace current structures and hard-standing areas. The</p>

	proposed works will provide improved areas of amenity open space and landscaping within the site extending to a total of 14,650sqm.
4.69	There will be no adverse impact on the amenity, character or biodiversity of the area arising from the development proposed. The proposals are deemed to result in clear and demonstrably positive impacts on the amenity, character, and biodiversity of the site. The proposals will introduce new and improved areas of open space, net gain tree planting, grassland areas, shrubs and vegetated mounds extending to almost 15,000 sqm, to a site that is currently devoid of any significant landscape features.
4.70	The proposal will result in betterment in terms of amenity and character and will significantly improve the biodiversity of the site. The proposal therefore complies with Policy OS 1 of the LDP.
4.71	<b>Pre-community Consultation</b> For applications for Major development, there is a legislative requirement for applicants to consult the community in advance of submitting the application.
4.72	Applicants are required to submit to the council a 'Proposal of Application Notice' (PAN) in advance of making the application, which sets out the proposals for the pre-community consultation. A PAN application (LA04/2023/3314/PAN) was submitted on 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2023 and issued on 16 <sup>th</sup> June 2023.
4.73	The applicant is further required to prepare a Pre-Application Community Consultation report (PACC) to accompany the planning application. A PACC Report was submitted with the application, which describes the engagement process and feedback received.
4.74	The resulting PACC report states that 5 people attended the public event, no written responses were returned during the consultation period. There were no written responses submitted and no issues raised.
4.75	The PACC report is considered compliant with the legislative requirements.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation:</b>
5.1	Having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal is considered to be in compliance with the LDP. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.
5.2	Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions, and deal with any other matters that arise prior to issuing the decision, provided they are not substantive.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Draft Conditions:</b>
	<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.</li> </ol> <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><b>Reason:</b> As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied or operated unless covered bicycle storage has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The covered bicycle storage shall be retained in accordance with the approved plans at all times.</li> </ol>

**Reason:** To ensure adequate provision and availability of cycle parking and encourage sustainable travel.

3. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied or operated until the parking and turning areas have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. Such areas shall not be used for any purpose other than the parking and turning of vehicles and such areas shall remain free of obstruction for such use at all times.

**Reason:** To ensure adequate car parking within the site.

4. No development shall commence on site (other than that required to fulfil this condition) unless the access, including visibility splays and any forward sight lines, have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The access and visibility splays shall be retained in accordance with the approved plans at all times.

**Reason:** To ensure safe and convenient access to the development.

5. No part of the development hereby approved shall be occupied or operated unless the area within the visibility splays and any forward sight line have been cleared to provide a level surface no higher than 250mm above the level of the adjoining carriageway. The visibility splays shall be retained in accordance with the approved plans at all times.

**Reason:** In the interests of road safety and convenience of road users.

6. The drainage for the site must be constructed in line with the agreed drainage plan, Proposed Drainage Layout -Westland-S4-P3 uploaded to the planning portal on 07/02/2024. All drainage measures shall be retained thereafter in accordance with the agreed details.

**Reason:** In order to decrease the risk of the incorrect diversion of contaminated water to drains carrying rain / surface water to a waterway.

7. If during the carrying out of the development, new contamination is encountered that has not previously been identified, all related works shall cease immediately, and the Council shall be notified immediately in writing. No further development shall proceed until this new contamination has been fully investigated in accordance with current industry recognised best practice. In the event of unacceptable human health risks being identified, a Remediation Strategy and subsequent Verification Report shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Council, prior to the development being occupied or operated. The Verification Report shall be completed by competent persons in accordance with best practice and must demonstrate that the remediation measures have been implemented and that the site is now fit for end-use.

**Reason:** To ensure that any contamination within the site is appropriately dealt with, in the interests of human health.

8. In the event that any centralised combustion sources (boilers, CHP or biomass) are proposed and there is a risk of impact at relevant receptor locations as per the criteria detailed within the Environmental Protection UK and Institute of Air Quality Management, Land-use Planning & Development Control: Planning For Air



Quality (January 2017), prior to installation, an Air Quality Impact Assessment must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. Where the Air Quality Impact Assessment indicates exceedances of air quality objectives, appropriate mitigation measures shall be presented, and these mitigation measures shall be agreed in advance and installed and retained thereafter.

**Reason:** Protection of human health

9. No development shall commence on site (including demolition, site clearance and site preparation) unless a Final Environmental Construction Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council.

The CEMP shall include the following:

- a. Construction methodology and timings of works
- b. Pollution Prevention Plan; including suitable buffers between the location of all construction works, storage of excavated spoil and construction materials, any refuelling, storage of oil/fuel, concrete mixing and washing areas and any watercourses or surface drains present on or adjacent to the site;
- c. Site Drainage Management Plan; including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), foul water disposal and silt management measures;
- d. Water Quality Monitoring Plan;
- e. Environmental Emergency Plan;
- f. Details of appropriate mitigation measures to protect protected and priority species.

All construction thereafter must be in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** To protect Northern Ireland priority species and habitats, to ensure implementation of mitigation measures identified within the Habitat Regulations Assessment and to prevent likely significant effects on the Inner Belfast Lough ASSI, Belfast Lough SPA, Belfast Lough Ramsar site and Belfast Lough Open Water SPA designated sites.

10. 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

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 complete 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.

13. All hard and/or soft landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with drawing WIL-MLA-XX-XX-DR-L-0001 and the Landscape Management Plan, completed by Mclwaine Landscape Architects. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council. Any existing or proposed trees or plants indicated on the approved plans which, within a period of five years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged, diseased or dying shall be replaced during the next planting season with other trees or plants of a location, species and size, details of which shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. All hard surface treatment of open parts of the site shall be permeable or drained to a permeable area. All hard landscape works shall be permanently retained in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Council.

**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.

14. If during the development works, new contamination or risks are encountered which have not previously been identified, works should cease and the Planning Authority shall be notified immediately. This new contamination shall be fully investigated in accordance with the Land Contamination: Risk Management (LCRM) guidance available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/landcontamination-how-to-manage-the-risks>. In the event of unacceptable risks being identified, a remediation strategy shall be agreed with the Planning Authority in writing, and subsequently implemented and verified to its satisfaction.

**Reason:** Protection of environmental receptors to ensure the site is suitable for use.

15. The existing building on site that was assessed to have low bat roost potential by the ecologist, denoted within the PEA as Building 3 must be retained as shown in site layout (drawing WLL-MCD-XX-ZZ-DR-AA-1001)

**Reason:** To protect bats and their refuges.

16. All external facing and roofing materials shall be carried out as specified on the approved plans.

**Reason:** In the interests of the character and appearance of the area