

## Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Committee Meeting Date:</b> 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2023	
<b>Application ID:</b> LA04/2023/3194/F	<b>Target Date:</b>
<b>Proposal:</b> Proposed change of use and renovation of an existing office/ community building into a ground floor 'Good Relations' Community Hub and 6no. studio apartments on the first/ second floor. These will be for short term accommodation for those in housing need while they are waiting to find permanent housing.	<b>Location:</b> 240 Newtownards Road Belfast BT4 1AF
<b>Referral Route:</b> BCC is a delivery partner of the Urban Villages Initiative	
<b>Recommendation:</b> Approval	
<b>Applicant Name and Address:</b> Tom Dinnen East Belfast Mission Skainos Square 239 Newtownards Road Belfast BT4 1AF	<b>Agent Name and Address:</b> Jennifer Whittaker Collins Rolston Architects 8th Floor, Causeway Tower 9-11 James Street South Belfast BT2 8DN
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b> This application seeks full planning permission for change of use and renovation of an existing office/ community building into a ground floor 'Good Relations' Community Hub and 6no. studio apartments on the first/ second floor. These 6 apartments will be for short-term accommodation for persons in housing need whom are awaiting permanent housing.</p> <p>The key issues are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Principle of development</li> <li>b) Design and Layout</li> <li>c) The impact of the proposal on amenity</li> <li>d) Impact on the character and appearance of the area</li> <li>e) Climate change</li> <li>f) Noise, odour and other environmental impacts</li> <li>g) Access and parking</li> </ol> <p><b>Recommendation</b> 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.</p>	

Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions, and deal with any other matters that arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they are not substantive.

# Officer Report

1.0

Drawings

1.1

Site Location Plan



1.2

Proposed Site Layout and Ground Floor Plan



1.3

### Proposed First and Second Floor Plan



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN



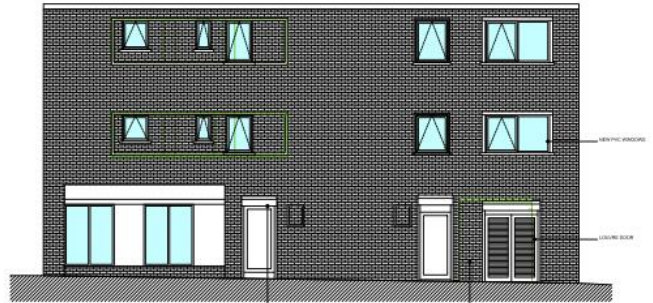
PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN

1.4

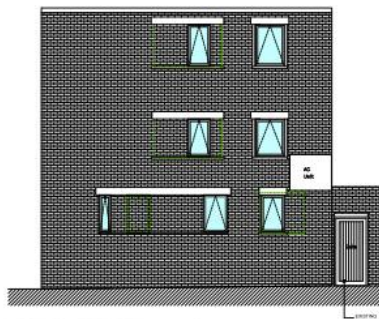
### Proposed Elevations



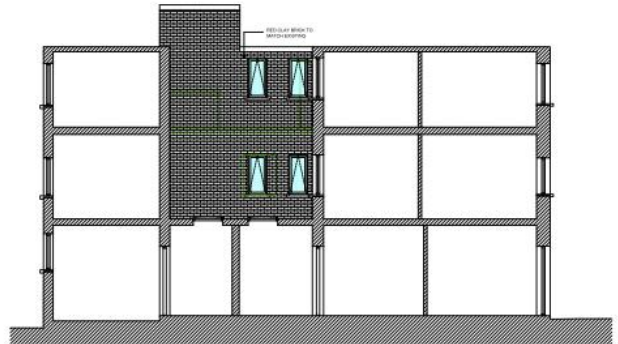
PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION



PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION



PROPOSED SECTION A-A

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Characteristics of the Site and Area</b>
2.1	<p>The site is located on the Newtownards Road which is an arterial route. The existing building is finished in red brick and was formally used as offices, however, the building has been vacant in recent years.</p> <p>The surrounding area is comprised of a mixture of commercial, residential and community buildings. The street is characterised by ground floor retail units with residential or offices on upper floors.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Description of Proposal</b>
3.1	Proposed change of use and renovation of an existing office/ community building into a ground floor 'Good Relations' Community Hub and 6no. studio apartments on the first/ second floor. These will be for short term accommodation for those in housing need while they are waiting to find permanent housing.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Planning Policy and Other Material Considerations</b>
4.1	<p><b>Development Plan – operational policies</b> Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035</p>
4.2	<p><b>Development Plan – zoning, designations and proposals maps</b> Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) BUAP Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014)</p>
4.3	<p><b>Regional Planning Policy</b> Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)</p>
4.4	<p><b>Other Policies</b> Developer Contribution Framework (BCC) Belfast Agenda Creating Places (DfI)</p>
4.5	<p><b>Planning History</b> None</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Consultations and Representations</b>
5.1	<p><b>Statutory Consultations</b> DfI Roads – Content NI Water – Content</p>
5.2	<p><b>Non-Statutory Consultations</b> BCC Environmental Health – No objection</p>
5.3	<p><b>Representations</b> The application has been advertised and neighbours notified. The Council has received one objection from a neighbouring resident. The objection relates to criminal activity and antisocial behaviour arising from the proposal and the impact it would have on their health and safety. Criminal activity and anti-social behaviour are matters that should be raised with the PSNI by those concerned.</p>

<b>6.0</b>	<b>PLANNING ASSESSMENT</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<p><b>Development Plan Context</b> 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>
6.1.2	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.
6.1.3	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
6.1.4	<b>Operational policies</b> – the Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application. These are listed in the report.
6.1.5	<b>Proposals Maps</b> – 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.
<b>6.2</b>	<p><b>Key Issues</b> The key issues are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Principle of development</li> <li>b) Design and Layout</li> <li>c) The impact of the proposal on amenity</li> <li>d) Impact on the character and appearance of the area</li> <li>e) Noise, odour and other environmental impacts</li> <li>f) Climate change</li> <li>g) Access and parking</li> </ul>
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Principle of development</b>
6.3.1	The site is within the development limit of Belfast as designated in both BUAP and the draft BMAP. It is also a shopping/commercial area within draft BMAP (v2004 and v2014). The existing use on the site is offices and the proposed change to a ground floor community hub is considered acceptable as it will not conflict with the surrounding uses in the area.
6.3.2	The first and second floor studio apartments will provide ‘move on’ housing for people who have been homeless or in housing need. They will provide short term accommodation for up to 12 months and will be used as a space until permanent housing is secured. The proposal is designed to improve community relations and provide support for those in need within the community. The use on this site is therefore considered acceptable in principle subject to other relevant material consideration as set out below.

<b>6.4</b>	<b>Design and Layout</b>
6.4.1	<p>The ground floor use of a Good Relations Community hub will focus on the integration of people who have been homeless or are in a precarious housing situation in the local community. It will run events such as developing life skills, Health and Wellbeing, cultural events etc and will therefore be in keeping with Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure which states that the Council will seek to provide development opportunities for community, health, leisure, nurseries and educational facilities based on local need. It is located in an accessible location along the Newtownards Road with access for pedestrians, cyclists and those using public transport. To the rear of the community hub will be a cycle store and bin store which will also be used by those living in the first and second floor apartments.</p>
6.4.2	<p>The first and second floor will consist of six one-bedroom apartments which can be accessed through a side entrance along Chadolly Street. The six apartments will be used as short-term accommodation for up to a maximum of 12 months for those in housing need. Policy HOU8 – Specialist Residential Accommodation applies to this proposal. Policy HOU8 states that planning permission will be granted where the homes and/or bed spaces meet community needs demonstrated through a statement of specialist housing need; and the proposal will deliver convenient access to relevant local services and facilities, including local shops, public transport routes and health facilities. A statement of need and evidence of the charity which is involved in the proposal has been provided and is considered acceptable. The apartments will be located along the Newtownards Road where there is access to a number of local services and facilities. The proposal is therefore compliant with Policy HOU8.</p>
6.4.3	<p>The proposed development will not result in a significant increase in density, nor will it affect the established pattern of development. Appendix C of the Belfast LDP Strategy sets out space standards for apartments and dwellings. In this case the proposal is for 6no one-bedroom apartments. The apartments range in size from 26m<sup>2</sup> – 31m<sup>2</sup>. All the units fail to meet the space standards which is 35m<sup>2</sup> for a 1 person one bedroom apartment. It is however considered that the apartments are required to serve a specialist form of short-term accommodation for those in housing need and a condition will be added to the permission that the maximum length of stay will be 12 months. It is therefore considered, on balance, that this shortfall is acceptable.</p>
6.4.4	<p>Policy RD3 (Conversion or sub-division of existing buildings for residential use) of the LDP Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for conversion or change of use of existing buildings for residential use where all the criteria in policy RD1 and all the additional criteria below are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Any units are self-contained (i.e. having separate bathroom, w.c. and kitchen available for use only by the occupiers);</li> <li>b. Adequate refuse storage space is provided within the curtilage of the site, large enough to allow for the separation of recyclable waste, and is designed to not be visible from the amenity space / public realm;</li> <li>c. The original property is greater than 150 square metres gross internal floorspace in the case of sub-division of an existing dwelling;</li> </ul> <p>The proposal complies with criterion (a – c) of Policy RD3</p>
<b>6.5</b>	<b>The impact of the proposal on amenity</b>
6.5.1	<p>The proposed apartments do not include private amenity space. Policy RD3 discusses how it is recognised that there may be circumstances where achieving adequate amenity space is not possible when according with wider policies. As previously discussed, the</p>

	<p>apartments are to provide specialist short-term accommodation which will be conditioned for a maximum length stay of 12 months. The apartments will provide a considerable community benefit for those who have been homeless or in housing need. The location is a short walk to Dr Pitt Memorial Park which is an open space park. Furthermore, the design of the development allows each apartment to be self-contained with ample bin/cycle storage provided. It is considered that on balance, residential amenity will not be harmed to an unacceptable degree.</p>
6.5.2	<p>The living/kitchen area of each unit has adequate outlook to a public street. The windows to the front and east side elevation do not face onto neighbouring dwellings. The proposed additional bedroom windows to the rear will have outlook to the amenity area of the terraced dwellings along Chadolly Street. It is however considered that these dwellings are located within a built up, urban area, where overlooking to amenity space already occurs. The addition of two bedroom windows to the existing rear wall is not considered to significantly exacerbate the existing situation. The kitchen/living areas and bedrooms of units 2, 3, 5 and 6 will have access to natural light at certain times of the day. The bedrooms of units 1 and 4 may experience reduced natural light and potential overshadowing. It is however reiterated that the apartments are not for permanent, long-term use and it is therefore considered that the design and layout as proposed are acceptable and will not significantly impinge on residential amenity via overlooking, dominance, loss of light or overshadowing.</p>
6.6	<p><b>The impact on the character and appearance of the area</b>  The proposal will include new replacement roller shutters on the windows and doors at ground floor level and new PVC windows on first and second floor level. The external changes are considered to enhance the existing building and street frontage and therefore positively contribute to the character and appearance of the area.</p>
6.7	<p><b>Noise, odour and other environmental impacts</b>  Belfast City Council Environmental Health department has been consulted on the proposal and offer no objections. They state that having regard to the short-term nature of the residential use proposed, it has been decided that they would not request a noise impact assessment, however, the applicant is advised that it is the developer's responsibility to ensure future occupants are not adversely affected by noise.</p>
6.8	<p><b>Climate change</b>  A climate change statement has been provided by the agent. It states that high performance insulation and energy efficient windows will be provided to improve thermal envelope. Lighting within stores, stairwells, communal hallways and 'unpopulated' areas will be by means of movement sensor thus minimising usage and wastage. Each of the new apartments will be equipped with a 'pack' to inform occupiers about the efficient use of their heating and lighting systems. The new apartments will also be equipped with an independent heating system with individual time and temperature controls. The statement also confirms that they will prioritise the use of sustainable materials during construction, focusing on those with low embodied energy and a minimal carbon footprint. The aim will be to source materials locally whenever possible, to reduce transportation related emissions. Low-flush toilets, dual flush toilets, spray and low-flow taps will be specified for use to reduce water usage. Overall, it is considered the proposed development embraces sustainable principles and aims to mitigate the impacts of climate change.</p>
6.9	<p><b>Access and parking</b>  It is considered that due to the nature of the scheme and its proposed user group, it is unlikely that car parking will be required at the site. The building will be run in tandem with services at the Skainos Centre located opposite. Therefore, any staff required to run community activities at 240 Newtownards will already be commuting to and from the Skainos Centre which is their primary location. The main forms of transport are expected</p>



	to be walking, public transport and cycling. The site is located on a well serviced public transport route and a cycle store has been included within the proposal. DfI Roads has been consulted and offers no objection to the proposal.
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
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 wording of conditions, and deal with any other matters that arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that 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 maximum stay by an occupant shall be no more than 12 months with no return by the same occupant within 12 months.  
Reason: Residential use of the building would require further consideration by the Council having regard to the Local Development Plan and relevant material considerations.
- No dwelling shall be occupied until weather protected cycle parking has been fully provided in accordance with the approved plans.  
Reason: To ensure acceptable cycle parking facilities on the site and to encourage alternative modes of transport to the private car.

**DRAFT INFORMATIVES:**

- This decision relates to the following approved drawing numbers: 01, 03, 06, 07.
- Please make sure that you carry out the development in accordance with the approved plans and any planning conditions listed above. Failure to do so will mean that the proposal is unauthorised and liable for investigation by the Council's Planning Enforcement team. If you would like advice about how to comply with the planning permission, you are advised to the contact the Planning Service at Belfast City Council at [planning@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:planning@belfastcity.gov.uk).
- This planning permission includes condition(s) which require further details to be submitted to and approved by the Council. Please read the condition(s) carefully so that you know when this information needs to be provided and approved. It could take a minimum of 8 weeks for the Council to approve the details, assuming that they are satisfactory, and sometimes longer depending on the complexity of the condition. You should allow for this when planning the timeline of your project.
- The grant of planning permission does not dispense with the need to obtain licenses, consents or permissions under other legislation or protocols. The requirement for other authorisations may have been identified by consultees in their response to the application

and can be accessed on the Northern Ireland Planning Portal website. The responses from consultees may also include other general advice for the benefit of the applicant or developer.

- Precautions shall be taken to prevent the deposit of mud and other debris on the adjacent road by vehicles travelling to and from the construction site. Any mud, refuse, etc deposited on the road as a result of the development, must be removed immediately by the operator/contractor.
- All construction plant and materials shall be stored within the curtilage of the site.
- It is the responsibility of the developer to ensure that water does not flow from the site onto the public road (including verge or footway) and that existing roadside drainage is preserved and does not allow water from the road to enter the site.
- In the event that unexpected contamination is encountered during the carrying out of the development, all related works should cease and the applicant should contact the Council. Investigation of the contamination, risk assessment and, if necessary, remediation work, should be undertaken and verified in accordance with current Environment Agency and CIRIA guidance and British Standards.
- The applicant should be aware that the proposed development location on the Newtownards Road is on an arterial route likely to be exposed to busy road traffic. This could give rise to high levels of road traffic noise and resulting impact due to elevated levels of noise. The developer is advised to seek advice from a competent acoustic consultant regarding any design mitigation measures that may be required such as upgrade to glazing particularly along the Newtownards Road façade and /or the need to install alternative means of ventilation (so that windows can be kept shut but still provide background ventilation).
- Where Belfast City Council is satisfied that a statutory noise nuisance exists, the Council has a duty to serve a Noise Abatement/Prohibition Notice on the person responsible for the nuisance or the owner or occupier of the premises from which the nuisance arises. Tenant's behaviour should be suitably managed to ensure that the occupants of nearby dwellings are not disturbed by noise.
- The Noise Act 1996 applies to night-time noise between 11pm to 7am. Where excessive noise from a dwelling affects the occupants of residential premises, a Warning Notice can be served. Failure to comply with the Notice can result in a fixed penalty fine of £110 or prosecution in the courts.

<b>ANNEX</b>	
<b>Date Valid</b>	26.06.2023
<b>Date First Advertised</b>	14.07.2023
<b>Date Last Advertised</b>	N/A
<b>Details of Neighbour Notification (all addresses)</b> 16 CHADOLLY STREET, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1EA 225 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1AF 227 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1AF 229 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1AF 232 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1HB 232A NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1HB 234 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN, BT4 1HB 235 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1AF Apt 1, 236 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST BT4 1HB Apt 2, 236 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST BT4 1HB 237 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1AF 238 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1HB 240 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1HB 244 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1HB 244A NEWTOWNARDS ROAD, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST, DOWN BT4 1HB 7 NEWCASTLE STREET, BALLYMACARRET, BELFAST DOWN BT4 1ED	