

Development Management Officer Report
Committee Application

Summary	
Committee Meeting Date: 20 th January 2026	
Application Ref: LA04/2025/1696/F	
Proposal: Installation of 2 No. ball stop systems at 30m x 6m (high).	Location: Existing soccer pitches at Clarendon Playing Fields (approx. 130m south-west of No. 5 Abbeydale Court), Abbeydale Gardens, 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
Date Valid: 22/10/2025	
Target Date: 04/02/2026	
Contact Officer: Lisa Walshe (Principal Planning Officer)	
Executive Summary: The application seeks planning permission for the installation of 2 no (30m (width) x 6m (height) ball stop fences. The site is located at Clarendon playing fields, Somerdale Park, off the Crumlin Road, North Belfast. The playing fields are a Council operated site which offers sport pitches and associated parking. The site comprises of two soccer pitches and a 3G synthetic pitch. There are also several 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. The proposed works are due to take place to the west and north of the site, which is isolated from the neighbouring properties to the east. The red line of the site is adjacent to the Forthriver / Wolfhill / Ligoniel Local Landscape Policy Area and the dBMAP policy designation for sites of local conservation importance (SLNCI), Upper Forth River. The site is situated within the development limit as designated under both versions of dBMAP (2004 & 2014). The Key Issues relevant to consideration of the application are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Principle of Development- Impact on amenity- Impact on the character and appearance of the area- Other considerations	

Due to the minor nature of the application, consultations were deemed unnecessary. 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

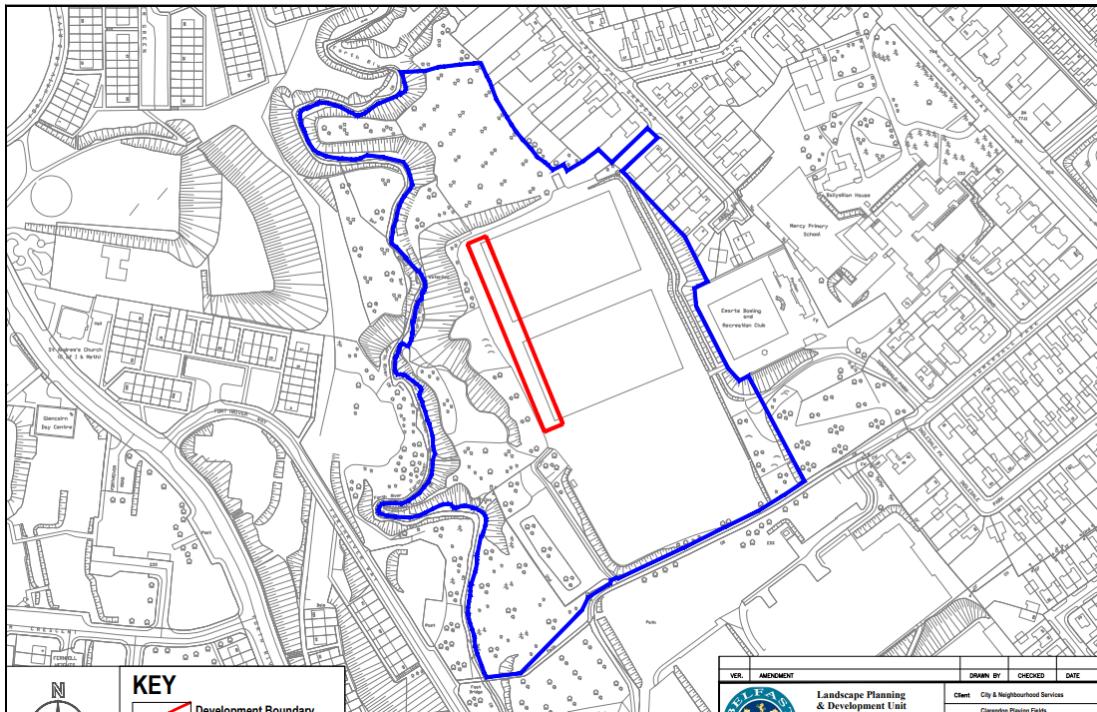
Officer Report

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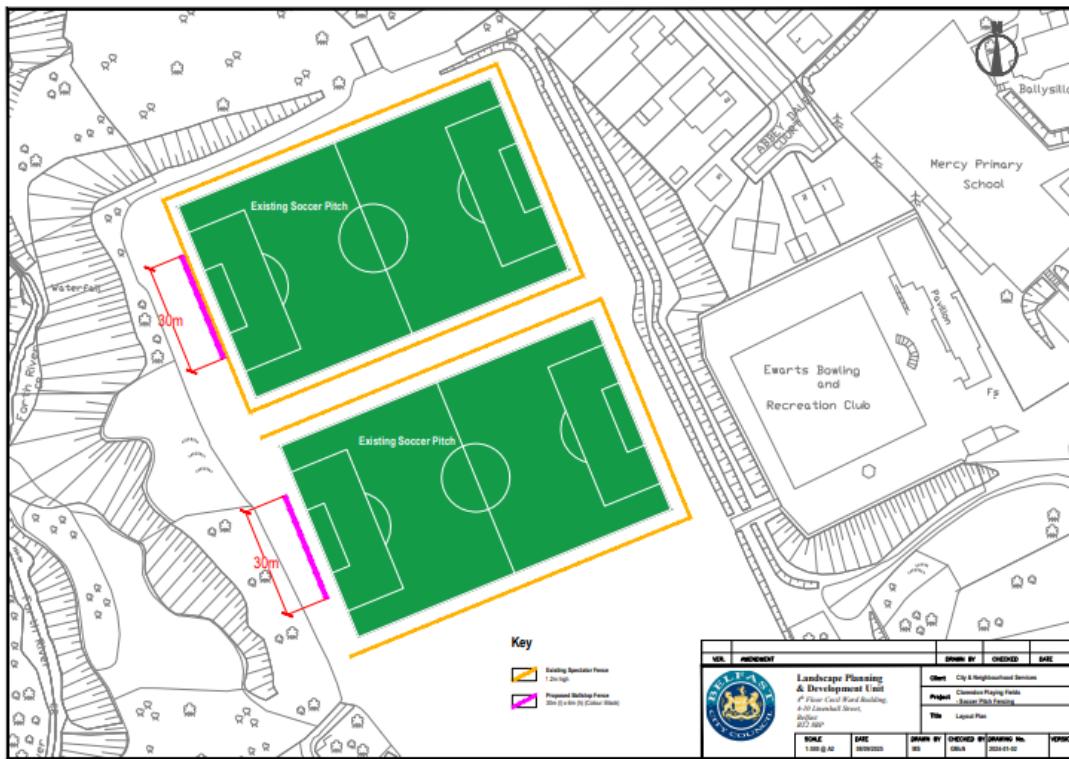
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Drawings

Site Location



Block Plan



2.0	Characteristics of the Site and Area
2.1	The site is located at Clarendon playing fields, Somerdale Park, off the Crumlin Road, North Belfast. The playing fields are a council operated site which offers sport pitches and associated parking. The site comprises of two soccer pitches and a 3G synthetic pitch. There are also several 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.
3.0	Description of Proposal
3.1	The application seeks planning permission for the installation of 2 no (30m (width) x 6m (height) ball stop fences
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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
4.3	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)
4.4	Regional Planning Policy Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)
4.5	Relevant Planning History LA04/2015/1356/F - Modular building for training facilities and associated services (Retrospective). Address: Clarendon Park (Playing Fields) Somerdale Park, Belfast, BT14 7HD. Decision Approval Date: 14/03/2017. LA04/2021/2772/F - Upgrading of sports facilities to include construction of new clubhouse changing room block, new floodlighting, fencing and ball stops, 2 no spectator grandstands (206 persons per stand), 3G goalkeeper training area, dug-outs, turnstiles, associated maintenance infrastructure, landscaping, and parking facilities (revised description and additional info). Address: Clarendon Playing Fields, 29 Somerdale Park, Belfast BT14 7HD. Decision: Approval: 02/10/2023
5.0	Consultations and Representations
5.1	Due to the minor nature of the application, consultations were deemed unnecessary.
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 (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	Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 - The site is located within the settlement development limit in the BUAP and is not zoned for any use.
6.1.7	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.
6.1.8	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.
6.2	Key Issues The key issues to be considered as part of this assessment are the following: <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	Principle of Development 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

	<p>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 west/north end of both existing pitches. These structures are 6m in height and 30m in length. It is considered that the separation distance s to existing residential properties will assist in mitigating noise impacts. The proposed works are not overly different from the existing ball stop net fencing previously approved under planning application LA04/2021/2772/F. Officers consider that noise levels will not increase from the existing situation.</p>
6.5	<p>Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area</p> <p>The proposed ball stop net fencing is considered appropriate for the operation of both pitches. 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 would also filter views of structures and on balance, the proposal would not result in detrimental visual impacts.</p>
6.6	<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"> 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission. <p>Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</p>	