

Development Management Report Committee Application

Summary	
Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday 11 th August 2026	
Application ID: LA04/2025/0110/F	
Proposal: Resurfacing and minor extension of existing 3G pitch; replacement floodlighting; 50-seater covered mini-stand (3.8m tall by 7.5m long and 3.3m wide); additional 1.2m fencing enclosure to pitch; replacement dugouts: storage container (3.6m by 2.4m); removal of portacabin and associated minor works/drainage modifications.	Location: Hammer Playing Pitch, Agnes Street, Shankill Road, Belfast, BT13 1GG
Referral Route: BCC is applicant	
Recommendation: Approval	
Applicant Name and Address: Stephen McCullough Cecil Ward Building 4-10 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BP	Agent Name and Address: Tony Quinn 5 Windsor Avenue North Malone Road Belfast BT96EL
Executive Summary: The proposal is considered acceptable in principle, representing the upgrading of an established recreational facility without materially altering the existing use of the site. The site is located within an established urban area comprising a mix of residential, educational, community, religious and recreational uses, including residential properties to the east and north, a primary school to the east, a youth club to the west and a church to the south-west. Having regard to this prevailing context, the scale, form, design and appearance of the proposed development are considered compatible with the character of the area and would not result in an unacceptable visual impact. DfI Roads, Historic Environment Division, NI Water, NIEA, Rivers Agency and Environmental Health have no objection to the proposal. Subject to the Council's final HRA incorporating the additional European site and the necessary operational-phase mitigation identified by NIEA, and concluding that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, the requirements of the Habitats Regulations would be satisfied. SES has advised that it does not require reconsultation following completion of this exercise. Having regard to the Development Plan, consultation responses and all other material considerations, the proposal is considered acceptable. 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 HRA, wording of conditions and deal with any other matters which may arise provided they are not substantive.	

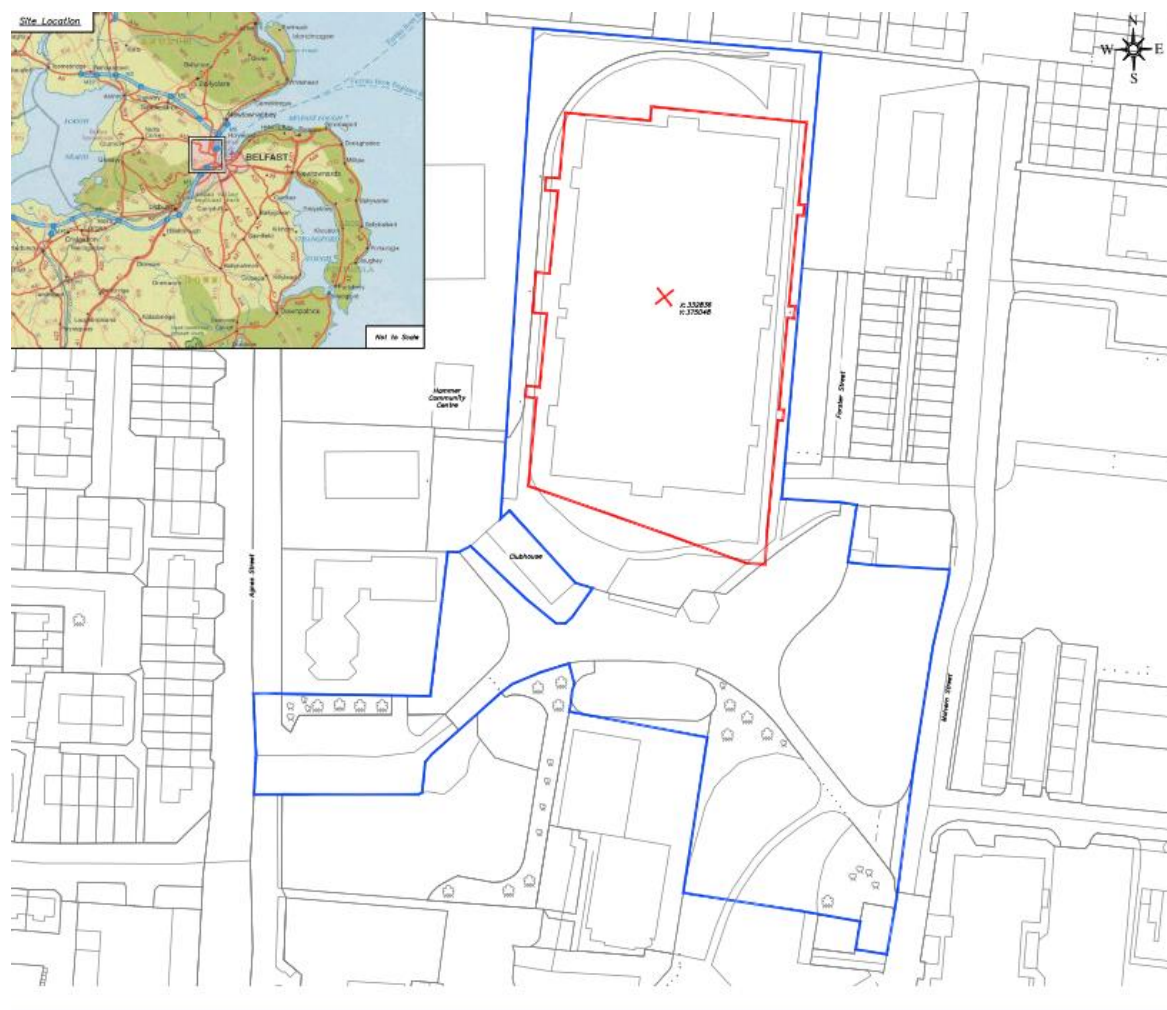
Planning Report

1.0

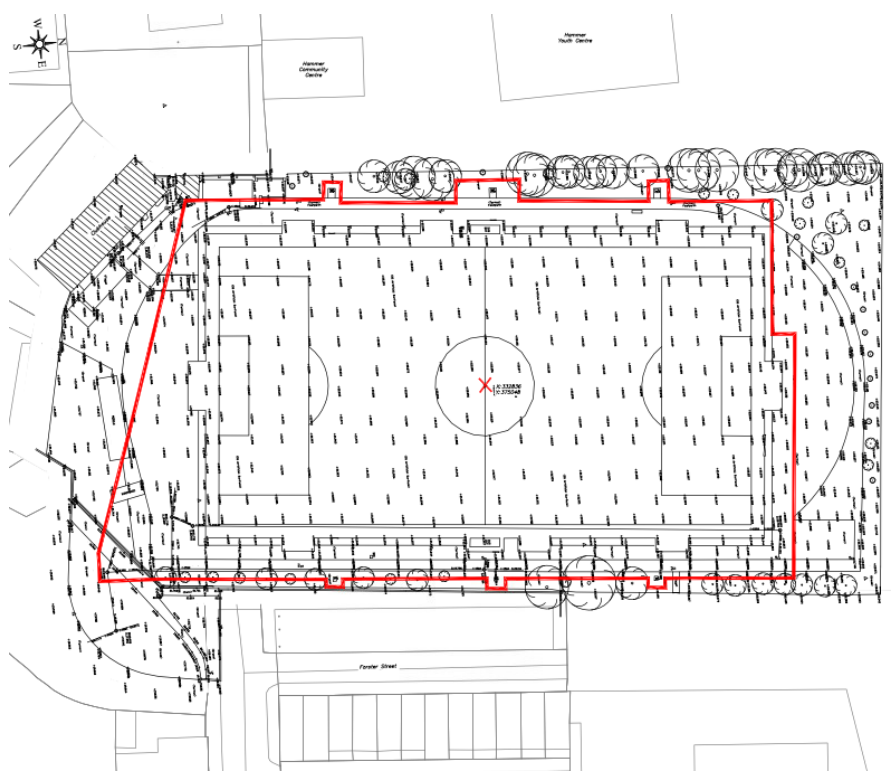
Drawings

1.1

Site Location Map



Existing Site Plan



Proposed Site Plan



2.0	Characteristics of the Site and Area
2.1	The application site comprises an existing established sports facility containing a 3G playing pitch and associated infrastructure, including floodlighting, perimeter fencing, dugouts and ancillary structures. The site is generally open in character, with the existing pitch forming the predominant feature. The surrounding area is predominantly urban and contains a mix of residential, educational, community, religious and recreational uses. Residential properties are located immediately to the east and also to the north of the site, with a primary school situated to the east. A youth club is located to the west, while a church is situated to the south west. The wider area is therefore characterised by a mixture of established residential development and community facilities, with the existing sports use forming an established component of the local character. The site is accessed from the existing surrounding road network and is contained within established boundaries. The existing floodlighting, fencing and associated sports infrastructure give the site a clear recreational character within the surrounding built up area.
3.0	Description of Proposal
3.1	Resurfacing and minor extension of existing 3G pitch; replacement floodlighting; 50 seater covered mini-stand (3.8m tall by 7.5m long and 3.3m wide); additional 1.2m fencing enclosure to pitch; replacement dugouts: storage container (3.6m by 2.4m); removal of portacabin and associated minor works/drainage modifications.
4.0	Planning Policy and Other Material Considerations
4.1	Development Plan – operational policies Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035
4.2	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)
4.3	Regional Planning Policy Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)
4.4	Other Relevant Policies Belfast Agenda
	Relevant Planning History
4.5	N/A
5.0	Consultations and Representations
5.1	Statutory Consultations

5.2 5.3	DfI Roads – No objections DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) – No objections DfI Rivers – No objections NI Water – No objections DAERA NIEA – No objections. Non-Statutory Consultations BCC Environmental Health – No objections Shared Environmental Services (SES) – Initial response: Additional information required. Re-consultation response: No re-consultation requested from SES Representations The application has been advertised and neighbours notified. The Council has received no representations from third parties.
6.0	PLANNING ASSESSMENT
6.1 6.2 6.3 6.4 6.5 6.6 6.7	Development Plan Context 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. 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. 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. Operational policies – the Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application. These are listed in the report. 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 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. Relevant Planning Policies Policies in the Plan Strategy relevant to the application include the following:

	<i>Strategic Policies:</i> Policy SP1 – Growth Strategy Policy SP2 – Sustainable development Policy SP3 – Improving health and wellbeing Policy SP5 – Positive placemaking Policy SP6 – Environmental resilience <i>Operational Policies:</i> Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure Policy TRAN1 – Active Travel – Walking and Cycling Policy TRAN 2 – Creating an Accessible Environment Policy TRAN 3 – Transport Assessment Policy ENV1 – Environmental Quality Policy ENV2 – Mitigating Environmental Change Policy ENV3 – Adopting to Environmental Change Policy ENV4 – Flood Risk Policy ENV5 – Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Policy GB1 – Green and Blue Infrastructure Network Policy OS1 – Protection of Open Space Policy OS5 – Intensive Sports Facilities Policy NH1 – Protection of Natural Heritage Resources Policy BH1 – Listed Buildings
6.8	Key Issues The key issues are: • The principle of the development at this location • Visual Impact of the Proposal / Character of the Area • Impact on amenity • Impact on Natural Environment • Impact on Built Heritage • Impact on transport and other infrastructure • Drainage • Ecological impacts • Flood Risk
6.9	The Principle of the Development at this Location The proposal is for the resurfacing and minor extension of the existing 3G playing pitch at Hammer Playing Pitch, together with replacement floodlighting, a 50-seat covered mini-stand, additional fencing, replacement dugouts, a storage container, removal of the existing portacabin and associated minor works and drainage modifications.
6.10	The principle of the development is considered primarily against Policies CI1, OS1 and OS5, together with the overarching objectives of Policies SP2 and SP3 of the Belfast LDP Plan Strategy.
6.11	Policy CI1 supports the provision and improvement of community infrastructure where it is accessible to the community it serves and where there would be no unacceptable impact on residential amenity, the environment, transport network or other relevant interests. Policies SP2 and SP3 seek to promote sustainable development and improve

	health and wellbeing, including through opportunities for physical activity, recreation and community participation.
6.12	Policy OS1 seeks to protect existing open space, including playing fields and other areas used for sport and recreation. The proposal would not result in the loss of the existing playing pitch or its recreational function. Rather, it would retain and enhance the established sporting use through the improvement of the existing 3G surface and associated facilities. The minor extension of the playing surface and associated infrastructure would remain ancillary to and compatible with the established recreational use of the site.
6.13	Policy OS5 relates specifically to intensive sports facilities and requires consideration of matters including accessibility, compatibility with surrounding land uses, residential amenity, traffic and parking, environmental impacts and the character and appearance of the area. These matters are considered in detail in the subsequent sections of this report. The site is an established playing pitch within an urban area and the proposal does not introduce a new sporting use to the site. The development would instead upgrade existing sporting infrastructure and improve the quality and functionality of the facility. The addition of the 50-seat covered stand, replacement dugouts and associated infrastructure would complement the primary recreational use and would remain proportionate to the scale and nature of the facility.
6.14	The proposal would therefore retain and enhance an established recreational facility, supporting opportunities for sport, physical activity and community participation without resulting in the loss of open space. Subject to the detailed consideration of amenity, environmental, transport and other impacts below, the principle of development is considered acceptable and compliant with Policies CI1, OS1, OS5, SP2 and SP3 of the Plan Strategy.
6.15	Visual Impact of the Proposal / Character of the Area The proposal has been assessed having regard to Policies SP5 and OS5 of the Plan Strategy, which seek to ensure that development responds appropriately to its context and does not result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
6.16	The application site comprises an established 3G playing pitch within a predominantly built-up urban area. The immediate surroundings are characterised by a mixture of residential, educational, community and recreational uses. Residential properties are located to the north of the site, including along Agnes Close and the wider Malvern residential area, with further residential development located immediately to the east beyond Malvern Primary School and Forster Street/Malvern Street. Malvern Primary School occupies land immediately to the east of the pitch, whilst Hammer Youth Club is situated to the west. Community and institutional uses, including the church, are located to the south-west. The wider area is therefore characterised by a relatively dense urban form, within which the playing pitch forms an established area of recreational open space.
6.17	The existing pitch and associated infrastructure are already readily apparent within this context. The proposal would retain the established recreational character and function of the site, with the majority of the works comprising the resurfacing and minor extension of the existing playing surface and replacement or upgrading of existing ancillary infrastructure.
6.18	The proposed 50-seat covered mini-stand would measure approximately 7.5 metres in length, 3.3 metres in width and 3.8 metres in height. Whilst introducing an additional built

6.19	element adjacent to the pitch, its scale and massing are relatively modest. The structure would be read visually in association with the existing playing pitch and against the backdrop of surrounding residential, educational and community development. It would therefore appear as a functional and proportionate ancillary structure within an established sporting facility rather than as an incongruous or visually dominant addition. Similarly, the replacement dugouts, additional 1.2 metre fencing and storage container are modest ancillary features which are characteristic of an established sports facility. Their scale, siting and relationship with the playing pitch are such that they would not materially alter the character or appearance of the wider area.
6.20	The proposal also includes replacement floodlighting. The lighting columns represent the tallest elements of the development and would remain visible from surrounding residential streets and other nearby properties. However, floodlighting is an existing and established feature of the playing pitch. The proposal therefore involves the replacement of existing sporting infrastructure rather than the introduction of floodlighting into an undeveloped or visually sensitive location. Within the urban context, the replacement columns would not appear unduly prominent or out of character.
6.21	The impact upon the historic environment has also been considered. DfC Historic Environment Division has assessed the potential impact upon the nearby listed building and its setting and advises that it is content with the proposal, subject to conditions, having regard to Policy BH1 of the Plan Strategy.
6.22	Impact on Amenity Policies ENV1, SP5, CI1 and OS5 require development to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses. This is an important consideration in this instance given the relatively constrained urban setting of the playing pitch and its proximity to residential and other sensitive uses.
6.23	Residential properties are located to the north and east of the site, whilst Malvern Primary School lies immediately to the east. Hammer Youth Club is located to the west, with further community and institutional uses to the south and south-west. The relationship with these surrounding uses has therefore been carefully considered, particularly in respect of noise, activity, outlook and artificial lighting. Notwithstanding the proximity of residential properties, significant weight is afforded to the established use of the site as a 3G playing pitch. Sporting activity and the associated movement of players and spectators already form part of the character and environmental baseline of the area. The proposal does not introduce an intensive sporting use into an otherwise quiet residential location but instead seeks to upgrade and improve an existing recreational facility.
6.24	The minor extension and resurfacing of the pitch would not, in themselves, give rise to any material impact upon residential amenity. The proposed stand, dugouts, fencing and storage container have also been considered in terms of their relationship with surrounding properties. Given their relatively modest height and scale, separation from surrounding dwellings and siting in association with the existing pitch, these elements would not result in unacceptable dominance, enclosure, overlooking or loss of privacy. The 50-seat stand would facilitate spectator accommodation; however, its limited capacity is not considered to represent a significant intensification of the existing sporting use. The surrounding area already accommodates a concentration of recreational, educational and community facilities, including the pitch itself, primary school and youth club. The continued operation and improvement of the playing pitch is therefore compatible with the prevailing mixed community/residential character of the locality.

6.25	Potential impacts from artificial lighting are particularly relevant given the surrounding housing. The application is supported by an External Lighting Assessment which identifies predicted levels of vertical illuminance at nearby sensitive receptors. Environmental Health has assessed the lighting information and raises no objection subject to conditions requiring the approved lighting scheme to be installed and maintained in accordance with the submitted assessment and restricting the operation of the floodlighting to between 07:00 and 23:00 daily.
6.26	These conditions would ensure that light spill towards surrounding residential properties and other sensitive receptors remains within acceptable parameters and would provide an appropriate safeguard against unacceptable disturbance during more sensitive night-time hours.
6.27	The proposal would therefore retain a use which is already well established within the local area and would not fundamentally change the relationship between the playing pitch and neighbouring residential, educational and community uses. Subject to the recommended controls on floodlighting, it is considered that the development would not result in an unacceptable impact upon residential amenity or the prevailing character of the area and accords with Policies ENV1, SP5, CI1 and OS5.
	Impact on Natural Environment
6.28	The proposal has been considered against Policies GB1 and NH1, which seek to protect and enhance the city's green and blue infrastructure network and safeguard natural heritage resources from unacceptable adverse impacts.
6.29	The application relates predominantly to an existing developed recreational facility and the works would be concentrated on and immediately around the established playing pitch. The proposal does not involve the introduction of an unrelated built development into an undeveloped natural area.
6.30	The existing peripheral vegetation and landscaping provide a degree of visual and environmental integration between the playing pitch and surrounding development. The proposed works are not considered to fundamentally undermine the site's contribution to the wider green infrastructure network.
6.31	DAERA/NIEA was consulted on the application. The Natural Environment Division has undertaken an assessment of the proposal and is content, while the Water Catchment Unit has also considered the potential impact upon the surface water environment and is content subject to appropriate conditions, adherence to standing advice and the obtaining of any necessary statutory permissions.
6.32	Having regard to the nature and location of the works and the consultation responses received, the proposal is not considered likely to result in unacceptable harm to natural heritage resources or the wider green and blue infrastructure network. It is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policies GB1 and NH1, subject to the relevant conditions and advice.
	Impact on Built Heritage
6.33	The application site impacts upon Malvern Primary School, Forster Street, Belfast (Grade B1) which is of special architectural or historic interest and is protected by Section 80 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011. DfC Historic Environment Division has assessed the potential impact upon the nearby listed building and its setting and advises that it is content with the

	proposal, subject to a condition limiting the replacement floodlights to 15m. The proposal is therefore acceptable having regard to Policy BH1 of the Plan Strategy. Impact on Transport and Other Infrastructure
6.34	The proposal has been assessed against Policies TRAN2 and TRAN3 of the Plan Strategy, which seek to ensure that development provides appropriate accessibility and does not prejudice road safety or the efficient operation of the transport network.
6.35	The site is an established recreational facility with existing access arrangements. The proposal would retain the existing sporting use rather than introduce a fundamentally different land use with substantially different transport characteristics.
6.36	The provision of a 50-seat stand and improvement of the pitch facilities have been considered in terms of their potential to generate additional trips. However, given the relatively modest capacity of the stand and the established nature of the facility, the proposal is not considered likely to generate a level of additional traffic that would result in an unacceptable impact upon the surrounding road network.
6.37	DfI Roads has been consulted and offers no objection to the development. It recommends a condition requiring secure and covered cycle parking facilities to be provided on the site and permanently retained. Such provision would support sustainable travel to the facility and encourage alternatives to private-car use. DfI Roads has also provided standard informatives relating to the management of construction activity.
6.38	Significant weight is afforded to the absence of objection from the statutory roads authority. Subject to the recommended cycle-parking condition, the proposal is considered to provide an acceptable transport and accessibility arrangement and complies with Policies TRAN2 and TRAN3. Drainage
6.39	Policies ENV3 and ENV5 seek to ensure that development appropriately responds to environmental change and incorporates suitable arrangements for the management of surface water, including the use of sustainable drainage measures where appropriate.
6.40	The proposal includes modifications to the existing drainage arrangements associated with the resurfacing and minor extension of the 3G pitch. A Drainage Assessment prepared by Doran Consulting has been submitted in support of the application.
6.41	DfI Rivers has reviewed the Drainage Assessment. Whilst advising that a Drainage Assessment was not required by the applicable threshold, Rivers acknowledges the submitted assessment, accepts its logic and has no reason to disagree with its conclusions. Responsibility for the accuracy of the assessment and implementation of the proposed flood-risk and drainage measures ultimately rests with the developer and their professional advisers.
6.42	DAERA Water Catchment Unit has separately considered the implications for the surface-water environment and is content with the proposal subject to conditions and standing advice. NI Water recommends approval subject to standard planning conditions, having considered the implications of the development for the public water and sewerage infrastructure.

6.43	Taking account of the submitted technical information and the responses from the relevant statutory consultees, it is considered that suitable drainage arrangements can be achieved and that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact upon drainage infrastructure or the surface-water environment. The proposal is therefore considered
6.44	compliant with Policies ENV3 and ENV5, subject to appropriate conditions.
	Ecological Impacts
6.45	The proposal has been considered against Policy NH1, which seeks to protect natural heritage resources and ensure that development does not result in unacceptable adverse effects upon protected habitats, species or sites.
6.46	NIEA Natural Environment Division has completed an assessment of the proposal and is content. Water Catchment Unit has similarly considered the impact upon the surface-water environment and is content subject to conditions and adherence to relevant standing advice.
6.47	Consideration must also be given to the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), having regard to potential pathways between the development and European designated sites.
6.48	Shared Environmental Service has reviewed the Habitats Regulations Assessment undertaken on behalf of the Council. SES advised that the assessment should include consideration of the East Coast (NI) Marine proposed Special Protection Area, which subsumes the existing Belfast Lough Open Water SPA. SES also advised that the relevant comments of NIEA Water Catchment/Management Unit concerning drainage, maintenance and management of the 3G pitch and necessary operational-phase mitigation should be incorporated into the assessment prior to its adoption by the Council.
6.49	Subject to the Council's final HRA incorporating the additional European site and the necessary operational-phase mitigation identified by NIEA, and concluding that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, the requirements of the Habitats Regulations would be satisfied. SES has advised that it does not require reconsultation following completion of this exercise.
6.50	It is acknowledged that the rubber infill material is not biodegradable. There is EU legislation currently under review regarding the legal requirement to use various forms environmentally friendly infill material. However, this is not a legislative requirement as yet. The Council have consulted NIEA, DFI Rivers, BCC Environmental Health Service, NI Water and Shared Environmental Services (SES) to ensure appropriate scrutiny. The applicant has also submitted documentation in the form of a Rubber Crumb Maintenance Report and a Drainage Assessment to help confirm the detailed elements of this proposal. All consultees have responded with no objection. A condition will be included to ensure compliance with the approved maintenance report and drainage assessment.
	Subject to the completion and adoption of the HRA on that basis, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of ecological impacts and Policy NH1.
	Flood Risk
6.51	The proposal has been assessed against Policy ENV4 – Flood Risk, together with the relevant provisions of the Flooding Supplementary Planning Guidance.
6.52	

6.53	DfI Rivers advises that Flood Maps (NI) indicate that the application site does not lie within the 1-in-100-year climate-change fluvial floodplain or the 1-in-200-year climate-change coastal floodplain. The proposal therefore does not give rise to the policy concerns normally associated with development within a defined fluvial or coastal floodplain.
6.54	Flood Maps identify a minor portion of the north-eastern boundary of the site as being within an area of predicted surface-water/pluvial flooding. This has been considered as part of the submitted Drainage Assessment.
6.55	There are no watercourses designated under the Drainage (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 within the site. DfI Rivers further advises that the provisions relating to artificial modification of watercourses and development in proximity to controlled reservoirs are not applicable to the proposal.
6.56	Although the development does not meet the threshold requiring a Drainage Assessment, one has nevertheless been submitted by Doran Consulting. DfI Rivers has considered this assessment, accepted its logic and has no reason to disagree with its conclusions.
6.57	Having regard to the limited extent of identified pluvial flood risk, the nature of the development, the submitted Drainage Assessment and the response of DfI Rivers, it is considered that the proposal would not be at unacceptable risk of flooding or materially increase flood risk elsewhere. The proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy ENV4 of the Plan Strategy.
7.0	Recommendation
7.1	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.
7.2	Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the HRA, wording of conditions and deal with any other matters which may arise provided they are not substantive.
DRAFT CONDITIONS: - 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. - The approved lighting scheme of the hereby permitted development shall be installed and maintained so as to not exceed the levels of vertical illuminance at nearby receptors shown in Lighting assessment from Semple McKillop titled 'External Lighting Proposal', Drawing reference 3113-SMK-ZZ-XX-DR-E-6301 and dated P03 22.01.25. Reason: To protect the amenity of nearby residents from excessive levels of artificial light. - The floodlighting associated with the hereby permitted development shall not operate outside the hours of 07:00 to 23:00 daily. Reason: Protection of surrounding amenity.	

4. If during the carrying out of the development, new contamination is encountered that has not previously been identified, all related works shall cease immediately, and the Council shall be notified immediately in writing. No further development shall proceed until this new contamination has been fully investigated in accordance with current industry recognised best practice. In the event of unacceptable human health risks being identified, a Remediation Strategy and subsequent 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 in accordance with best practice and must demonstrate that the remediation measures have been implemented and that the site is now fit for end-use.

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

5. The development shall not be occupied until secure and covered cycle parking facilities have been provided on the site. These facilities shall be permanently retained on the site.

Reason: To ensure acceptable cycle parking on the site and to encourage alternative modes of transport to the private car.

6. No part of the development hereby permitted shall become operational until all drainage mitigation measures have been installed in accordance with the submitted drainage assessment and a report verifying that these measures have been installed has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. These measures shall be permanently retained and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved arrangements and shall not be altered or removed without the prior consent of the Council in writing.

Reason: To ensure adequate drainage arrangements are provided for the development and in the interests of public amenity and safety.

7. The application hereby approved shall be carried out in compliance with the approved Hammer Pitch Rubber Crumb Maintenance Report (or such other infill maintenance plan agreed in advance with the Council), uploaded to the planning Portal on 9th May 2025. The approved Rubber Crumb Maintenance Report shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and all works on site shall conform to the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the rubber crumb infill is appropriately managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details, in the interests of environmental protection.