

## Development Management Officer Report

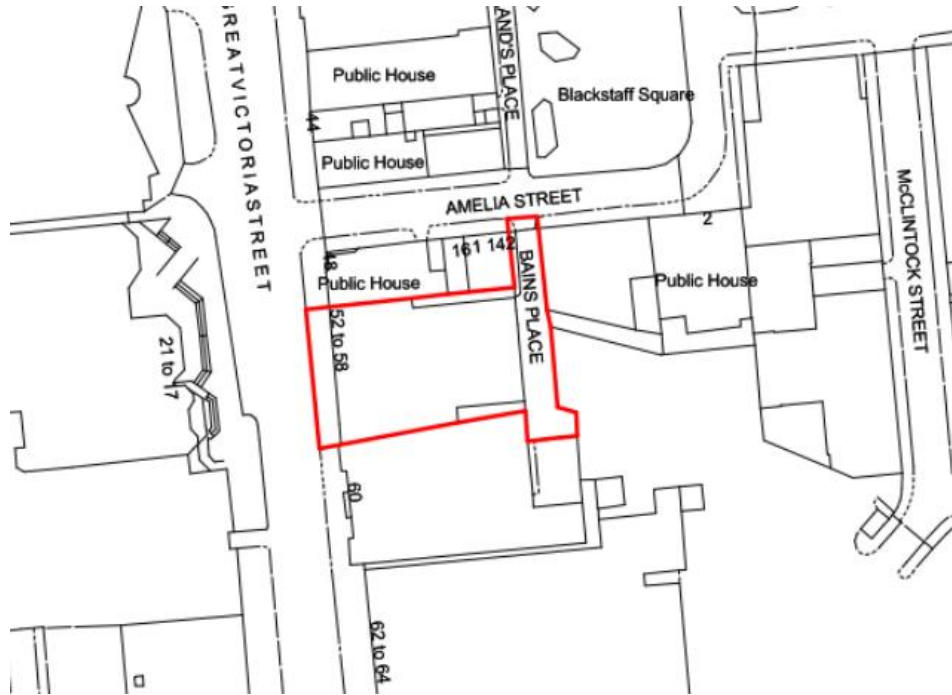
Summary	
<b>Application ID:</b> LA04/2023/3821/F	
<b>Proposal:</b> Proposed change of use from offices to aparthotel (136 rooms) with the creation of additional floors to the upper section of building along with elevational alterations and associated development.	<b>Location:</b> Dorchester House, 52-58 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7BB
<b>Recommendation:</b> Approval	<b>Referral route:</b> Major application
<b>Applicant Name and Address:</b> Andras House Ltd 60 Great Victoria Street Belfast BT2 7BB	<b>Agent Name and Address:</b> Clyde Shanks Ltd 2nd Floor 7 Exchange Place Belfast BT1 2NA
<b>Executive Summary:</b>  The application seeks full planning permission for a proposed change of use from offices to aparthotel (136 rooms) with the creation of additional floors to the upper section of building along with elevational alterations and associated development. The main issues to be considered in this case are; <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The principle of an apart-hotel at this location;</li><li>• Scale, Massing and Design;</li><li>• Impact on Built Heritage;</li><li>• Traffic and Road Safety;</li><li>• Human health/Environmental Considerations;</li><li>• Flooding and Drainage;</li><li>• Economic Considerations;</li><li>• Environment &amp; Community;</li></ul> <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.  Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions and deal with any other matters which may arise, so long as they are not substantive.	

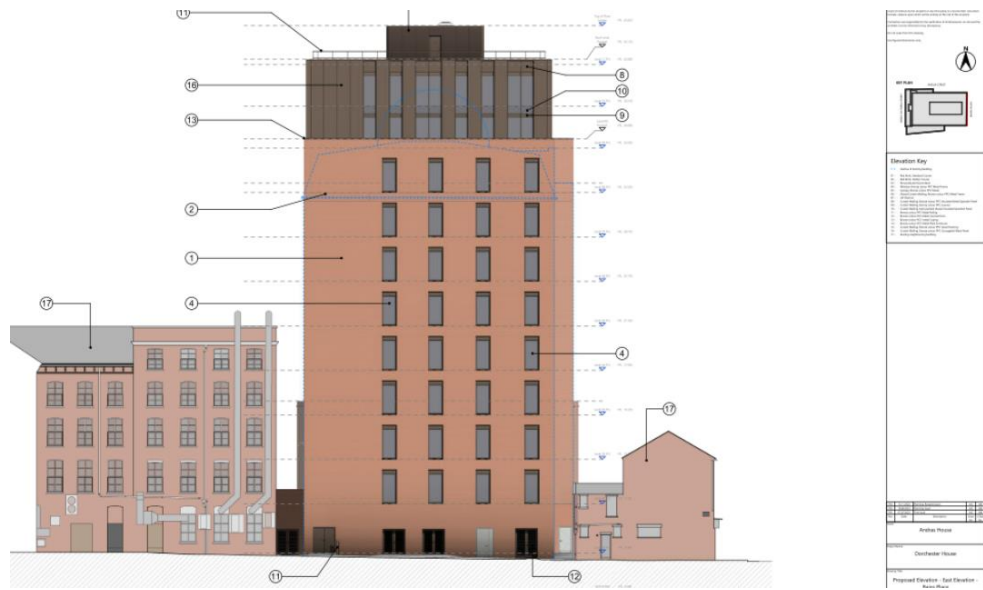
# Officer Report

1.0

Drawings

Site Location Plan / Site Layout / Elevations





**CGI Views**





	<p><b>Characteristics of the Site and Area</b></p>
<p>2.0</p>	<p><b>Description of Proposed Development</b></p>
<p>2.1</p>	<p>The description of the proposal is as follows:  <i>‘Proposed change of use from offices to aparthotel (136 rooms) with the creation of additional floors (11 storey) to the upper section of building along with elevational alterations and associated development.’</i></p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p><b>Description of Site and Area</b></p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>Dorchester House is an existing vacant office building in Belfast City Centre. The building consists of a 3 storey podium/base, 5 storey mid-section, and 1.5/2 storey top which is composed of a combination of barrel vaulted and mansard roofs. The building is primarily clad in red brick, a material typical of Belfast.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>The site falls just outside the Linen quarter conservation area. There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of Dorchester House, including The Crown Bar, McLean Bookmakers, and Robinsons Bar.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p><b>Planning Policy and Other Material Considerations</b></p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p><b>Development Plan – operational policies</b>  Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035</p>
<p>4.2</p>	<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)  Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)  Developer Contributions Framework (adopted 2020)  Parking Standards (former Department of Environment)</p>
4.4	<p><b>Planning History</b>  None relevant.</p>
5.0	<p><b>Consultations and Representations</b></p>
	<p><b><u>Consultations</u></b>  <b>Conservation</b> – Advice Provided  <b>DfI Rivers</b> – No objections  <b>DFI Roads</b> – No objections with conditions  <b>Environmental Health</b> – No objections with conditions  <b>Historic Environment Division</b> – No objection  <b>NIW</b> – No objections  <b>NIEA</b> – No objections  <b>Urban Design</b> – Content</p> <p><b>Representations</b>  No objections have been received.</p>
6.0	<p><b>PLANNING ASSESSMENT</b></p>
	<p><b><u>Development Plan Context</u></b></p>
6.1	<p>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>
6.2	<p>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.</p>
6.3	<p>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 (PS), 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.</p>
6.4	<p><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.</p>
6.5	<p><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</p>

	<p>advanced stage in the development process, save for retail policies that relate to Sprucefield which remain contentious.</p> <p><b><u>The principle of an aparthotel at this location</u></b></p>
6.6	<p>The SPPS sets out five core planning principles for the planning system, including improving health and wellbeing, supporting sustainable economic growth, creating and enhancing shared space, and supporting good design and place making.</p>
6.7	<p>The site is located within the City Centre where an aparthotel is acceptable in principle.</p>
6.8	<p>Policy TLC1 (PS): relates to “Supporting tourism leisure and cultural development”. This policy sets out that “The council will support tourism leisure, and culture development that contributes to:</p> <p>a) Extending the offer across the daytime and night time for a broad range of visitors; and  b) Improving the quality, and accessibility of tourism, leisure, and culture facilities and assets to support Belfast’s reputation as an attractive tourism destination.”</p>
6.9	<p>Policy HOU 13 (PS): Short-term let accommodation states that planning permission will be granted for short-term let accommodation where set criteria are met. It is considered that criteria (a) to (e) are met, whilst (f) is not applicable.</p>
6.10	<p>The policy states that a condition will be applied to limit occupation to short-term lets only. As such it is recommended by officers to ensure that the aparthotel cannot be used as long-term residential accommodation as the proposal has not been assessed against the relevant policies for residential accommodation and may be inappropriate for such use.</p>
6.11	<p>The condition would ensure that the maximum stay by the same occupant shall be no more than 90 days in any 12 month period, in accordance with written records which shall be made available to the Council at all reasonable times.</p> <p><b><u>Scale, Massing and Design</u></b></p>
6.12	<p>The proposal will increase the height of the existing building by approximately 5 metres which includes the two new upper floors and rooftop elements. The addition of the upper floors will increase the massing of the existing building, however this is not considered inappropriate when assessing the surrounding context.</p>
6.13	<p>Buildings in the immediate vicinity contain a range of materials which comprise red and buff brick, render, curtain walling and stone. However, the use of red brick does become more prevalent across buildings further south along GVS towards Bruce Street.</p>
6.14	<p>The proposed materials palette consists predominantly of standard course red brick across both the lower three-storey podium and the six storey mid-section. Horizontal sections of soldier course red brick are also proposed at locations across the building, such as immediately below the second floor reconstituted stone parapet and above the seventh floor, features which provide additional visual interest. Elsewhere curtain walling is utilised in vertical arrangements up both the podium and mid-section and across the full extent of the upper two floors.</p>
6.15	<p>The BCC Senior Urban Design Officer was consulted on the application and has no concerns with the proposal. Therefore, the proposal is compliant with Policy DES1(Principles of Urban Design) and Policy DES3 (Tall Buildings).</p>



	<p><b><u>Built Heritage</u></b></p>
6.16	There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of Dorchester House, including The Crown Bar, McLean Bookmakers, and Robinsons Bar.
6.17	HED (Historic Buildings) were consulted on the application and are content. The proposal is therefore considered compliant with Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) para 6.12 and Policy BH1 (PS): Listed Buildings.
	<p><b><u>Conservation</u></b></p>
6.18	Given that the site falls just outside the Linen Quarter conservation area, the conservation officer (CO) was consulted on the basis of development impacting the setting of the conservation area.
6.19	Within the PAD (LA04/2023/2409/PAD) it was concluded that the ‘existing building was of lesser architectural and historic interest but is an architecturally unified statement in a postmodernism effect idiom. The proposed alterations would be detrimental to this architectural unity. However, balancing this against the fact that the building is of limited architectural / historic interest (significance), then alterations would be acceptable in terms of the wider setting of the Conservation Area.’
6.20	During the consultation within this application the CO concluded that ‘the glazed, attic floors are detrimental to creation of a coherent, architecturally unified statement and a missed opportunity to create a more traditional roofscape enhancing the setting of the Conservation Area to a building fronting a visually prominent path that provides a sense of arrival into it.’ However, it was stated that the proposed scheme ‘has a more appropriate solid to void relationship.’
6.21	Given that the existing building has little architectural / historic interest, on balance it is considered that the proposed changes are considered appropriate and would not impact negatively on the character and appearance with regards to views into, out of, within or across the Linen Conservation Area. Therefore, on balance, the proposal is considered compliant with Policy BH2 (Conservation Areas).
	<p><b><u>Traffic, Movement and Parking</u></b></p>
6.22	DFI Roads have been consulted on the proposal and offer no objection to the development, subject to conditions.
6.24	A Travel Plan, prepared in accordance with LDP policy TRAN4, has been submitted which is aimed at encouraging staff to use public transport. A Travel Plan Coordinator will also be appointed to promote active travel rather than the use of private cars and patrons will be encouraged to travel by sustainable modes of transport rather than the private car. In compliance with TRAN1, the proposed development has been designed taking into account the needs of pedestrians and cyclists ensuring that it creates a safe and convenient environment. Provision has also been made for supporting infrastructure including cycle parking and linkages to existing or proposed networks and public transport.
6.25	The proposed development complies with the new LDP (PS), in particular policies SP7, TRAN1, TRAN4, TRAN8, TRAN9, TRAN10, DES1, HC1 and supports the Council’s objective which is to materially shift the balance of travel choices away from cars and towards sustainable transport, walking and cycling.

6.26	<p><b><u>Human Health/Environmental Considerations</u></b></p> <p>Policy ENV1 (PS) – Environmental Quality states that ‘<i>Planning Permission will be granted for development that will maintain and, where possible, enhance environmental quality, and protects communities from materially harmful development. Development must not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment, including the following considerations: Ground contamination, air quality, water quality, noise and light pollution</i>’.</p> <p>The considerations stated are addressed below:</p>
6.27	<p><b>Contaminated Land</b></p> <p>The application is supported by a Preliminary Risk Assessment and has determined that there are no potential contaminant linkages.</p>
6.28	<p><b>Noise</b></p> <p>Environmental Health has reviewed the Noise Impact Assessment and advised that it meets the relevant requirements with the recommendation of conditions.</p>
6.29	<p><b>Air Quality</b></p> <p>Environmental Health has reviewed the submitted Air Quality information and have concluded that they are content.</p>
6.30	<p><b>Odour</b></p> <p>Environmental Health has reviewed the Odour Impact Assessment and advised that it meets the relevant requirements. Conditions have been provided.</p>
6.31	<p><b><u>Site Drainage / Flood Assessment</u></b></p> <p>DfI Rivers Flood Maps (NI) indicates that the site lies within the 1 in 100 year climate change fluvial flood plain. Policy ENV4 states that applications in flood risk areas must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. DfI Rivers has reviewed the submitted Flood Risk &amp; Drainage Assessment and are content that all sources of flood risk to and from the proposed development have been identified; and there are adequate measures to manage and mitigate any increase in flood risk arising from the development”. They further conclude that they acknowledge this application has been deemed an exception by the Planning Authority on 7th December 2023.</p>
6.32	<p>A wastewater impact assessment was carried out and NIW have no objection.</p>
6.34	<p><b><u>Economic Considerations</u></b></p> <p>Policy EC1 – ‘Delivering Inclusive Economic Growth’ states that development of business sectors with strong growth potential in Belfast will be supported subject to normal planning considerations, the sectors include Hospitality and tourism.</p>
6.35	<p>It is considered that the proposal will result in the creation of jobs within the tourism and hospitality sector, therefore will be supported subject to normal planning considerations.</p>
6.36	<p><b><u>Environment &amp; Community</u></b></p>
6.36	<p>A Climate Change statement has been provided which demonstrates how the proposal is in accordance with policies SP2, SP6, ENV2, ENV3 and ENV5 of the LDP PS.</p>
6.37	<p>In relation to ENV2: Mitigating Environmental Change, the proposal has demonstrated that demolition will be kept to a minimum. Whilst the interiors have been stripped out, the vast majority of the substructure, superstructure and cladding will be retained as part of the proposal. A site waste management plan has been included in the construction</p>



<p>6.38</p> <p>6.39</p> <p>6.40</p>	<p>management plan which indicates that the BRE smart waste system will be used to prevent waste, to reuse where possible, to recycle and send waste to landfill as a last resort.</p> <p>In relation to Policy ENV3: Adapting to Climate Change, the proposal will make use of high-performance glazing and thermal envelope to reduce the heating and cooling loads on the building.</p> <p>Policy ENV5 (PS): Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) states that all built development should include, where appropriate, SuDS measures to manage surface water effectively on site. This scheme will include a blue roof and an associated ground floor attenuation tank which will relieve rainwater overflow during normal and storm events. The proposal retains the existing trees along Great Victoria Street.</p> <p><b><u>Conclusion</u></b></p> <p>The proposal will have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with the development plan, taking account of all other material consideration including the relevant planning policies and planning history.</p>
<p><b>7.0</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation</b></p>
<p>7.1</p>	<p>Having had regard to the development plan, relevant planning policies, and other material considerations, it is considered that the proposal should be approved.</p>

**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.
2. Notwithstanding the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (or any order revoking and/or re-enacting those orders with or without modification), the bed spaces shall not be used other than as hotel accommodation or serviced apartments. The maximum stay by the same occupant shall be no more than 90 days in any 12 month period, in accordance with written records which shall be made available to the Council at all reasonable times.  
  
Reason: Residential use of the building would require further consideration by the Council having regard to the Local Development Plan and relevant material considerations.
3. The development hereby permitted shall not become operational until sheltered cycle parking facilities have been provided in accordance with Drawing No.17A uploaded to the Planning Portal 23rd November 2023.  
  
Reason: To promote the use of alternative modes of transport in accordance with sustainable transportation principles.
4. The development hereby permitted shall operate in accordance with the Travel Plan uploaded to the Planning Portal 8th September 2023.

Reason: To promote the use of alternative modes of transport in accordance with sustainable transportation principles.

5. The development hereby permitted shall operate in accordance with the Service Management Plan uploaded to the Planning Portal 8th September 2023.

Reason: In the interests of road safety and the convenience of road users.

6. Prior to occupation of the development, glazing which meets the sound reduction specification deemed necessary across all facades and presented within table 1 of the submitted Layde Consulting report, dated: 8th May 2024 and referenced P6805, shall be installed within habitable rooms of the development and retained at all times.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of occupants of the building hereby approved and protection of surrounding amenity.

7. Prior to commencement of the hereby approved development the applicant shall submit to the planning service for review and approval, the final details of the ventilation strategy to habitable rooms. The final details shall confirm that the proposed air intake vents have a sound reduction equivalent to or greater than the sound reduction specification for the glazing at each façade as specified in table 1 of the Layde Consulting report dated 8th May 2024, referenced P680-5. The final details shall also confirm that air intake ducts serving all habitable rooms (bedrooms and living rooms) will be capable of being fitted with a fit for purpose activated carbon filter as recommended in the Layde Consulting report dated 8th May 2024, referenced P680-5. Where any element of mechanical or active means of ventilation is proposed, the final details shall include a Noise Impact Assessment that confirms that the noise associated with the mechanical operation (from fans /duct noise) of the ventilation system will not lead to a cumulative exceedance of the internal target levels for habitable rooms in line with BS 8233:2014 Guidance on sound insulation and noise for buildings.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of occupants of the building hereby approved and protection of surrounding amenity.

8. Prior to the occupation of the development the ventilation strategy to serve habitable rooms shall be installed as approved and be maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and be retained at all times.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of occupants of the building hereby approved and protection of surrounding amenity.

9. Prior to operation of the ground floor commercial kitchen associated with the hereby-approved development, a kitchen extraction and odour abatement system shall be installed to suppress and disperse odours created from operations on the premises which achieves a 'high' level of odour control. The system shall incorporate one of the two odour mitigation options presented in section 13.1 of the Layde Consulting Report dated the August 2023, report reference P680/2 in accordance with the current EMAQ+ 'Guidance on the Control of Odour and Noise from Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems' (updated in May 2022). The outlet from any extract ventilation ducting shall terminate at a height not less than 1m above the main roof height as confirmed in the Layde Consulting report of the 12th February 2024, report reference P680-3.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of occupants of the building hereby approved and protection of surrounding amenity.

10. The kitchen extraction and odour abatement system installed to achieve a high level of odour control at the hereby permitted development must be retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of occupants of the building hereby approved and protection of surrounding amenity.

11. The rating level (dBLAr,T) from the operation of all combined plant and equipment must not exceed the existing daytime and night-time background sound levels 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'.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of occupants of the building hereby approved and protection of surrounding amenity.

#### Informatives

1. 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 contact the Planning Service at Belfast City Council at [planning@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:planning@belfastcity.gov.uk).
2. 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.

<b>ANNEX</b>	
<b>Date Valid</b>	06/09/2023
<b>Date First Advertised</b>	15/09/2023
<b>Date Last Advertised</b>	N/A
<b>Details of Neighbour Notification:</b> 9 Neighbouring properties on 08.09.2023	
<b>Date of EIA Determination:</b> NA <b>ES Requested:</b> NA	