

# Development Management Committee Report

Summary	
<b>Committee Date:</b> 13 <sup>th</sup> August 2024	
<b>Application ID:</b> LA04/2024/0358/F	
<b>Proposal:</b> Proposed change of use from Office (Use class B1) to Health Care Hub (incorporating use classes D1, A1 and A2), external alterations to the façade of the property and other ancillary site works	<b>Location:</b> Park House, 87-91 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7AG.
<b>Referral Route:</b> Section 3.8.2 (a) of the Scheme of Delegation, a community related application over 500sq/m with a representation contrary to the officer recommendation.	
<b>Recommendation:</b> Approval subject to conditions.	
<b>Applicant Name and Address:</b> Millar Estates (Park House) N.I. Limited Park House Great Victoria Street Belfast BT2 7AG	<b>Agent Name and Address:</b> Paul McStay 388/390 Ravenhill Road Belfast BT6 0BA
<b>Date Valid:</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	
<b>Target Date:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	
<b>Contact Officer:</b> Ciara Reville, Principal Planning Officer, Development Management.	
<b>Executive Summary:</b> <p>The application seeks full planning permission for change of use from Office (Use class B1) to Health Care Hub (incorporating use classes D1, A1 and A2), external alterations to the façade of the property and other ancillary site works.</p> <p>The key issues to be considered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Principle of medical use at this location</li><li>• Provision of community infrastructure</li><li>• Access and transport</li><li>• Environmental considerations</li></ul> <p>The site is within the settlement limits and zoned within the city centre as detailed in the BUAP and also within the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) and dBMAP (2014v)</p> <p>The proposed use is considered acceptable within this sustainable city centre location and in compliance with Retail and community infrastructure policies contained with the LDP Plan Strategy.</p> <p>The height, scale and massing of the proposed building remain unaltered, the proposal alterations to the façade of the building are considered acceptable within the wider character of the area that exhibits a variety of building designs.</p> <p>The proposal would provide limited dedicated on-site parking to service the proposed building. This is considered acceptable given the highly sustainable location of the site.</p>	

The application proposes to deliver a purpose designed building to meet the needs of medical practitioners and associated pharmacy and opticians.

Planning Service has received 1 third party objection expressing concerns discussed within report below.

**Recommendation**

Having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, 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 wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that the issues are not substantive.



Proposed Elevations CGI



Existing elevation



<b>1.0</b>	<b>Characteristics of the Site and Area</b>
1.1	The site is a modern three storey office block occupying a corner plot at the junction of Great Victoria Street (GVS) and Wellwood Street. It is finished in red brick, flat roof with large expanse of glazing. This section of GVS is defined by modern buildings although older two and three storey buildings can be found further along the road. GVS is a main arterial route into the city with many varieties of commercial uses to be found. Wellwood Street is currently an area suitable for redevelopment with a number of modern apartment buildings already constructed and having a number of large vacant plots suitable to be developed.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>PLANNING HISTORY</b>
2.1	No relevant planning history.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>PLANNING POLICY</b>
	<b>Development Plan – operational policies</b>
3.1	<u>Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035</u>
	Policy CI1 – Community Infrastructure
	Policy RET1 – Establishing a Centre Hierarchy
	Policy TRAN8 – Car parking and servicing arrangements
	Policy ENV2 – Mitigating environmental change
	Policy ENV3 – Adapting to environmental change
	Policy ENV5 - Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)
	<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)
	<b>Regional Planning Policy</b>
	Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)
	Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)
<b>4.0</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS</b>
4.1	<u>Statutory Consultees</u>
	<b>DfI Roads</b> – no objection with conditions.
	<b>NI Water</b> – recommended refusal
	<b>NIEA</b> – no objection with condition
	<b>SES</b> – no objection with condition
4.2	<u>Non-Statutory Consultees</u>
	<b>BCC City Regeneration and Development</b> – supporting proposal.
	<b>BCC Environmental Health</b> – no objection with condition
	<u>Representations</u>
4.3	The application has been advertised in the newspaper and neighbours notified.
4.4	One objection/comment was received, comments posted on portal, letter raised concerns about the following:

4.5	<p>Use of premises for homeless Drug taking in area.</p> <p>Response: No indication that premises is for homeless use, medical facilities open to all. Drug taking in area not a material planning consideration.</p>
5.0	<p><b>PLANNING ASSESSMENT</b></p> <p><b>Main Issues</b></p> <p>5.1 The main issues relevant to consideration of the application are set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle of medical use at this location</li> <li>• Provision of community infrastructure</li> <li>• Access and transport</li> <li>• Environmental considerations</li> </ul> <p>5.2 <b>Development Plan Context</b></p> <p>5.3 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> <p>5.4 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> <p>5.5 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.</p> <p>5.6 <b><u>Operational Policies</u></b></p> <p>5.7 The Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application. These have been listed above.</p> <p>5.8 <b><u>Proposals Maps</u></b></p> <p>5.9 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.</p> <p><b>Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 – open space.</b></p>

	<b>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (2004) – open space</b>
	<b>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014) – open space</b>
5.10	<b>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS</b> Planning Statement Travel Plan TAF
5.11	<b><u>Principle of development in this location</u></b>
5.12	The SPPS advises that planning permission should be granted for sustainable development that accords with the area plan and causes no harm to areas of acknowledged importance. The proposal is for a change of use of a vacant office building to a medical hub containing differing medical offices and to include a ground floor pharmacy and opticians. The proposal is within white-land in the area plan and is designated within the limits of the city centre. The proposal is considered to be a sustainable use bringing a vacant building back into use and will have no significant impact on areas of acknowledged importance. The alteration to the façade with the introduction of new windows, likewise will have no negative impact on the surrounding character, the building and the nearest neighbouring buildings are of modern construction therefore no historical features to protect that contributes to the surrounding character.
5.13	<b>Community Infrastructure</b>
5.14	Policy CI1 relating to the provision of community infrastructure states that the Council will seek to protect and provide development opportunities for among other things health facilities based on local need and in line with projected population growth. It is further stated that planning permission will be granted for new and improved community infrastructure at appropriate and accessible locations within the urban area that ensures no unacceptable impact on residential amenity or heritage assets. It is also expected that the proposal provides a satisfactory arrangement for access that includes for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. The site is located on a main city thoroughfare that has excellent transport links and can cater for all modes of transport. No significant new impacts on nearby residential units will arise as a result of the proposal.
5.15	BCC City Regeneration and Development team has commented on the proposal and offered support stating that the proposal is likely to be sufficient for the initial stages of delivery of the City Centre Living Vision. They expanded explaining that 8,000 new housing units for the city centre could generate a population of around 16,000 residents and that the provision of GP surgeries suggests 1 full time GP to cover 1,423 patients. The new proposed city centre housing with up to 16,000 could generate a need for up to 12 additional GPs to meet this need.
5.16	Having regards to transport links and neighbouring residential amenity and the potential future increase in city centre population and the need to provide acceptable infrastructure the proposal is acceptable and complies with policy.
5.17	<b>Retail</b>
5.18	Policy RET1 sets the hierarchy for main town centre uses, the proposal in terms of usage would not normally be considered a development that should be located within the primary retail core or frontage. The proposed medical use is a community use and thus considered a main town centre use. It will also cater for a community need and thus is usually located in areas to meet that community need. The proposed pharmacy and

	opticians offer a retail element to their business although the items retailed generally have a medical connection. The site being within the city centre, the next area below the retail core, and adjacent to protected city centre housing adds to the acceptability of this use at this site regarding retail element and complies with policy.
5.19	<b>Transport</b>
5.20	Policy TRAN8 relating to the provision of acceptable parking and servicing arrangements for development. The policy seeks to reduce the reliance on the private car in particular for commuting into the city to help tackle growing congestion and bring about a change in travel behaviour. The proposal will provide six car parking places to the rear of the site, with the layout including three spaces dedicated for disabled parking; also provided is cycle parking. The advice of DfI Roads Service was sought on the proposal, the response indicated no objection to the proposal. It is therefore considered that the proposal, being in a highly accessible location with excellent transport links, providing adequate on-site car parking and cycle parking meets the requirement of policy.
5.21	<b>Environmental</b>
5.22	The proposal being for a change of use offers little scope to introduce significant measures regarding environmental change. The demolition works associated with the proposal relates to replacement of existing windows, newer windows are now designed to meet a higher environmental standard to reduce the reliance on both air conditioning and heating. The reuse of a vacant building can also be seen as a supported sustainable use preventing the need for new construction and all the associated energy that is consumed. The proposal is considered to be compatible with policies ENV1 & 2.
5.23	<b>NIW objection</b>
5.24	NI Water has objected to the proposal as the site is constrained by lengths of downstream sewer operating above capacity. It advises that existing public waste-water infrastructure cannot currently support the proposal without significant risk of environmental harm, potential pollution, flood risk and harm to local amenity. However, no clear evidence has been provided to demonstrate specific harm resulting from the development. Moreover, NI Water has a duty to connect committed development across the city to its waste-water infrastructure. Such development, which includes significant levels of residential and commercial floor space across the city, will not all come forward at once and some may not come forward at all. For these reasons, it would be unreasonable for the Council to refuse planning permission on these grounds and the proposal is acceptable having regard to Policy SP1A of the Plan Strategy.
5.25	As the proposal would result in clear intensification of the use of the land, the Council has consulted Shared Environmental Services (SES) to assist its consideration of the Habitats Regulations. SES has advised that the proposal would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, subject to condition. DAERA has been consulted and is concerned that the sewage loading associated with the proposal has the potential to cause adverse environmental impact. Having regard to this advice, it is considered necessary to impose a condition to mitigate any likely significant effects on Belfast Lough. In this regard, the proposal is considered compliant with Policy NH1 of the of the Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035 and paragraphs 6.176 and 6.177 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement.
5.26	<b>SuDS</b>
5.27	Policy ENV5 seeks to include SuDS measures into the development where appropriate. The measures can include green roof, swales, permeable paving, detention basins open



	<p>areas and trees and landscaping. With the exception of green roof all the other measure are not achievable in this case, as the outside area of the building is not within the ownership of the developer that would allow such measures a permeable paving and landscaping. Regarding the potential for a green roof, this type of measure needs to be considered that an early design stage of a new build development to ensure that the necessary sized steels and foundations are in place to cater for the additional loads that would be generated. The opportunity for SuDs is not considered attainable in this instance however the reuse of the building is considered to comply with the amin thrust f the environmental polices within the Plan Strategy especially with regard to mitigating against climate change.</p>
<p><b>6.0</b></p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>The proposal makes use of a vacant building in an area of the city that requires additional investment, remodelling of the façade will enhance the surrounding character by acting as a potential catalyst to the regeneration of the local area. The proposal will provide a community infrastructure development that satisfies a local need, offering additional medical facilities for the future growing population of the city. It is considered that the proposal will have no significant impact on residential amenity or the character of the surrounding area. Whilst there are some concerns in relation to lack of SUDs measures, on balance, it is considered the proposal is acceptable and recommendation is that planning permission is granted.</p> <p>Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that arise, including those raised in the final consultation response from BCC Environmental Health, provided that the issues are not substantive.</p>
<p><b>7.0</b></p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p>	<p><b>DRAFT CONDITIONS</b></p> <p>The development hereby permitted must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</p> <p>The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until hard surfaced areas have been constructed within the site in accordance with the approved plan. This area shall not be used at any time for any purpose other than for parking and movement of vehicles in connection with the approved development.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> To ensure that adequate provision has been made for parking and traffic circulation within the site.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> To ensure acceptable cycle parking on the site and to encourage alternative modes of transport to the private car.</p>

7.4	<p>The development hereby permitted shall operate in accordance with the approved Travel Plan.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> To encourage the use of alternative modes of transport to the private car in accordance with the Transportation Principles.</p>
7.5	<p>In the event that any centralised combustion sources (boilers, CHP or biomass) are proposed and there is a risk of impact at relevant receptor locations as per the criteria detailed within the Environmental Protection UK and Institute of Air Quality Management, Land-use Planning &amp; Development Control: Planning For Air Quality (January 2017), this Service would request that an Air Quality Impact Assessment is submitted in writing to the Planning authority for review and approval in writing. Where the Air Quality Impact Assessment indicates exceedances of air quality objectives, appropriate mitigation measures shall be presented and these mitigation measures shall be installed and retained thereafter.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> Protection of human health</p>
7.6	<p>No development shall take place on-site until the method of sewage disposal has been agreed in writing with Northern Ireland Water (NIW) or a Consent to discharge has been granted under the terms of the Water (NI) Order 1999.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> To ensure the project will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site.</p>