

Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

Summary	
Committee Meeting Date: 20 th January 2026	
Application Ref: LA04/2025/1695/F	
Proposal: Extension to existing spectator fencing on site, new ball stop system along with pedestrian and vehicular access gates. New kerb line and drainage along car park boundary.	Location: Existing soccer pitch at Dixon Playing Fields (approx. 50m north-east of No. 100 Orby Road), Grand Parade, Belfast
Referral Route: 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))	
Recommendation: Approval subject to condition	
Applicant Name and Address: Michael Small Cecil Ward Building 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BP	Agent Name and Address: Michael Small Cecil Ward Building 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BP
Recommendation	Approval
Date Valid: 22/10/2025	
Target Date: 04/02/2026	
Contact Officer: Lisa Walshe (Principal Planning Officer)	
Executive Summary: <p>The application seeks planning permission for the installation of 1 no (30m (width) x 6m (height) ball stop fences.</p> <p>The site is located within Dixon Playing Fields, off Grand Parade. The playing fields are a Council operated site which offers sport pitches and associated parking. The site comprises of two soccer pitches. There are also two single-storey buildings located close to the site entrance. 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 and car park. The Knock River is located at the north of the park.</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 Orangefield / Dixon Local Landscape Policy Area and the dBMAP policy designation for Community Greenways for Odyssey/ Tullycarnet Park/ Ormeau Park. The site is situated within the development limit as designated under both versions of dBMAP (2004 & 2014).</p> <p>The Key Issues relevant to consideration of the application are:</p>	

- 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.

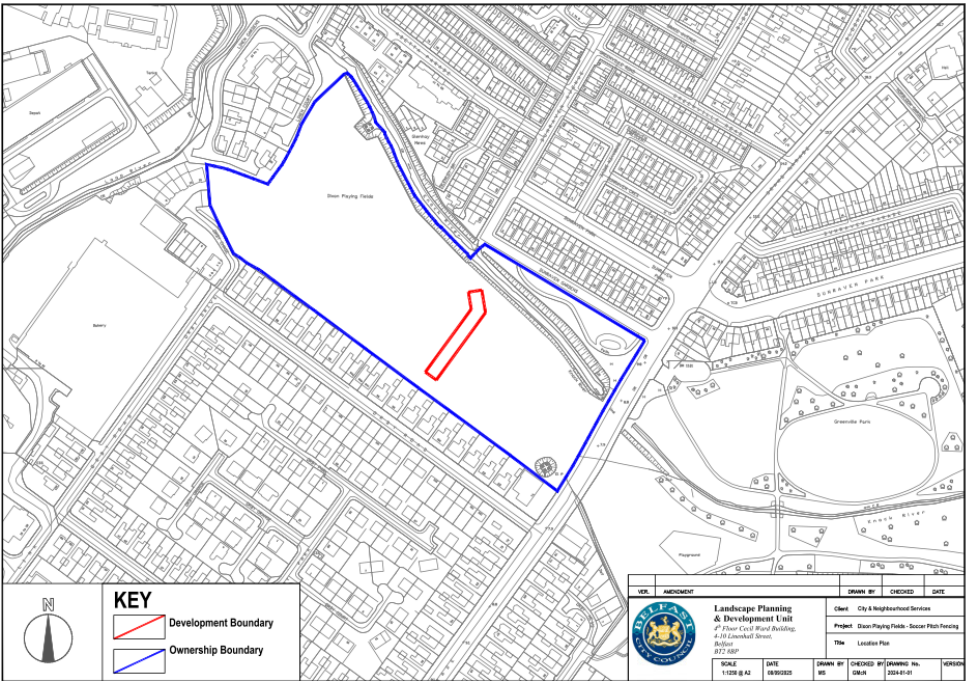
Recommendation

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

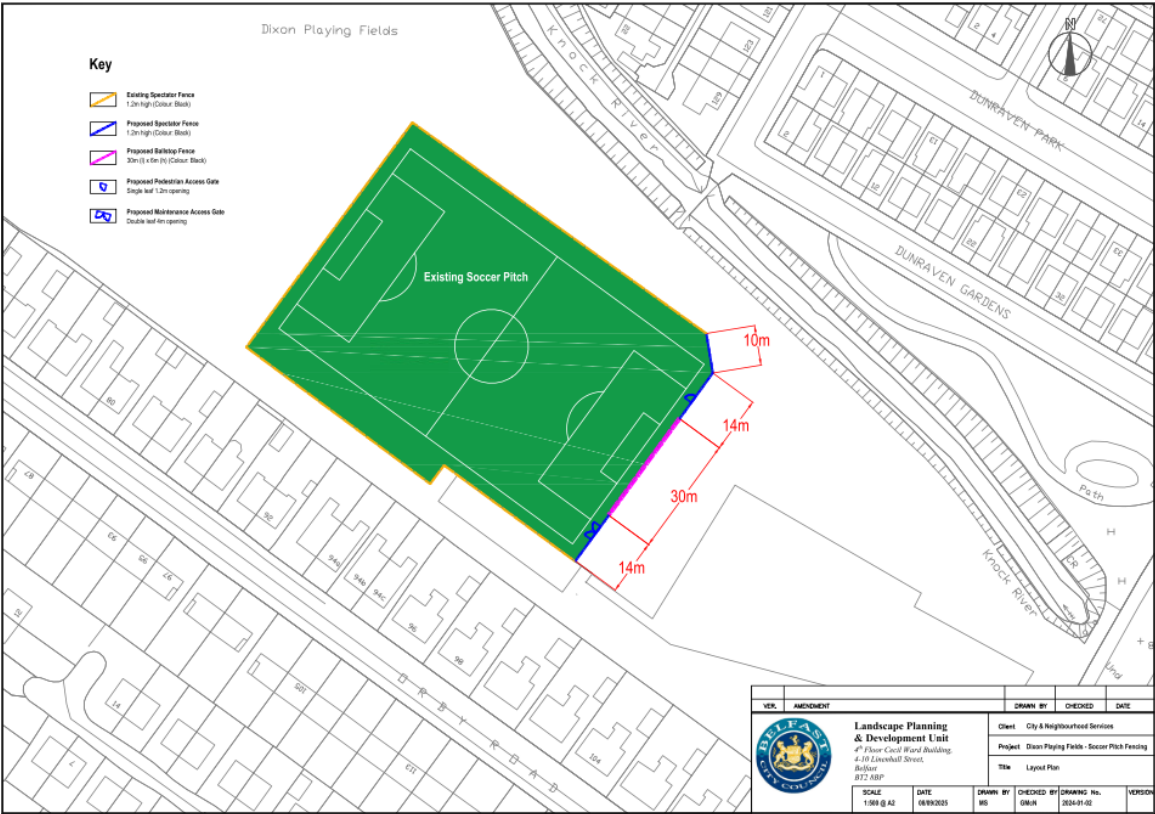
It is recommended that planning permission is approved. Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the approval reasons and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive

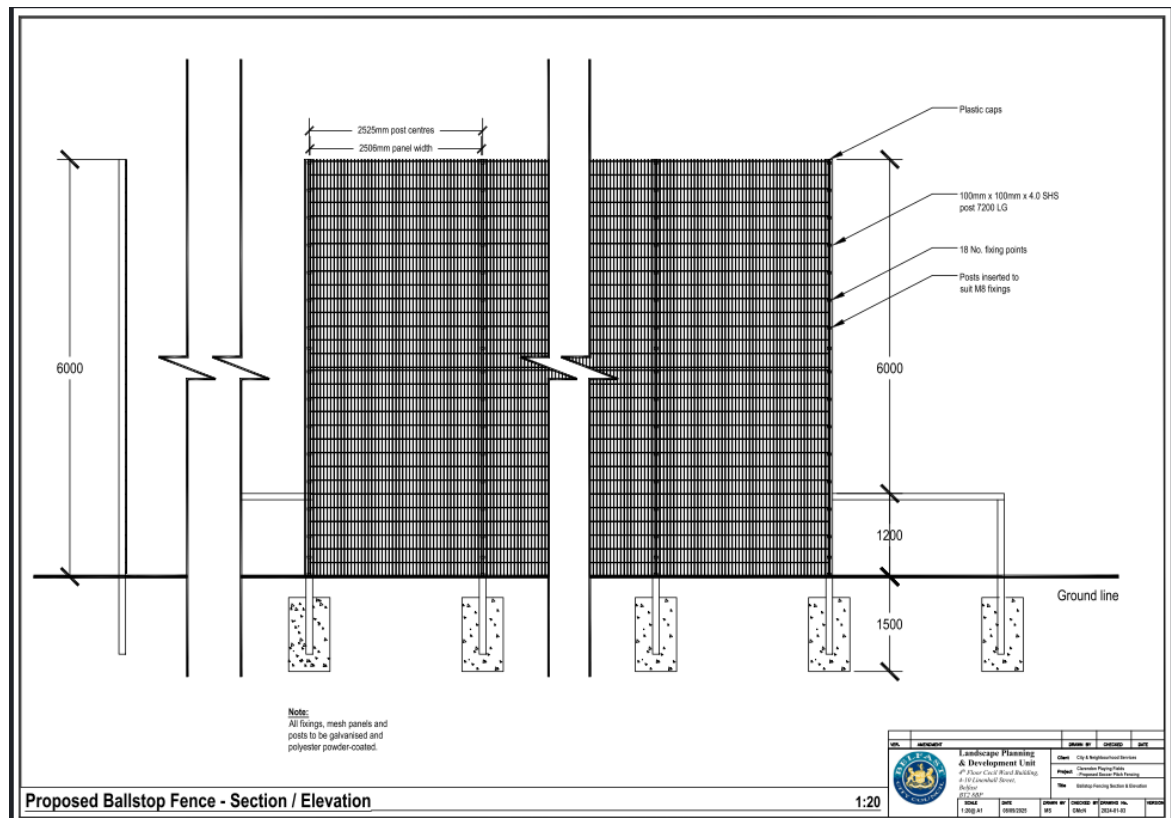
Officer Report

1.0 Drawings
1.1 Site Location



Block Plan



Proposed Elevations**2.0****Characteristics of the Site and Area****2.1**

The site is located within Dixon Playing Fields, off Grand Parade. The playing fields are a council operated site which offers sport pitches and associated parking. The site comprises of two soccer pitches. There are also two single storey buildings located close to the site entrance. 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 and car park. The Knock River is located at the North side of the park.

3.0**Description of Proposal****3.1**

The planning application is seeking permission for an extension to existing spectator fencing on site, new ball stop system along with pedestrian and vehicular access gates. New kerb line and drainage along car park boundary.

4.0**Planning Policy and Other Material Considerations****4.1****Development Plan – Plan Strategy**

Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035

4.2

Policies in the Plan Strategy relevant to the application include the following:

- Policy GB1 -Green and Blue Infrastructure network.
- Policy HC1 – Promoting Healthy Communities
- Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure
- Policy DCI3 – Other Proposed Development in the Countryside
- Policy TRE1 – Trees
- Policy OS1 – Protection of Open Space
- Policy OS5- Intensive Sports Facilities

4.4	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)
4.5	Regional Planning Policy Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) Edition 2
4.6	Relevant Planning History Z/2010/0430/f - Proposed building upgrade for intermediate football provisions including additional fencing with gate and provision of disabled toilet with ramped access. Address: Dixon Park playing fields, Grand Parade, Belfast, BT5 5HP. Decision Approval Date: 24/08/2010. Z/2013/0207/F- Proposed changing pavilion with associated perimeter fencing. Address: Dixon Park, Grand Parade, Belfast. Decision 24/06/2013.
5.0	Consultations and Representations
5.1	Non-Statutory Consultations Environmental Health – No objections subject to conditions.
5.2	No representations were received.
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 the following section of this report.).
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

	<p>(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.</p>
6.1.6	<p>Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 - The site is located within the settlement development limit in the BUAP and is not zoned for any use.</p>
6.1.7	<p>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (2004) - The site is located within the settlement development limit in the BUAP and is not zoned for any use.</p>
6.1.8	<p>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014) - The site is located within the settlement development limit in the BUAP and is not zoned for any use.</p>
6.2	<p>Key Issues</p> <p>The key issues to be considered as part of this assessment are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of Development • Impact on amenity • Impact on the character and appearance of the area • Other considerations
6.3	<p>Principle of Development</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 ballstop 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>Impact on Amenity</p> <p>The proposed ball stop net fencing is to the east end of the first pitch, which is closest in proximity to the car park. These structures are 6m in height and 30m 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	<p>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.</p>
6.6	<p>Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area</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 Somerdale Park Road. 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>Other Considerations</p> <p>The proposal would not cause any loss of existing trees.</p>

8.0	Recommendation
8.1	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.
8.2	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.
DRAFT CONDITIONS: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. If during the carrying out of the development, new contamination is encountered that has not previously been identified, all related development works shall cease, and the Council shall be notified immediately in writing. No further related development works shall proceed until this new contamination has been fully investigated in accordance with current Environment Agency and CIRIA guidance and British Standards. In the event of unacceptable human health risks being identified, a Remediation Strategy shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Council. The Remediation Strategy shall be implemented and subsequently a 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 and demonstrate the successful completion of the remediation works and that the site is now fit for end-use. The Verification Report shall be in accordance with current Environment Agency and CIRIA guidance and British standards. Reason: To ensure that any contamination within the site is appropriately dealt with, in the interests of human health. 	