

Development Management Report	
Committee Date: 17 th February 2026	
Application ID: LA04/2025/1716/F	
Proposal: Proposed change of use from, Use class B1(a) office, to short term Transitional Care Unit, Use Class C3 b) comprising of 73 no. ensuite beds, associated ancillary facilities including café, rehabilitation suites and treatment rooms, laboratory, consulting rooms, 2 no. external terraces and all other ancillary, staff and storage rooms. Development includes ambulance drop off bay, replacement of existing windows, and all other associated site and access works.	Location: Santander House, 1 Mays Meadow, Belfast, BT1 3PH
Referral Route: Application for Major development	
Recommendation: Approval subject to conditions	
Applicant Name and Address: Life Works Developments Ltd 33a Clare Road Gilford BT63 6AG	Agent Name and Address: TSA 20 May Street Belfast BT1 4NL
Date Valid: 5 th November 2025	
Target Date: 3 rd June 2026	
Contact Officer: Ciara Reville, Principal Planning (Development Management)	
Executive Summary: The application seeks full planning permission for change of use from, Use class B1(a) office, to short term Transitional Care Unit, Use Class C3 b) comprising of 73 no. ensuite beds, associated ancillary facilities including café, rehabilitation suites and treatment rooms, laboratory, consulting rooms, 2 no. external terraces and all other ancillary, staff and storage rooms. Development includes ambulance drop off bay, replacement of existing windows, and all other associated site and access works. The key issues for consideration of the application are set out below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of health facility in this location • Impact on Transport infrastructure and road safety • Flood risk/ drainage • Health Impacts • Environmental impact • Climate change • Pre-application Community Consultation The site is within the settlement limits for the city, within the city centre and un-zoned “white land” within the most recent version of draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004).	

The site is considered to be a suitable location for a health facility being within the commercial district of the city centre.

The proposal being change of use of an existing building ensures height, scale and massing are in keeping with the surrounding area.

The proposal will provide additional space for the health system for the city and wider afield.

Currently awaiting comments from DfI Roads Service, given no significant objection expressed previously, amended details to application form is required, the application is being presented to Committee for delegated powers following DfI response. NI Water and BCC Enforcement Health offered no objection to the proposal subject to planning conditions.

No third-party objections have been received.

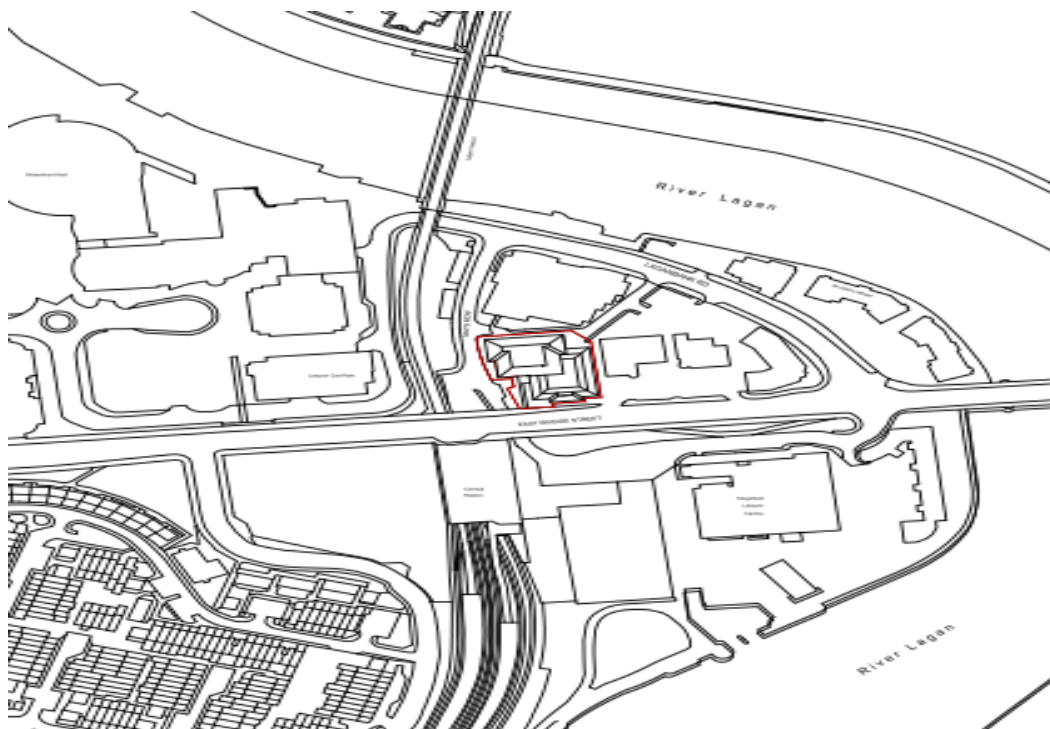
Recommendation

Having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

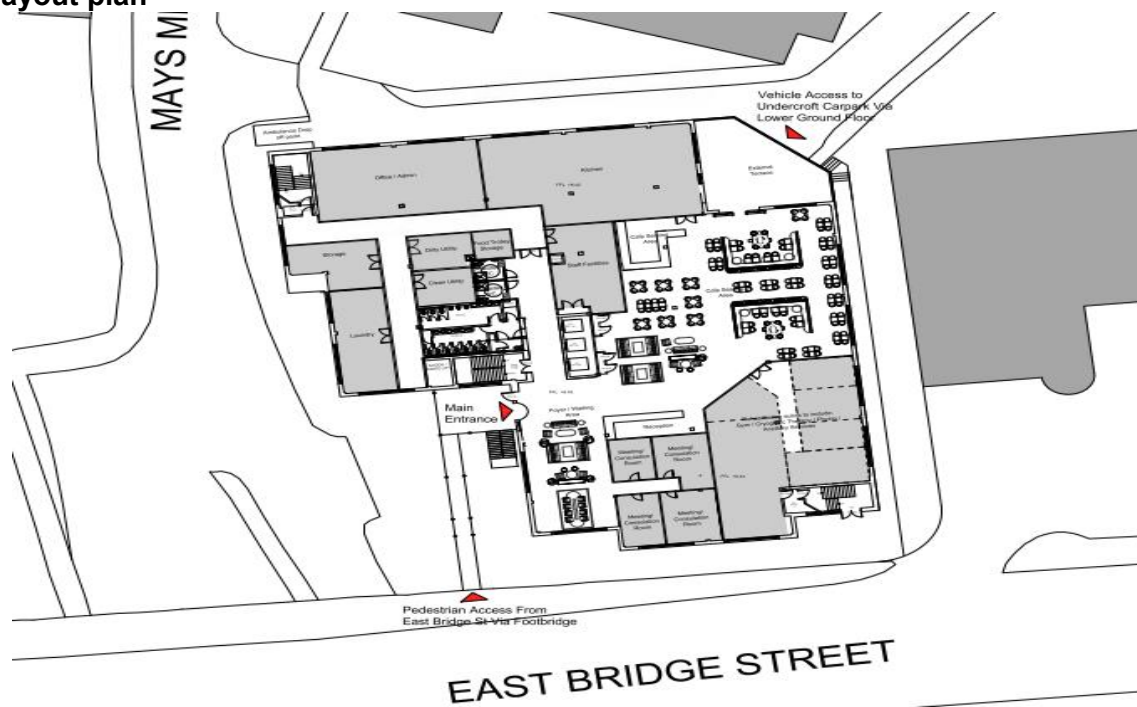
Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that arise, provided the issues are not substantive.

DRAWINGS AND IMAGERY

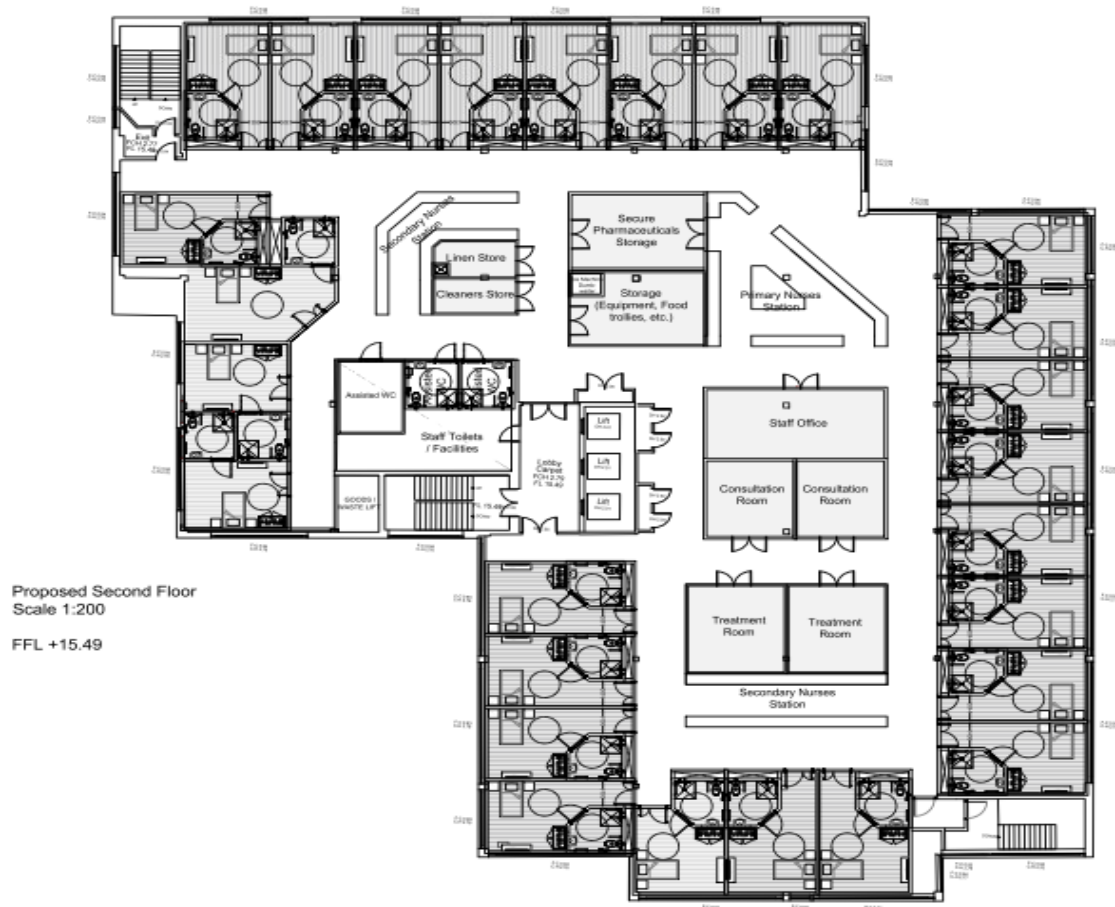
Site Location Plan:



Site layout plan



Typical floor layout



<p>1.0</p> <p>1.1</p> <p>1.2</p>	<p>Characteristics of the Site and Area</p> <p>The site is a purpose-built multi-storey office building accessed off Mays Meadows; the building is constructed in yellow brick with an extensive glazing to the facades. The immediate surrounding area is mainly commercial in character with neighbouring office accommodation and Lanyon train station in close proximity. The site is within the boundary for Belfast City Centre.</p> <p>Description of Proposed Development</p> <p>The application seeks full planning permission for change of use from, Use class B1(a) office, to short term Transitional Care Unit, Use Class C3 b) comprising of 73 no. ensuite beds, associated ancillary facilities including café, rehabilitation suites and treatment rooms, laboratory, consulting rooms, 2 no. external terraces and all other ancillary, staff and storage rooms. Development includes ambulance drop off bay, replacement of existing windows, and all other associated site and access works.</p>
<p>2.0</p> <p>2.1</p>	<p>Planning History</p> <p>LA04/2025/0885/PAN Proposed change of use from class B1(a) office to short term Transitional Care Unit comprising of c.60-80 beds, associated ancillary facilities including consulting rooms, physiotherapy, laboratories and offices; minor external alterations and all other associated site and access works</p>
<p>3.0</p> <p>3.1</p>	<p>PLANNING POLICY</p> <p>Development Plan – Plan Strategy</p> <p><u>Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035</u></p> <p><i>Strategic Policies:</i></p> <p>Policy SP1A – managing growth and supporting infrastructure delivery Policy SP2 – sustainable development Policy SP3 – improving health and wellbeing Policy SP5 – positive placemaking Policy SP6 – environmental resilience Policy SP7 – connectivity Policy SD2 – Settlement Areas</p> <p><i>Operational Policies:</i></p> <p>Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure Policy TRAN1 – Active travel – walking and cycling Policy TRAN 2 – Creating an accessible environment Policy TRAN4 – Travel plan Policy TRAN6 – Access to public roads Policy TRAN8 – Car parking and servicing arrangements Policy ENV1 – Environmental quality Policy ENV2 – Mitigating environmental change Policy ENV3 – Adapting to environmental change</p> <p>Development Plan – zoning, designations and proposals maps</p> <p>Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) BUAP Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014)</p>

	<p>Regional Planning Policy Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)</p> <p>Other Material Considerations Developer Contribution Framework (2020) <i>Belfast Agenda</i> (Community Plan)</p>
4.0	CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS
4.1	<p><u>Statutory Consultees</u></p> <p>DFI Roads – waiting final reply DfI Rivers – waiting reply NI Water – No objection</p> <p><u>Non-Statutory Consultees</u></p>
4.2	<p>Environmental Health – no objection with conditions</p> <p><u>Representations</u></p> <p>The application has been advertised in the press and neighbours notified.</p> <p>No third-party representations received</p>
5.0	PLANNING ASSESSMENT
5.1	<p>Main Issues</p> <p>The main issues relevant to consideration of the application are set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of health facility in this location • Climate change • Pre-application Community Consultation <p>Development Plan Context</p>
5.2	<p>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>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>
5.3	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 until the Local Policies Plan is adopted.
5.4	

	<p><u>Operational Policies</u></p> <p>The Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application. These have been listed above at para 3.1.</p>
5.5	<p><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, 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.</p>
5.6	<p>Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 – the site is un-zoned “white land” and within city centre boundary.</p> <p>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) – the site is un-zoned “white land” within the settlement limits and within city centre boundary.</p> <p>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014) – the site is un-zoned “white land” within the settlement limits and within city centre boundary.</p>
	<p><u>Principle of health/community facilities in this location</u></p>
5.7	<p>Policy CI1 pertaining to community infrastructure states that the Council will seek to protect and provide development opportunities for community, health, leisure, nurseries and educational facilities based on local need in line with projected population growth.</p>
5.8	<p>It is further expressed within the policy that permission will be granted for the provision of new and improved community infrastructure at appropriate and accessible locations within the urban area, subject to consideration of the nature and location of the proposal. all proposals are expected to ensure that there are no unacceptable impacts on residential amenity heritage assets and satisfactory arrangements are provided for access for all including pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.</p>
5.9	<p>The proposal is within an accessible city centre location, the surrounding commercial character ensures there is no impact on residential amenity. The proposal being for a change of use of an existing modern building ensures there is no impact on natural or built heritage assets. The proposal will have replacement windows fitted, these will be of a similar design and finish to the existing windows with some glazing panels replaced with opaque glazes units; this will not impact on the existing style of the building or on the surrounding character. The city centre location of the site, allows for all forms of transport to be used to access the building, the site benefits from direct access to footpaths, cycle lanes, and both bus and trains public transport.</p>
5.10	<p>The proposal is compatible with the policy requirements and is an acceptable form of development at this site.</p>
5.11	<p><u>Climate change</u></p>

5.12	<p>Policy ENV2 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.</p> <p>The applicant has provided details on the various sustainable design features which will be incorporated in the development. These include new insulation and new windows operating at a higher efficiency. The reuse of an existing building is also beneficial for the environment.</p>
5.13	
5.14	<p>Policy ENV3 states that planning permission will be granted for development that incorporates measures to adapt to environmental change. The proposal is considered to meet criteria (d) in that the proposal incorporates various measures to minimise overheating and reduces reliance on air conditioning.</p>
5.15	<p>Policy ENV 4 relating to flooding is considered to be satisfied, a flood risk assessment was submitted and DfI Rivers consulted. Although, at this time DfI has not responded it is not considered there will be any significant impacts as the proposal is for the reuse of an existing building.</p>
5.16	<p>Policy ENV5 states that all built development shall include, where appropriate, SuDS measures to manage surface water effectively on site to reduce surface water run-off. Given the location of the site adjacent to public roads there is no scope to include hard SuDS measure. However the external terrace and other public spaces lends itself to soft SUDs measures landscaping; a condition has been added to ensure their introduction prior to occupation of the development.</p>
5.17	<p>The proposal is considered acceptable having regard to Policy TRE1, ENV 2, 3, 4 & 5. <u>Access and transport</u></p>
5.18	<p>The site is a highly accessible location within the city centre having direct access to the road network and public transport. It is within short walking and cycling distance of shops, services, and leisure facilities. Provision is made for sheltered and secure cycle parking within the site. There a number of access points to the site, a pedestrian access via east bridge street, an ambulance drop off point to the rear and internal access from the under croft parking area. The proposal accords with Policy TRAN1.</p>
5.19	<p>Regarding on-site parking, the proposal provides 37 parking spaces within the lower ground floor level. DFI Roads Service, although not yet offered final comments, have not objected to the proposed development in their original comments. It is also not expected that there will be any significant objections to the proposal.</p>
5.20	<p>Subject to final comments, the proposal is considered acceptable having regard to Policies TRAN1, TRAN2, TRAN4, TRAN6 and TRAN 8. <u>Health impacts</u></p>
5.21	<p>Policy HC1 seeks to ensure that all new developments maximise opportunities to promote healthy and active lifestyles. New developments should be designed, constructed and managed in ways that improve health and promote healthy lifestyles. This will include supporting active travel options, improving accessibility to local service centres, reducing the use of private car travel, adequate provision of public open space, leisure and recreation facilities, high quality design and promoting balanced communities and sustainable neighbourhoods.</p>

5.22	<p>The site is highly accessible and provides excellent opportunities for active travel, including walking and cycling, through good linkages with the city and public amenity. The site is within short walking distance of the commercial city centre.</p> <p><u>Contaminated land</u></p> <p>Environmental Health (EH) as offered standard conditions should contamination be found on site.</p>
5.23	<p><u>Air quality</u></p> <p>EH has offered conditions relating to the potential noise impacts.</p>
5.24	<p><u>Noise</u></p> <p>A Noise Impact Assessment was submitted in support of the proposal. Following review of the NIA, awaiting EH comments.</p>
5.25	
5.26	<p>Odour</p> <p>EH has offered conditions regarding kitchen extraction methods.</p> <p><u>Pre-application Community Consultation</u></p>
5.27	<p>The application was preceded by a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) which set out the applicant's proposals for pre-application community consultation. The application is accompanied by a mandatory Pre-application Community Consultation Report (PACC). The PACC report describes the comprehensive pre-application consultation undertaken by the applicant.</p> <p>The applicant actively sought the views of the public and stakeholders with regards to this development by utilising the following methods of engagement:</p>
5.28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of an information leaflet containing the details of the proposals and the avenues through which recipients could provide their comments and feedback, a website was also set up to allow comments; • Hosted a public exhibition event with members of the project team to assist in any questions and to allow for further feedback; • Issued a press notice to highlight information about the proposals and provide notification of the public information event; <p>The feedback was reviewed, and the matters were considered within the PACC report, detailing how the feedback was gathered, analysed, assessed and considered.</p> <p>It is considered that the Pre-Community Consultation Report submitted has demonstrated that the applicant has carried out their duty under Section 27 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 to consult the community in advance of submitting an application.</p>
6.0	Recommendation
6.1	<p>The proposal is providing new health facility in a highly sustainable location and making very effective use of a vacant building. The scale, height, massing remain the same and design changes to the building are considered appropriate to the site's context. The</p>

6.2	<p>proposal would not have a harmful impact in respect of other land-use planning considerations.</p> <p>It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.</p> <p>Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with outstanding consultation responses as well as any other issues that arise, provided the issues are not substantive.</p>
7.0	<p>DRAFT CONDITIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development hereby permitted must be begun within five years from the date of this permission. <p>Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. If contamination is encountered during the carrying out of the development, all related development works shall cease, and the Council shall be notified immediately in writing. No further related development works shall proceed until this 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. <p>Reason: To ensure that any contamination within the site is appropriately dealt with, in the interests of human health</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The rating level (dBL_{A,T}) from the operation of all combined plant and equipment must not exceed the existing daytime and night-time background sound levels at the nearest noise sensitive premises, when measured or determined in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019 'Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound'. <p>Reason: Protection of nearby amenity.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. No external plant to be installed in association with the hereby permitted development unless previously approved in writing by the Planning Authority. <p>Reason: Protection of nearby amenity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Prior to the commencement of operation of hereby permitted kitchen a fit for purpose kitchen extraction and odour abatement system shall be installed to suppress and disperse odours created from operations on the premises. The specification of the system shall be determined in line with the current EMAQ+ 'Guidance on the Control of Odour and Noise from Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems' (updated in May 2022). The outlet from any extract ventilation ducting shall terminate at a height not less than 1m above the main eaves. <p>Reason: Protection of nearby amenity</p>

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| | <p>6. The installed kitchen extraction and odour abatement system must be retained and maintained thereafter.</p> |
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Reason: Protection of nearby amenity

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| | <p>7. Notwithstanding the submitted details, the development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until details of landscaping, water butts and planters, for the external terrace and any other available external space, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The development shall not be occupied unless the climate change measures have been implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall be permanently retained as such thereafter.</p> |
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Reason: In the interests of amenity and to mitigate against the environmental effects of climate change.

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| | <p>8. Employability and Skills. (Tbc if necessary)</p> |
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