

Development Management Report

Committee Date: 17th February 2026

Application ID: LA04/2024/1389/F

Proposal: Community garden and improvements to existing unused space, scheme to include, allotment area, pizza and BBQ area and pathways.

Location:
Newhill Youth and Community Centre, 261
Whiterock Road, Belfast, BT12 7FX

Referral Route: Application on lands to which the Council has an estate (3.8.5 (d) of the Scheme of Delegation)

Recommendation: Approval subject to conditions

Applicant Name and Address:
Niall Enright
Newhill Youth and Community Association
261 Whiterock Road,
Belfast,
BT12 7FX

Agent Name and Address:
Mullin Design Associates
12 Audleystown Road,
Downpatrick
BT30 7LP

Date Valid: 9th October 2024

Target Date: 20th January 2025

Contact Officer: Ciara Reville, Principal Planning (Development Management)

Executive Summary:

The application seeks full permission for community garden and improvements to existing unused space, scheme to include, allotment area, pizza and BBQ area and pathways.

The site is located within the settlement limits for the city.

The key issues for consideration of the application are set out below.

- Principle of proposal
- Impact on Amenity
- Access & transport
- Climate change
- Environmental protection
- Natural heritage

The principle of the proposed uses is considered acceptable under the strategic aims of the RDS, the SPPS and the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy. The proposal seeks, in the main, to alter existing rough ground area, to the rear of the centre, into an area for allotment beds, wildflower and planted areas and improved pathways. To the side of the centre, it is proposed the area to be used for a seating area, BBQ and pizza making and a film wall and additional hedging planting to screen this area.

The proposed works are considered subservient to the existing building and is sympathetic to both the character of the area and the setting of the surrounding residential use.

Consultation with Environmental Health resulted in conditions being offered regarding times of operation to protect neighbouring amenity from noise and risk of unknown ground contamination.

One third party objection has been received and is addressed in the report.

Recommendation

Having regard to the Development Plan and, all relevant 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.

Proposed Plans

Site location plan:



<p>1.0 1.1</p>	<p>Characteristics of the Site and Area</p> <p>The site is to the rear and side of an existing community centre. The side section of the site is in hard standing set behind steel palisade fencing, centre management stated it was previous used as a location for a modular building. To the rear is an area of hard standing used as a MUGA also a pathway connecting with a rear gate and the remaining area is a rough, overgrown grass area. The boundary fencing consists of both timber fencing and steel palisade fencing. To the south and east of the site is domestic housing with back garden areas of the housing adjoining the site and to the north of the site is a childcare facility. The site and childcare facility are located on the edge of the settlements with open fields of the Black Mountain beyond.</p>
<p>2.0 2.1</p>	<p>Planning History</p> <p>LA04/2015/1453/F - Proposed refurbishment of community centre to comprise of the part demolition of the existing single storey building and replacement with a two-storey structure and associated site works – PP Granted</p>
<p>3.0 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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><i>Operational Policies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy CI1 Community Infrastructure • 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 • Policy ENV4 - Flooding • Policy ENV5 – Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) • Policy NH1 – Protection of natural heritage resources <p>Development Plan – zoning, designations and proposals maps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) BUAP • Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) • Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014) <p>Regional Planning Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) • Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (2nd Edition 2025) (SPPS)

4.0	Consultations and Representations
4.1	<p><u>Statutory Consultees</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None <p><u>Non-Statutory Consultees</u></p>
4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCC Environmental Health: No objection, advise conditions <p><u>Representations</u></p> <p>The application has been advertised in the newspaper and neighbours notified, one representation was received:</p>
4.3	<p>Consideration of third-party comments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objection stated that higher footfall to the community centre leading to noise and parking issues, potential for damage to fencing. <i>Case Officer's Response: The proposal is not designed to increase footfall to the centre but to improve an existing area of open ground to the rear and side of the centre. Potential increased noise levels have been considered by EH and a condition has been offered to ensure no unacceptable noise affecting amenity. The issue of parking on site or on adjacent road is no different from the current situation. There is no increase proposed in the number of cars attending the site the on-site parking will not change from the current level of parking.</i>
5.0	PLANNING ASSESSMENT
5.1	<p><u>Main Issues</u></p> <p>The main issues relevant to consideration of the application are set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of proposal • Impact on Amenity • Access & transport • Climate change • Environmental protection • Natural heritage <p><u>Development Plan Context</u></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>
5.3	<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>
5.4	<p>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</p>

	<p>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>Proposals Maps</u></p>
5.5	<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 the city centre. • Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (2004): The site is within the city centre's Primary Retail Core and the City Centre Conservation Area. • Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014): The site is within the city centre's Primary Retail Core and the City Centre Conservation Area. <p><u>Principle of Development</u></p>
5.6	<p>The existing site is within the settlement limits for the city and is currently in use as a community infrastructure facility: the principle of development is acceptable having regard to planning policy and other areas of acknowledged importance such as consultee and third-party comments.</p>
5.7	<p><u>Policy considerations:</u></p> <p>Policy CI1 states that the Council will seek to protect and provide development opportunities for community, health, leisure among other things based on local need in line with the projected population growth over the plan period. It further states 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 the nature and location of the proposal. It is expected that all proposals will ensure that there is no unacceptable impact on residential amenity and that access is provided for all.</p>
5.8	<p>The proposal is considered to comply with the policy requirements the location is appropriate; it is accessible and neighbouring residential amenity is protected from unacceptable harm by way of appropriate planning conditions.</p>
5.9	<p><u>Impact on Amenity</u></p> <p>The proposed has a hard standing area to the side of the centre which is proposed to be used for seating, BBQ and Pizza making area also included is a film wall. Having regard to this area being adjacent to gardens of neighbouring residential dwelling EH was consulted with a noise impact assessment. Having assessed the NIA EH offered no objection subject to the inclusion of a time limiting condition.</p>

5.10	<p><u>Access & transport</u></p> <p>The proposal does not include the provision for alteration to the existing access and parking provision on site. The nature of the works is not designed to attract additional visitors to the site. Given no alterations there was no requirement to consult DfI Roads Service. The proposal is considered to satisfy the relevant TRAN1, TRAN2 and TRAN8.</p>
5.11	<p><u>Climate change</u></p> <p>Policy SP6 (Environmental resilience) of the Plan Strategy reinforces the RDS policy on climate change which also aligns with the Belfast Agenda, by seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate to build environmental resilience. Policy ENV1 (Environmental quality) allows for development that will maintain and, where possible, enhance environmental quality. Any proposal must protect communities from materially harmful development and must not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment. Policy ENV2 (Mitigating environmental change) 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. There is a presumption in favour of retaining existing buildings. Policy ENV3 (Adapting to environmental change) states that planning permission will be granted for development that incorporates measures to adapt to environmental change. Policy ENV5 (Sustainable Drainage Systems) SuDS states that all built development should include, where applicable, SuDS measures to manage surface water effectively on site to reduce surface water runoff.</p>
5.12	<p>The proposal complies by policies ENV2 and ENV3 by contributing to soft landscaping and additional planting. The proposal maximises opportunities to incorporate of SuDS and therefore complies with policy ENV5.</p>
5.13	<p>Subject to conditions to ensure implementation of these measures, there would be no conflict with policies SP3, SP6, ENV1, ENV2, ENV3 and ENV5 of the Plan strategy, and the strategic aims of the RDS the SPPS, and the Belfast Agenda.</p>
5.14	<p><u>Environmental protection</u></p> <p>Policy SP6 (Environmental resilience) of the Plan Strategy reinforces the RDS policy on climate change which also aligns with the Belfast Agenda to build environmental resilience. Policy ENV1 (Environmental quality) requires new development to protect communities from materially harmful development and must not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment.</p>
5.15	<p>Environmental Health have been consulted in regard to noise and contaminated land. The response from Environmental Health indicated no objection to the proposal subject to relevant condition. The proposal is considered compliant with Policy ENV1.</p>
5.16	<p><i>Contaminated land:</i></p> <p>The site is not located on past land use types that have the potential to contaminate land and pose a risk to human health. A PRA was submitted for the groundworks and EH have no objections with conditions.</p>
5.17	<p><i>Noise:</i></p> <p>A Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted which proposes noise mitigation measures for the protection of the residents of the hotel. EH had no objections with conditions.</p>

5.18	<p><u>Flood risk</u></p> <p>Policy ENV4 (Flood risk) of the Plan Strategy states that planning applications in flood risk areas must be accompanied by an assessment of the flood risk in the form of a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). Flood Maps (NI) indicate that an area of the site lies within a surface water flood plain. This is mainly confined to the area containing an existing basketball court. It is considered the nature of the works mainly planting and upgrade of existing pathway will have no significant impact on the current flood risk situation on site. It is also noted that from the production of the flood map the lands above the site has gained planning permission for residential development with drainage facilities that would alter the amount of water flowing downstream towards the site.</p>
5.19	<p><u>Natural heritage</u></p> <p>Policy NH1 states that the Council will adopt a precautionary approach when considering the impact of proposed development on local, national or international natural heritage resources, including designated sites, protected species and the other important interests of biodiversity and geodiversity.</p>
5.20	<p>Due to the proposed nature of the works, wildflower beds, planting, allotment beds the proposal will not significantly impact on the surrounding environment.</p> <p>The proposal is in compliance with Policy NH1.</p>
6.0	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Having regard to the Local Development Plan and all material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.</p>
6.1	
6.2	<p>Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues arising, provided that they are not substantive.</p>
7.0	<p>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. Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 2. The front and rear access gates to the site shall be kept closed and locked at all times when the building is not in operation or when no staff are present on site. Reason: to safeguard the amenity of nearby noise sensitive receptors. 3. The hereby permitted development shall not operate outside the following hours: Monday to Thursday 09:00-21:30 Friday & Saturday 09:00-23:00 Reason: to safeguard the amenity of nearby noise sensitive receptors. 4. 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

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