

Planning Committee

Development Management Report

Summary	
Application ID: LA04/2025/2113/F	Committee Date: 21 st April 2026
Proposal: The construction of a new Sports Hall, Gymnasium and P.E Facility and footbridge connecting to existing GAA playing field	Location: St. Marys Christian Brothers Grammar School St Marys Christian Brothers Grammar School 147a Glen Road, Andersonstown, Belfast, BT11 8NR
Referral Route: Application for Major development	
Recommendation: Approval subject to conditions	
Applicant Name and Address: St. Marys Christian Brothers Grammar School 147a Glen Road, Andersonstown Belfast BT11 8NR	Agent Name and Address: Andrew Heasley Turley Hamilton House 3 Joy Street BELFAST
Date Valid: 9 th December 2025	
Target Date: 7 th July 2026	
Contact Officer: Ciara Reville, Principal Planning Officer (Development Management)	
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>The application relates to St. Marys Christian Brothers Grammar School St Marys Christian Brothers Grammar School 147a Glen Road. The proposal is for the construction of a new 3 storey Sports Hall, Gymnasium and P.E Facility and footbridge connecting to existing GAA playing field to the rear. The aim of the proposal is to enhance facilities within the school for pupils and staff. The facility will include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sports Hall (440m²), Gymnasium (260m²), Fitness Suite (121m²), Dance / Lecture / Drama Suite (101m²), P.E Classroom (60m² from general classroom allowance), Changing Accommodation & WCs (Pupils & Staff) and Hygiene Room (12m²) · P.E Office (15m²) <p>The application follows Pre-Application Discussions with officers.</p> <p>The key issues for consideration of the application are set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of development • Layout, Scale, Massing and Design and Impact on the character and appearance of the area • Open Space • Impact on Natural Heritage • Flood Risk • Climate change • Proposed Access and Car Parking 	

The site is located within the development limits and designated as an area of existing open space within the most recent version of draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004).

The proposal is considered to enhance the overall sports and recreation facilities for the pupils of St Mary's. The proposed building will be built on an existing all-weather pitch that provides limited value to the school in the way of amenity/ recreation. The proposed facility will be more adaptable to the school curriculum and will be able to be used throughout the year. The proposal will include a link bridge to the existing pitch to the rear of the site. The overall range of facilities that will be provided within the new proposal is considered to far outweigh the partial loss of open space within the school campus, and will not result in a detriment to the overall green infrastructure provision in line with Policy OS1 of the Plan Strategy. The addition of landscaping to this area of the school campus will enhance the character, amenity and biodiversity of the campus and assist in mitigation against climate change.

DFI Roads, DFI Rivers, Environmental Health, NIEA, NI Water and Shared Environmental Services have all been consulted and offer no objection to the proposal.

The application was advertised in the local press, no letters of representation have been received. No neighbour notification was required due to the separation distance between the site and any adjoining sites being greater than 20m.

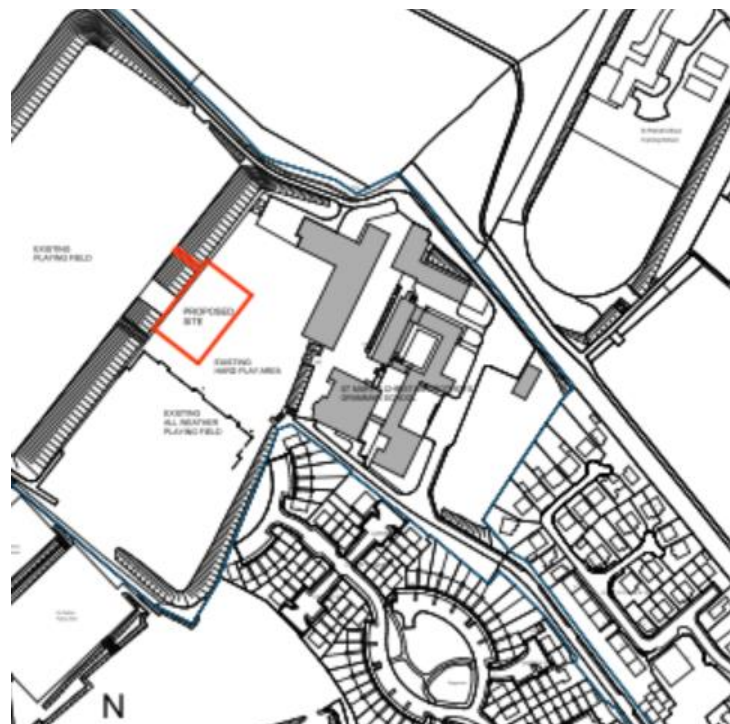
Recommendation

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.

DRAWINGS AND IMAGERY

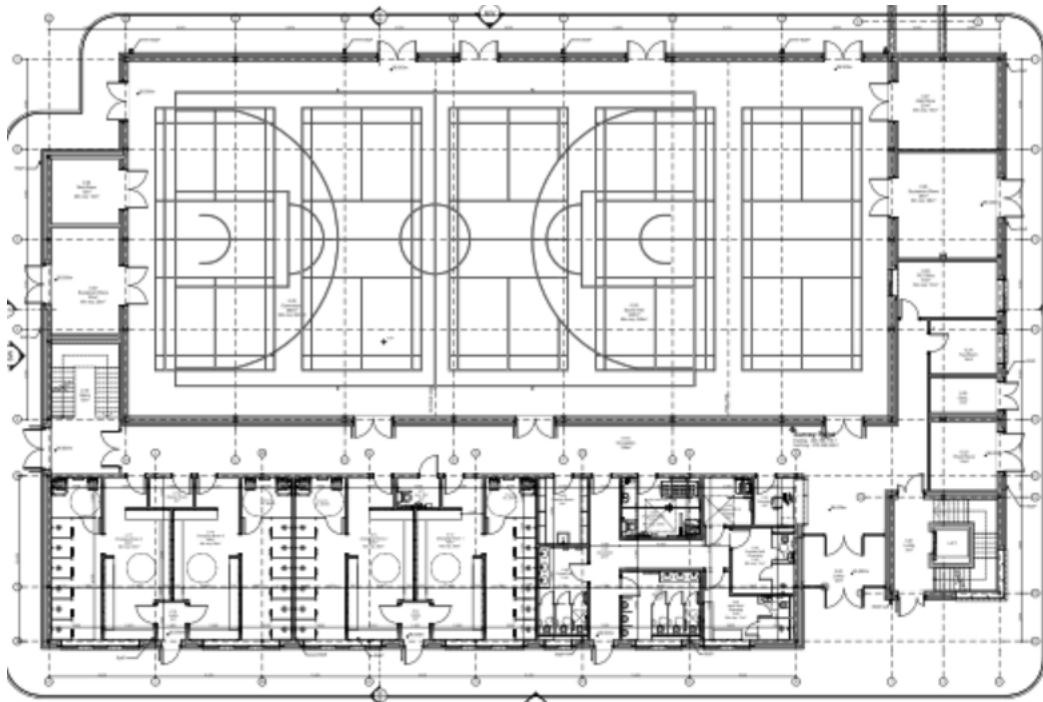
Site Location Plan:



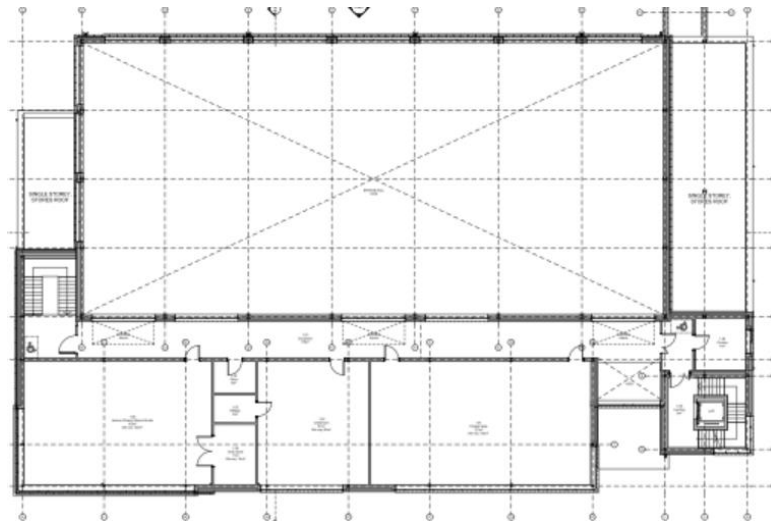
Proposed Site Plan:



Ground floor plan:



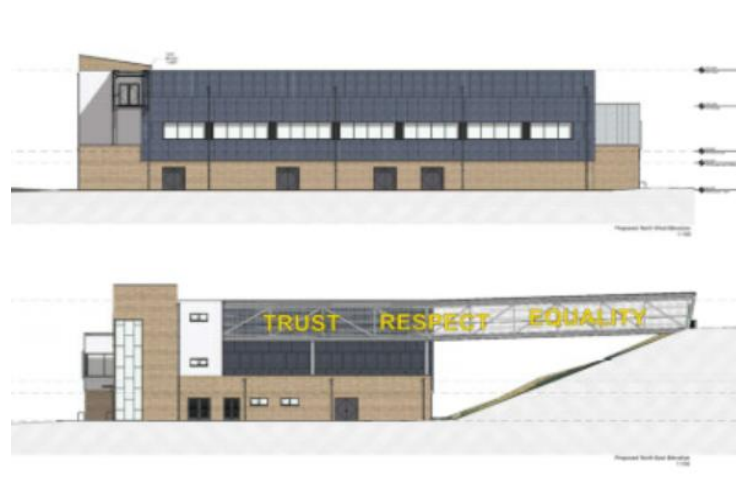
First Floor Plan:



Southwest & Southeast Elevations



Northeast & Northwest Elevations



<p>1.0</p> <p>1.1</p> <p>1.2</p> <p>1.3</p> <p>1.4</p>	<p>Characteristics of the Site and Area</p> <p>The site is located within the existing grounds of St. Mary’s Christian Brothers’ Grammar School, 147A Glen Road, Belfast, BT11 8NR. The school site is accessed from the Glen Road.</p> <p>The site comprises of a portion of the all-weather playing field and an existing grass bank. The space was previously part of a running track but is no longer used as such as due to the development of astroturf playing facilities. The space is currently used as an outdoor recreation space by the school.</p> <p>Description of Proposed Development</p> <p>The proposal is for the construction of a new 3 storey Sports Hall, Gymnasium and P.E Facility and footbridge connecting to existing GAA playing field to the rear of the site. The facility will provide a Sports Hall and Gymnasium, alongside a two-storey Physical Education (P.E.) facility.</p> <p>The application follows Pre-Application Discussions with officers.</p>
<p>2.0</p> <p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p>	<p>RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Z/1996/2114 – Erection of sports hall and changing facilities. Permission Granted 11th April 1996 • Z/2014/0978/F - Single storey structure containing synthetic surface sports training pitch with changing facilities and ancillary accommodation. Permission Granted 18th December 2015.
<p>3.0</p> <p>3.1</p>	<p>PLANNING POLICY</p> <p>Development Plan – Plan Strategy <u>Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035</u></p> <p><i>Strategic Policies:</i></p> <p>Policy SP2 – sustainable development Policy SP3 – improving health and wellbeing Policy SP5 – positive placemaking Policy SP6 – environmental resilience</p> <p><i>Operational Policies:</i></p> <p>Policy BH5 – Archaeology Policy HC1 – Promoting Healthy Communities Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure Policy TRAN1 – Active travel – walking and cycling Policy TRAN 6 – 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 – Flood Risk Policy ENV5 - Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)</p>

<p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p>Policy GB1 – Green and blue infrastructure network Policy OS1 – Protection of Open Space Policy TRE1 – Trees</p> <p><u>Supplementary Planning Guidance</u> Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Planning and Flood Risk</p> <p>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)</p> <p>Regional Planning Policy Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)</p> <p>Other Material Considerations <i>Belfast Agenda</i> (Community Plan)</p>
<p>4.0</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p>	<p>CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS</p> <p><u>Statutory Consultees</u></p> <p>Dfi Roads – No objections NIEA – No objections DFI Rivers- No objections</p> <p><u>Non-Statutory Consultees</u></p> <p>Environmental Health – No objections subject to conditions Shared Environmental Services (SES) – No objections NI Water - No objections</p> <p><u>Representations</u></p> <p>The application was advertised in the local press, no letters of representation have been received.</p> <p>No neighbour notification was required due to the separation distance between the site and any adjoining sites being greater than 20m.</p>
<p>5.0</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p>PLANNING ASSESSMENT</p> <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 development • Open space • Layout, Scale and Design and Impact on the character and appearance of the area • Impact on amenity • Impact on Natural Heritage

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Risk • Climate change • Proposed Access and Car Parking
5.2	Development Plan Context
5.3	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.
5.4	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.
5.5	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.
5.6	<u>Operational Polices</u>
5.7	The Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application. These have been listed above.
5.8	<u>Proposals Maps</u>
5.9	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.
5.10	Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 – the site is unzoned whiteland.
5.11	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (2004) – the site is located within the development limits and designated as an area of existing open space
5.12	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014) – the site is located within the development limits and designated as an area of existing open space
5.13	<u>Principle of Development</u>
5.14	The proposal will result in the partial loss of open space within the school campus. Policy OS1 provides general policy principles for the protection of open space. There is

5.15	a general presumption in favour of retaining all such lands and uses, including protecting any character and amenity value.
5.16	Development resulting in the loss of open space will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where it is clearly shown that redevelopment will bring substantial community benefits that decisively outweigh the loss of the open space.
5.17	The site consists of part all-weather pitch which previously existed within the school grounds. A running track also existed round the perimeter of the pitch. Following the development of a MUGA approved under (Z/2014/0978/F) on a section of the all-weather pitch the usability of the pitch and running track is limited.
5.18	The facility will provide a Sports Hall (440m ²), Gymnasium (260m ²), Fitness Suite (121m ²) and Dance / Lecture / Drama Suite (101m ²) as well as associated offices and changing facilities.
5.19	<p>The submitted Planning Statement provides a list of benefits to the school community which are below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a modern indoor sports and changing facility including a sports hall, gymnasium and fitness suite • Can be used to deliver the school's sports and social curriculum throughout the year. • Greater connectivity to the existing grass pitch to the rear.
5.20	Taking into account the benefits a modern sports facility like this will provide, it is considered that in this specific instance these decisively outweigh the loss of open space. The open space in its current form has lost its primary use as a sports pitch and running track therefore now only exists as an informal area for recreation within the school.
5.21	It is considered that there is sufficient open space remaining within the wider school campus that allows for informal outdoor recreation.
5.22	<u>Layout, Scale and Design and Impact on the character and appearance of the area</u>
5.23	The site is within the St Mary's School Campus which is characterised by large three and four storey buildings. Therefore the proposed three storey building 11m in height is not considered to be out of character in terms of scale with the surrounding area. The building is positioned in front of a large grass bank to the northwest of the site which provides natural screening and integration with the existing topography.
5.24	The facility is located to the rear of the wider St Mary's site therefore there will be limited critical views from south of the site that would be considered to impact on the character and appearance of the area. The proposed sports facility will be approx. 35m from the nearest dwelling in Caffrey Drive.
5.24	The building will be finished with a range of materials including brickwork at lower level. The first floor will be rendered with painted wall surfaces to introduce contrast and texture, a metal zinc cladding feature at the south corner of the Lecture/Drama/Studio Room is proposed to add contrast and architectural detail.

5.25	The combination of varied wall finishes, alternating wall depths, and differentiated roof heights contributes significantly to the articulation of the building's massing. These elements help break down the overall scale and reduce the visual impact of the structure, ensuring it sits comfortably within its context while maintaining a strong architectural identity. The proposed footbridge is designed as a steel frame structure.
5.26	<u>Impact on Amenity</u>
5.27	The proposal is not considered to impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties. The nearest residential property is approx. 35m from the application site. Therefore, there will no impact in terms of overlooking, overshadowing or dominance. Environmental Health have been consulted on the proposal in terms of noise, air pollution, general amenity, ambient air quality, contaminated land and other considerations and offer no objection subject to a condition regarding noise and any unexpected, contaminated land on the site.
5.28	<u>Impact on Natural Heritage</u>
5.29	Policy NH1 states the Council will adopt the precautionary principle when considering the impacts of a proposed development on local, national or international heritage resources, including designated sites, protected species and other important interests of biodiversity and geodiversity.
5.30	A biodiversity checklist and ecology was submitted with the application. NIEA Natural Environment Division and Shared Environmental Services were consulted and offered no objections to the proposal.
5.31	In regards to trees on the site overall there will be a net gain as required by Policy TRE1. Trees felled as a result of the proposed development will be mitigated through the provision of a net gain for tree planting. This is considered to improve the biodiversity the site. The proposal is considered compliant with Policy TRE1.
5.32	<u>Flood Risk and Proposed Drainage</u>
5.33	The proposal includes a Drainage Assessment and DFI Rivers were consulted. DFI Rivers acknowledge the submitted Drainage Assessment and Officers have no reason to disagree with its findings.
5.34	<u>Transport, Access and Road Safety</u>
5.35	The proposal is for the use of pupils and staff within St Mary's school therefore will not result in an increase of visitors coming to and from the school. The existing access remains unaltered. The proposal provides a lift to allow accessible access to the link bridge on the third floor to the school pitch to the north of the site. The changing facilities and encourage active travel too and from the school.
5.36	The proposal meets the criteria of TRAN1 (Active Travel) and TRAN2 (Creating an accessible Environment).
5.37	

<p>5.38</p> <p>5.39</p> <p>5.40</p> <p>5.41</p> <p>5.42</p> <p>5.43</p> <p>5.44</p> <p>5.45</p> <p>5.46</p>	<p>The proposal is in accordance with HC1 in that it is supporting active travel options, improving accessibility, reducing the use of private car travel, provides adequate provision of public open space, leisure and recreation facilities.</p> <p>The proposal by way of design, siting and layout as well as the proposed access in terms of road safety is considered to comply with Policies TRAN1, TRAN 2, and HC1</p> <p><u>Climate change</u></p> <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. Policy ENV3 states that planning permission will be granted for development that incorporates measures to adapt to environmental change.</p> <p>The associated planning statement with the submission states;</p> <p><i>‘The Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) design strategy incorporates existing photovoltaic (PV) panels and a wind turbine that currently generate sustainable energy for the school. Depending on the outcome of the SBEM analysis, the installation of additional PV panels may be required to achieve the targeted energy efficiency levels.’</i></p> <p>Associated tree planting resulting a net gain of trees of 3 trees provided within the overall development will maximise the use of sustainable design features.</p> <p>The proposal has eradicated any downstream flood potential by providing a SuDS compliant attenuated storm drainage design which mimics the natural greenfield environment by incorporating stormwater storage potential through a geo-cellular storage tank and some oversized pipelines.</p> <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 and to ensure flooding is not increased elsewhere.</p> <p>The planning design and access statement states;</p> <p><i>In line with current planning policy on Sustainable Design Systems (SuDS), the proposal has eradicated any downstream flood potential by providing a SuDS compliant attenuated storm drainage design which mimics the natural greenfield environment by incorporating stormwater storage potential through a geo-cellular storage tank and some oversized pipelines.</i></p> <p>Additional SUD’s will be provided in the form additional tree planting.</p>
<p>6.0</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, 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.</p>

7.0	DRAFT CONDITIONS
7.1	<p>1. The development hereby permitted must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</p>
7.2	<p>2. The rating level (dBLAr,T) from the operation of all combined plant and equipment associated with the hereby approved development must not exceed the existing representative daytime and night-time background sound levels (dBLA90,T) 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> <p>Reason: Protection of residential amenity.</p>
7.3	<p>3. 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.</p> <p>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> <p>Reason: To ensure that any contamination within the site is appropriately dealt with, in the interests of human health.</p>
7.4	<p>4. All external facing and roofing materials shall be carried out as specified on the approved plans.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the area</p>
7.5	<p>5. All soft landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council. Any existing or proposed trees or plants 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 with other trees or plants of a location, species and size, details of which shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. All hard</p>

7.6	<p>surface treatment of open parts of the site shall be permeable or drained to a permeable area. All hard landscape works shall be permanently retained in accordance with the approved details</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the area.</p> <p>6. The use hereby approved shall only be for the benefit of staff and pupils in accordance with the details set out in the Planning Statement received from the agent on 09/12/2025 dated September 2025.</p> <p>Reason: The development is only acceptable in this location because of the circumstances of the applicant.</p>
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