

Planning Committee

Development Management Report

Committee Date: 20th January 2026

Application ID: LA04/2025/1694/F

Proposal: The installation of 7 x Ballstop Systems @ 30m x 12m high.	Location: Woodlands Playing Fields, Finaghy Road North, Belfast
Applicant Name and Address: Michael Small Cecil Ward Building 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8PB	Agent Name and Address: Michael Small Cecil Ward Building 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8PB
Referral Route: The application is made by Belfast City Council and on lands to which the Council has an estate (3.8.5 (a) of the Scheme of Delegation)	
Recommendation	Approval
Date Valid:	8 th January 2026
Target Date:	22 nd April 2026
Contact Officer:	Ciara Reville, Principal Planning Officer (Development Management)

Summary of Issues:

The application seeks planning permission for 7no. proposed 30m (length) x 12m (height) ball stop fencing.

The site is located at Woodlands Playing Fields, Finaghy Road North, Belfast which is a Council site consisting of sports pitches, a changing facilities and associated parking. There are a number of mature trees around the site periphery.

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

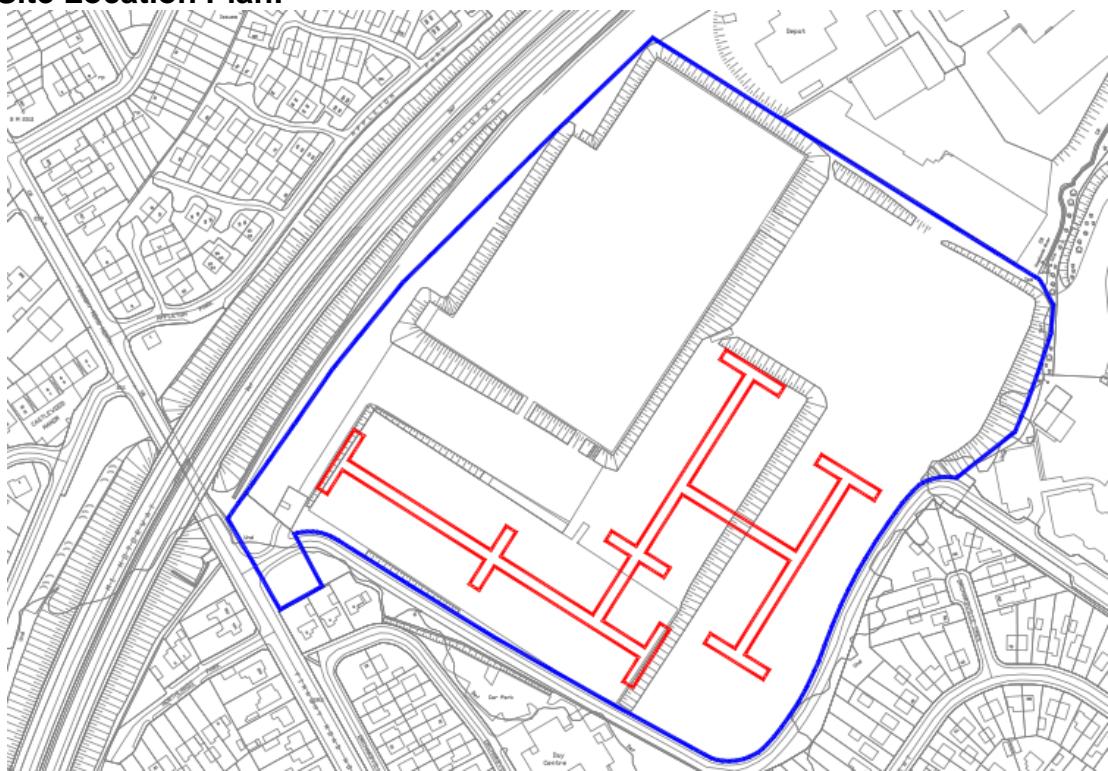
There have been no objections from consultees. One neutral comment was received. This is addressed within the main report.

Recommendation

Having had regard to the development plan, relevant planning policies, and other material considerations, it is considered that the proposal should be approved. Delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control is sought to finalise conditions.

Case Officer Report

Site Location Plan:



Proposed Site Layout:



	<p>Proposed Sections and Elevations:</p>
1.0	<p>Characteristics of the Site and Area</p> <p>1.1 The site is located at Woodlands Playing Fields, accessed via Finaghy Road North, Belfast. The site is council owned with 6x GAA sport pitches, changing room facilities and associated parking. Trees are found along the boundary of the site.</p> <p>The site does not fall within any designations as per the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 and both versions of the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004 and v2014) yet is found within an area of existing recreation and open space.</p> <p>To the north of the site is an industrial site, to the north- east is Musgrave Park Hospital, to the east is Cranmore Integrated Primary and Nursery School. Residential dwellings are located along the east and south boundary and the M1 is found to the west of the site.</p>
2.0	<p>PLANNING HISTORY</p> <p>2.1 There is no relevant planning history.</p>
3.0	<p>PLANNING POLICY</p> <p>3.1 Development Plan – Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035</p> <p><i>Strategic Policies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy SP2 – Sustainable development • Policy SP3 – Improving health and wellbeing • Policy SP5 – Positive placemaking

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy SD2 – Settlement areas <p><i>Operational Policies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy HC1 – Promoting Healthy Communities • Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure • Policy OS1 – Protection of Open Space • Policy OS5- Intensive Sports Facilities • Policy ENV1- Environmental Quality • Policy TRE1 – Trees
3.2	<p>Development Plan – zoning, designations and proposals maps</p> <p>Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) BUAP</p> <p>Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004)</p> <p>Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014)</p>
3.3	<p>Regional Planning Policy</p> <p>Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)</p> <p>Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)</p>
4.0	<p>CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS</p> <p>4.1 Due to the nature and location of the proposal, no consultations were deemed necessary.</p> <p><u>Representations</u></p> <p>4.2 1 representation was received regarding the address of the site on the application, this was amended. No further representation has been received.</p>
5.0	<p>PLANNING ASSESSMENT</p> <p><u>Main Issues</u></p> <p>5.1 The main issues relevant to consideration of the application are set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of Development • Impact on amenity • Impact on the character and appearance of the area • Other considerations <p><u>Development Plan Context</u></p> <p>5.2 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.</p>

	<p>5.3 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.</p> <p>5.4 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.</p> <p><u>Operational Polices</u></p> <p>The Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application. These are listed at paragraph 3.1.</p> <p>5.5 <u>Proposals Maps</u></p> <p>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 (BUAP), both versions of the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (v2004 and v2014) (dBMAP) 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 dBMAP 2015 (v2014) given its advanced stage in the development process, save for retail policies that relate to Sprucefield which remain contentious.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001: The site is located within an area of Existing Open Space. • Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (2004): The site is within an Area of Existing Open Space • Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014): The site is within an Area of Existing Open Space <p>It is considered that the proposal is in compliance with the SPPS in that the proposed development will not cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance which are considered below.</p> <p>Principle of Development</p> <p>5.7 <u>Principle of Development</u></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 7x ballstop systems support the continued use of the site as an intensive</p>
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	<p>sports facility under Policy OS5. The principle of the development is acceptable subject to further considerations below.</p>
5.8	<p>Impact on Residential Amenity</p> <p>The proposed ball stop fencing and netting is not located close to any neighbouring dwellings for any loss of light or overshadowing to occur. The design of the ballstop is such that it will not prevent sunlight. The proposal complies with Policy OS5 in that the ballstops will not cause an unacceptable impact on the amenities of people living nearby.</p>
5.9	<p>Character and Appearance of the Area</p> <p>The proposal is incidental to an exiting use within an area of open space and will have no adverse effect on the sporting potential of the facility it will assist with the overall functioning and recreational use of the sports grounds. The proposal complies with Policy OS1 of the Belfast Local Development Plan. The proposed ballstop nets (12m in height and 30m in length) are considered appropriate for the use of the playing pitches where they are to be located with the use of slim steel posts alongside the net means is considered sympathetic to the existing site and surrounding area</p>
	<p>Neighbour Notification Checked Yes</p>
	<p>Summary of Recommendation</p> <p>Having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal is considered acceptable. It is recommended that planning permission is approved.</p> <p>Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions and deal with any other matters which may arise.</p>
	<p>DRAFT CONDITIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 2. All trees and planting within the site shall be retained unless shown on the approved drawings as being removed. Any existing or new trees or planting 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 (October to March inclusive) with other trees or plants of a location, species and size to be first approved in writing by the Council. <p>Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.</p> <p>DRAFT INFORMATIVES</p>

1. Please make sure that you carry out the development in accordance with the approved plans and any planning conditions listed above. Failure to do so will mean that the proposal is unauthorised and liable for investigation by the Council's Planning Enforcement team. If you would like advice about how to comply with the planning permission, you are advised to contact the Planning Service at Belfast City Council at planning@belfastcity.gov.uk.
2. This planning permission includes condition(s) which require further details to be submitted to and approved by the Council. Please read the condition(s) 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.
3. The grant of planning permission does not dispense with the need to obtain licenses, 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. consents or permissions under other legislation or protocols.

