

Title of Report:	Planning Committee Report – LA01/2023/0670/F
Committee Report Submitted To:	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting:	27th September 2023
For Decision or For Information	For Decision – Council Interest Item
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council has agreed policies and procedures and decision making is consistent with them
Lead Officer	Development Management and Enforcement Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Nil
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	N/A
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.
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Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	N/A	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	N/A	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	N/A	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:

<u>No:</u>	LA01/2023/0670/F	<u>Ward:</u> UNIVERSITY
<u>App Type:</u>	Full Planning	
<u>Address:</u>	Prescient Data Centre, Portstewart Road, Coleraine	
<u>Proposal:</u>	Installation of 4 electric vehicle charging points, provision of 6 parking bays, 2 overhead canopies with solar panels, lighting, relocation of existing security gate, provision of 3m high palade fencing and associated landscaping.	
<u>Con Area:</u>	No	<u>Valid Date:</u> 30.06.2023
<u>Listed Building Grade:</u>	N/A	
<u>Agent:</u>	GM Design Associates, 22 Lodge Road, Coleraine, BT52 1NB	
<u>Applicant:</u>	Weev, 8 Edgewater Road, Belfast, BT3 9JQ	
<u>Objections:</u> 0	<u>Petitions of Objection:</u> 0	
<u>Support:</u> 0	<u>Petitions of Support:</u> 0	

Executive Summary

- Full planning permission is sought for the Installation of 4 electric vehicle charging points, provision of 6 parking bays, 2 overhead canopies with solar panels, lighting, relocation of existing security gate, provision of 3m high palade fencing and associated landscaping.
- The site is located within the Coleraine Settlement Development Limit as designated within the Northern Area Plan 2016. Designations on the site include Economic Development Zoning CEED 02 – University Business Cluster and Local Landscape Policy Area Designation CEL 04 – University LLPA
- No concerns have been raised by any consultee. Further consultation with Environmental Health has not been sought on the basis of the noise levels generated.
- The proposal is considered to comply with the provisions of the Northern Area Plan 2016, SPPS, PPS 3 and A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland.
- The application is recommended for approval.

Drawings and additional information are available to view on the Planning Portal- <https://planningregister.planningsystemni.gov.uk/>

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Committee has taken into consideration and agrees with the reasons for the recommendation set out in section 9 and the policies and guidance in sections 7 and 8 and resolves to **GRANT** planning permission subject to the refusal reasons set out in section 10.

2 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is located on land associated with an existing commercial building located off Portstewart Road. The application site is located within the curtilage of a data centre and encompasses a section of the existing data centre internal road and parking area and the vehicular access to Atlantic Link/science park internal road and pavement. The site is located within Coleraine Settlement Development Limit and Economic Development Zoning CEED 02: University Business Cluster and Local Landscape Policy Area Designation CEL 04 University LLPA. The surrounding land to the application site is located within the settlement development limit. To the northeast is undeveloped land within the zoning. To the southeast is the internal road for the science park. To the northwest and southwest is the data centre. Further to the southwest is Portstewart Road and the countryside.

RELEVANT HISTORY

C/2013/0303/F – Lands within the University of Ulster (Coleraine Campus) adjacent to Portstewart Road Coleraine (75m South East of 3 Dundoan Road Coleraine) BT52 1SF – Proposed Data Centre and Associated Works inc. External Plant, Office Accommodation, Car and Cycle Parking, New Estate Road, Security Fencing and CCTV, Grasscrete Service Yard – Permission Granted – 7th October 2013

LA01/2016/0589/F – Adjacent to Portstewart Road Coleraine (275m South East of 2 Dundoan Road Coleraine BT52 1SF – Access road and pumping station to serve the proposed Coleraine Enterprise zone on site – Permission Granted – 22nd December 2016

LA01/2016/0731/NMC – Land within the University of Ulster (Coleraine Campus) Adjacent to Portstewart Road (75m South East of 3 Dundoan Road Coleraine) – Revised landscaping proposals and planting schedule – Consent Granted – 23rd August 2016

LA01/2017/0478/F – Adjacent to Portstewart Road Coleraine (275m South East of 2 Dundoan Road Coleraine BT52 1SF – The minor amendments of road width, footpath layout, pumping station location with associated landscaping and public lighting previously approved under Planning Application C/2013/0303/F and LA01/2016/0589/F – Permission Granted – 26th October 2017

3 THE APPLICATION

- 3.1 This is a full application for the Installation of 4 electric vehicle charging points, provision of 6 parking bays, 2 overhead canopies with solar panels, lighting, relocation of existing security gate, provision of 3m high paladin fencing and associated landscaping.
- 3.2 The proposal is located adjoining the vehicular access to the data centre and encompasses re-development of the internal road comprising the turning point into the car park and access to the northeastern side of the site.
- 3.3 The proposal involves re-development of existing hardstanding and grass landscaped areas to provide six car parking spaces. One of these spaces is indicated to be an accessible car parking space. The spaces are split between the northwest and southeast of the site with a new access to the car parking area located between. In each of these two car parking sections there is a 50Kw and 150Kw Weev electric vehicle charging point. The charging points are just under 2 metres in height. Above the charging points are canopies held by three supports. The canopies are 3.2 metres in height and 7.5 metres in length.
- 3.4 Hardstanding is proposed to the rear (southwest) of the spaces which continues around to the edge of the new access. To the rear of the spaces an indigenous screen hedge comprising 120cm – 150cm capinus betulus hedge is proposed double staggered and row spaced at 350mm apart. To the rear of this hedging is a proposed green 3m mesh wire fence with steel posts. The proposed fence is to match existing. The existing keypad operated sliding is to be relocated to form a new controlled access point into the data centre. This is relocated from the vehicular access onto Atlantic Link to the entrance to the car parking area. The fencing across from the car parking area

is to be erected alongside the existing NIE substation.

4 PUBLICITY & CONSULTATIONS

5.1 External:

One neighbour notified.

No objections received.

5.2 Internal:

DFI Roads: No objections

Environmental Health: No objections.

6 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Section 45(1) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires that all applications must have regard to the local plan, so far as material to the application, and all other material considerations. Section 6(4) states that in making any determination where regard is to be had to the local development plan, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The development plan is:

- Northern Area Plan 2016 (NAP)

6.3 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) is a material consideration.

6.4 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) is a material consideration. As set out in the SPPS, until such times as a new local plan strategy is adopted, councils will apply specified retained operational policies.

6.5 Due weight should be given to the relevant policies in the development plan.

6.6 All material considerations and any policy conflicts are identified in the "Considerations and Assessment" section of the report.

7.0 RELEVANT POLICIES & GUIDANCE

The Northern Area Plan 2016

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement and Parking

A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland

8.0 CONSIDERATIONS & ASSESSMENT

8.1 The main considerations in the determination of this application relate to: Principle of Development and Local Landscape Policy Area, Access and Amenity.

Principle of Development

8.2 The principle of development must be considered having regard to the SPPS, PPS and other policy documents before mentioned.

8.3 The site is located within Economic Development Zoning CEED 02 – University Business Cluster. The key site requirements for this designation are:

1. The maximum retention of the existing woodland on the site shall be retained any new development will incorporate a high quality of landscaping, maintaining the parkland character of the area.

2. A single access shall be acceptable from Portstewart Road where a right turn lane shall be provided.

3. Uses on the site will be restricted to Class B1 use.

This developing science park within the university campus will be restricted to information technology and biotech laboratories and other enterprises appropriate to a science park development.

8.4 Policy IC 15 of a Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland relates to Roadside Service Facilities and states that the provision of roadside service facilities on the trunk roads network in the open countryside may be considered acceptable where there is a clear indication of need.

- 8.5 The proposal is located within the Coleraine Settlement Development. Consequently, Policy IC 15 is not applicable to the development.
- 8.6 The proposal falls to be considered under Policy DES 2 of A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland which relates to townscape. Policy DES 2 requires development proposals in towns and villages to make a positive contribution to townscape and be sensitive to the character of the area surrounding the site in terms of design, scale and use of materials.
- 8.7 The policy outlines that each application will be assessed against the three main elements of land use, amenity and design.
- 8.8 The proposed charging points are to be in the Weev branding colours which is blue and white. The charging points are indicated to have a height just under 2 metres.
- 8.9 The proposed canopies are to be in the Weev branding colours which is blue and white. The canopies are supported by three legs constructed of aluminium. The roof is constructed of aluminium and polycarbonate sheets. The canopies are indicated to have rainwater downpipes included. The canopies have a height of 3.2 metres and length of 7.5 metres.
- 8.10 The proposed gates and paladin fencing has a height of 3 metres and is to be finished in galvanised and polyester powder coating in Green RAL 6005.
- 8.11 Road markings are to be added to prevent obstructions. The parking bays are finished in the colours of the Weev brand.
- 8.12 The designation requires a B1 use class. The proposal establishes vehicle charging outside the data centre site and is a commercial operation. The sale of fuel for motor vehicles is outlined as having no class Under Article 3, paragraph 4(g) of The Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. This use is not in compliance with this requirement of the zoning. However, the zoning outlines that the developing science park within the university campus will be restricted to other enterprises appropriate to a science park development. Vehicle charging is a new technology and the associated sustainability of electric vehicles is considered to be an appropriate form of development for a science park.
- 8.13 The critical viewpoints of the proposal are heading on approach to the site in both directions along Portstewart Road and heading into the science park site from Atlantic Link. Views of the proposal are within

context of the built form of the data centre which has a low pitched roof and eaves height of 6 metres and is surrounded by existing site fencing which is 3 metres in height. The proposal is screened on approach from the north along Portstewart Road until passing the building given the height of the building. Views from the southern approach are over a longer distance given the presence of undeveloped land to the south of the data centre. However, the structures are located in context of the backdrop of the data centre. Fencing is proposed along the existing NIE substation. This is indicated to be confirmed by NIE before installation. Any change to the location of this fencing would require separate permission. On this basis, the design and layout is not considered to detract from the character of the area. Accessible parking is available for disabled users of the charging points.

- 8.14 The proposal does not impact on any existing woodland as the proposal is located within the existing data centre site. The proposal includes a 1.2 – 1.5 metre screening hedgerow located to the rear of the parking spaces, canopy and vehicle charging point. The hedging when planted will not be of a sufficient height to restrict views but will soften the visual impact. Views again are in context of the scale of the data centre building. The proposal is not considered to maintain the parkland character of the area given its location, its setting and context and the scale of what is proposed.
- 8.15 Environmental Health advised that EV charging points are potential sources of noise emissions. The Planning Department may wish to seek the accompanying technical data for the proposed units which should specify the noise emission level/sound power level. Given the context, scale and location of the proposed development it would not at this juncture be considered as a significant source of noise. The installation of any proposed security/operational lighting schemes should consider the potential for light spill.
- 8.16 The proposed site plan indicates the presence of existing lamp posts on site which are located in close proximity to the charging points and spaces. No lighting is indicated to be proposed.
- 8.17 The specification for the charging points were submitted and indicated as a Raption 150 Compact which has an operational noise level of less than 55dB which is at conversation level. Environmental Health were re-consulted and no response has been received. There are no sensitive receptors located in proximity to the proposal with the closest receptor being the data centre. There are no concerns with noise

having regard to the Environmental Health response and the levels of noise produced.

8.18 The proposal is considered to comply with the zoning requirements of CEED 02 and the policy requirements of Policy DES 2.

Local Landscape Policy Area

8.19 The site is also located within Local Landscape Policy Area Designation CEL 04 – University LLPA. The features or combination of features that contribute to the environmental quality, integrity or character of this area are:

1. This large area extends from the Coleraine campus of the University of Ulster, west of Portstewart Road to include an area of open space in public ownership.
2. It contains extensive tree groups and gardens, established over the past 35 years.
3. These landscaped grounds now make a very significant and positive contribution to the landscape on the northern fringe of the town.

The continued development of institutional buildings within this area will be acceptable but will be required to have to the landscape framework of this area.

8.20 Policy ENV 1 of the Northern Area Plan 2016 relates to Local Landscape Policy Areas and states that planning permission will not be granted for development proposals that would be liable to affect adversely those features, or combination of features, that contribute to the environmental quality, integrity or character of a designated LLPA.

8.21 The proposal is located within the curtilage of an existing commercial site. The site will result in the loss of grassed areas associated with the existing access to the car parking area.

8.22 The proposal will replace the existing grassed areas with hardstanding. This is viewable in context of an existing access road and car parking area. The canopies have a height of 3.1 metres and there will be an increase in visual impact associated with this, the 3 metre high fencing and the charging point structures.

- 8.23 The proposal includes the provision of indigenous screen hedging at a height of 1.2 – 1.5 metres. The landscaping on site was established following the data centre approval from 2013. Visual impact from the proposal is in context of the scale of the existing data centre building. There is no impact on any other landscaping from the proposal.
- 8.24 The proposal is not considered to adversely affect the features outlined under Designation CEL 04 and the proposal is considered to satisfy Policy ENV 1 of the Northern Area Plan 2016.

Access

- 8.25 The proposal utilises an existing access onto Atlantic Link and establishes a new entrance to the data centre car park between the two sets of charging points. There are no changes to the existing access to Portstewart Road proposed.
- 8.26 DFI Roads were consulted on the proposal and advised that they have no issues of concern with the application as presented.
- 8.27 There are no concerns with the parking layout and access arrangements proposed. The proposal is considered to be compliant with the requirements of PPS 3.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The proposal relates to the installation of 4 electric vehicle charging points, provision of 6 parking bays, 2 overhead canopies with solar panels, lighting, relocation of existing security gate, provision of 3m high paladin fencing and associated landscaping. Visual impact and impact on surrounding amenity is considered to be limited. The proposal is considered to be compatible with the uses in the economic development land use zoning. The proposal is considered to be acceptable having regard to the Northern Area Plan, SPPS, PPS 3 and A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland and is recommended for approval.

10 Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

11 INFORMATIVES

1. This permission does not confer title. It is the responsibility of the developer to ensure that he controls all the lands necessary to carry out the proposed development.
2. This permission does not alter or extinguish or otherwise affect any existing or valid right of way crossing, impinging or otherwise pertaining to these lands.
3. This approval does not dispense with the necessity of obtaining the permission of the owners of adjacent dwellings for the removal of or building on the party wall or boundary whether or not defined.
4. This determination relates to planning control only and does not cover any consent or approval which may be necessary to authorise the development under other prevailing legislation as may be administered by the Council or other statutory authority.

You should refer to any other general advice and guidance provided by consultees in the process of this planning application by reviewing all responses on the Planning Portal at <https://planningregister.planningsystemni.gov.uk/simple-search>

Site Location Plan:



