

Northern Health and Social Care Trust Board Meeting in Public - Cover Sheet

Subject:	Birch Hill Centre for Mental Health Capital Scheme		Date of Meeting: 27 March 2025	
Prepared By:	Simon Daly, Head of Capital Projects MH			
Approved By:	Alison Renfrew, Assistant Director of Capital Development			
Presented By:	Petra Corr, Director of MHLDCW			
Purpose				
To provide an update on progress with the Birch Hill Centre for Mental Health project, for noting.			Approval	
			Assurance	
			Update	
			Noting	✓
Strategic Objectives				
Build Northern Partnerships and Integrate Care	Continue to improve Outcomes & Experience	Deliver value by optimising Resources	Nurture our People, Enable our Talent & Build Our Teams	Improve population Health & address health & social care inequalities
•	•		•	•
Risk – please note if links to any principal, corporate or divisional risk				
Corporate Risks	A new build will reduce the ligature related issues and incidents of violence and aggression to a rating of 12 on the Trust Risk Register. Not compliant at present, high rating of 20. A new build may reduce the current inability to secure acute psychiatric beds to a rating of 12 on Trust Risk Register. Not compliant at present, high rating of 25.			
Committees/groups where this item has been presented before				
Executive Team				
Acronyms				
Mental Health, Learning Disability and Community Wellbeing (MHLDCW) Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) Outline Business Case (OBC) Full Business Case (FBC) Achieving Excellence Design Evaluation Toolkit (AEDET) Strategic Planning & Performance Group (SPPG) Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE)				
Executive Summary				
Completion of RIBA Stage 3: The ICT issued the final drawing packages and associated reports to the Trust on Monday 10th March 2025 with the Final Stage report due to be issued by the ICT on Friday 21st March 2025. This final drawing package incorporated the work required to close out Stage 3 queries relating to the mock up bedrooms and en-suites. Significant discussions had taken place in January with the ICT on their proposals for the en-suites in particular. In early February 2025 the ICT provided the Trust with 4 different options of sink and tap layout and after an internal review the preferred option was identified and endorsed by Petra Corr, (Senior Responsible Owner) on 7 February 2025. On 17 January 2025 the ICT provided the Trust with a potential cost reduction list following work undertaken to update proposed costs based on the agreed Stage 3 design. Whilst it offers the potential for a number of savings to be made the Trust, independently HE are in the process of RAG rating the individual elements to allow discussion and informed decisions to be made. This work is ongoing.				

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To address a small number of catering queries a Catering review was undertaken internally within the Trust and followed up with a Workshop involving the Trust, Health Estates and the ICT. At this workshop on 20 February 2025 decisions were made on all outstanding issues and the current design signed off in line with Stage 3 requirements.

Commencement of RIBA Stage 4: On 6 February 2025 the ICT issued the Trust with a revised Road Map for the delivery of the RIBA Design Stage 4 and on 14th February 2025 they issued the first updated programme since September 2024. Following a meeting with the ICT, the Project Director, Project Manager, Health Estates and Core Group to seek clarity on a small number of queries and provide feedback, Health Estates subsequently gave approval of the revised programme, on behalf of the Trust, on 28th February 2025. It should be noted that the commencement of RIBA Stage 4 on 25th March is predicated on the DoH approval of the Mental Health Inpatient Addendum to the OBC as this will allow the release of the required capital funding. Health Estates issued an approval letter to proceed with RIBA Stage 4 on 15 January 2025, but this had subsequently been withdrawn pending an ongoing DoH review of Mental Health projects across all Trusts. The delay in approval will now have impact on the recently agreed programme which showed completion by December 2029 followed by a Trust clinical commissioning period.

Schedule of Accommodation: the SOA has increased from 14,072m² in the approved OBC to 15,389m² at the end of Stage 2 and then 15,615m² at Stage 3. However these figures excluded the 1st floor plant areas, the service walkways which connect them or the under-croft below Block C where ground levels fall which in total make an additional 2454m² bringing the total SOA to 18,068m². The Trust await details of the attributable rateable value to be chargeable against the covered walkways joining all the blocks. This will be reflected in the reworked costs being prepared to address the Addendum initial observations.

Enabling Works: the enabling works for Birch Hill are ongoing. The Trust MTC carried out a tree thinning and tree clearance exercise at the Birch Hill site boundary and across the site for the new road. The majority of this work was completed at the end of February 2025. Two additional areas of trees beside Fern House, on the North West entrance of Birch Hill site, require felling to support a NIE switch over. This is anticipated to be completed by 1 April 2025. The other enabling projects are being developed to tender package stage. These projects will be required to facilitate a clear site and access route for the main Birch Hill Project. These projects are awaiting funding approval Any delay to these works will only increase their cost to complete.

Mental Health Inpatient Addendum to the OBC: the Trust received initial draft observations on the Mental Health Inpatient Addendum 24 February 2025. These are being worked through at present and it is anticipated a completed response will be resubmitted to the DoH in early April. They require signification work to re-cost all shortlisted options and bring the revenue costs up to current levels. Approval of the Addendum is required to will secure funding to complete the RIBA Stage 4 and the completion of enabling works for progression to tender in advance of the Full Business Case.

Finance: The initial CRL allocation for 2024/25 continues to be £2,460,000. The CRL of £550k was returned back to the DOH week commencing 17 February 2025 due to delays with the programme and the inability to spend in year. Net spend to the end of February is £1,034,944. This allocation will be fully spent in year allowing the Trust to meet contractual commitments relating to Stage 3 and maybe the commencement of Stage 4.

Decision Log: D43 was added this month. It describes a revision to the initial proposals for ensuring free access for patient, their families, the public, volunteers and other Trust staff to Birch Hill during the day with out of hours arrangements managed both remotely and in person as required.

Issues/Risks: One new risk has been added to the risk register covering the requirement for the agreed design to meet the required RIBA Stage 4 energy target. The risk relating to the Stage 3 energy target was closed as the ICT confirmed their best case scenario calculations can achieve the target. Issues 28, 53 and 56 were closed. They related to the delay completing RIBA Stage 3, the replacement planting on the

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Western site boundary which needed replenished and that RIBA Stage 3 took longer than programmed, but has now been completed.

The major risk to the project is now that the ongoing DoH review of Mental Health Projects across all Trusts will continue to extend the programme and the associated costs. Should the review lead to a delay in the project the Trust will continue to carry the risks associated with Holywell Hospital which will increase as will the associated costs of maintaining the building.