

Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

Summary	
Committee Meeting Date: 26th October 2018	Item Number:
Application ID: LA04/2018/2393/LBC	Target Date: 18.01.2019
Proposal: Conservation led works to Bank Buildings involving the taking down, recording and assessment for restoration purposes of the building above the fourth floor cornice line to the Bank Street, Castle Street and Castle Place elevations of the building for off-site storage	Location: Bank Buildings (bounded by Castle Street Bank Street and Royal Avenue) Royal Avenue Belfast BT1 1BL
Referral Route: Involves partial dismantling of a Listed Building	
Recommendation:	Approve with conditions
Applicant Name and Address: Primark Ltd PO Box 644 47 Mary Street Dublin Dublin 1	Agent Name and Address: Turley Hamilton House 3 Joy Street Belfast BT2 8LE
Executive Summary: <p>The application relates to Bank Buildings, a Category B1 Listed Building situated in the city centre on the corner of the junction of Royal Avenue and Castle Street. The site is located within the City Centre Conservation Area.</p> <p>Bank Buildings is a multi-bay classically-styled five-storey building finished in red sandstone and polished granite. It was constructed between 1880 and 1899. The Bank Buildings was designed by William Henry Lynn.</p> <p>The building was severely damaged by a fire that initiated on 28 August 2018 and continued for 3 days. A significant proportion of the internal structure was burnt away, has collapsed or was severely damaged with the external facades subject to further damage. In its present condition, the building's physical fabric remains very vulnerable and poses a threat to public health and safety. On engineering advice, a safety cordon has been established to protect the public which has had a very significant impact on businesses both within and outside it. Available data establishes a significant decline in trade when compared with data available for comparable months in other years.</p> <p>The application seeks Listed Building Consent for conservation led works involving the taking down, recording and assessment of the building above the fourth-floor cornice line to Bank Street, Castle Street and Royal Avenue, including the 6 chimneys.</p>	

The Council's Building Control service has confirmed the perilous structural condition of the building. It is currently unsafe for site operatives to structurally stabilise the building. The building remains in imminent risk of collapse which could significantly damage its heritage asset status, and/or cause harm to neighbouring Listed Buildings or the public. The proposal to dismantle the top floor above the fourth-floor cornice line would allow that element to be recorded and assessed. This will in turn allow the remainder of the building to be made safe and supported through a façade retention scheme.

Department for Communities Historic Environment Division advises that the proposal is compliant with planning policy.

Belfast Civic Trust and Ulster Architectural Heritage support the application.

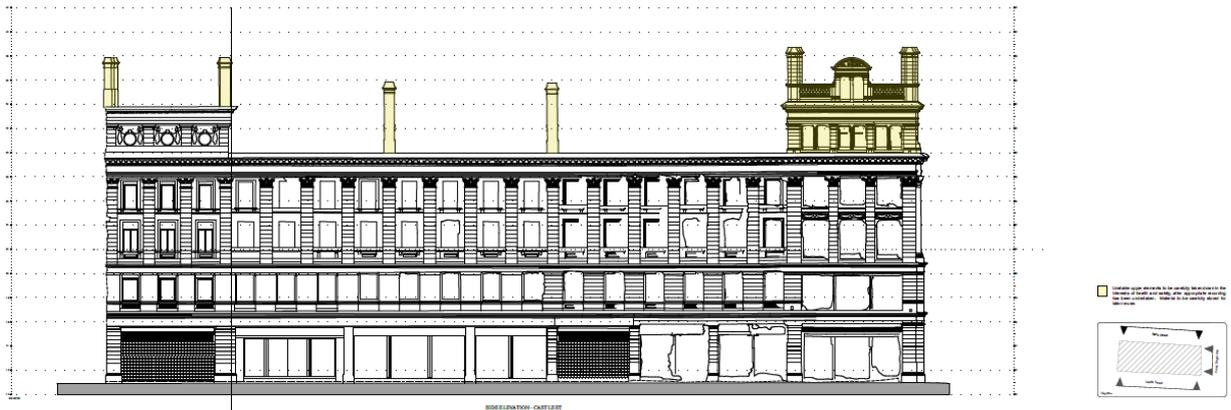
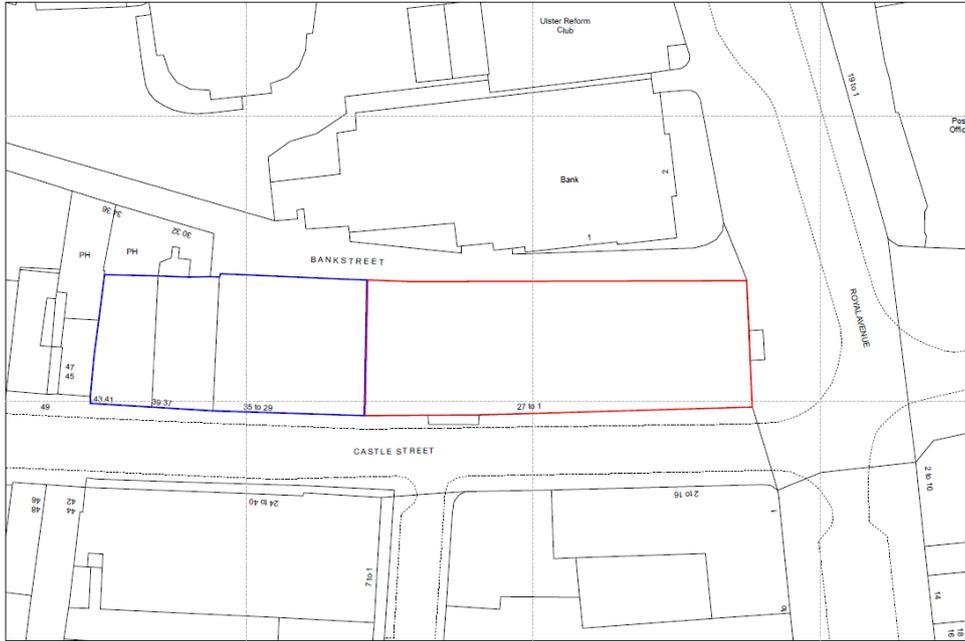
The City Council has received 7 objections to the proposal.

It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to grant Listed Building Consent subject to conditions.

Signature(s):

Case Officer Report

Key Plans and Drawings



1.0 Description of the Site and Proposal

1.1 The application relates to Bank Buildings, a Category B1 Listed Building situated in the city centre at the junction of Royal Avenue and Castle Street. The building fronts onto Royal Avenue to the east. It is bounded by Castle Street to the south and Bank Street to the north. It is attached to Nos. 29-35 Castle Street (known as Commonwealth House) on its west side.

1.2 The site is surrounded by other Listed Buildings including:

- No. 2 Royal Avenue to the north (Tesco), Category B+
- Nos. 1-9 Donegall Place & 2-16 Castle Street to the south (Zara), Category B1
- Nos. 1-5 Royal Avenue to the north east (Spar), Category B2

1.3 The site is within the City Centre Conservation Area.

1.4 Bank Buildings is a multi-bay classically-styled five-storey building finished in red sandstone and polished granite. It was constructed between 1880 and 1899. Prior to the fire, the building had a half natural slate roof set behind the front balustrade parapet. The remainder of the roof was of a mansard design. The building features tall stepped-profile chimney stacks on the roof. There was a feature copper-lined segmental-pedimented clock dormer breaking through the parapet to the centre of the front elevation with a metal clock face set in a decoratively carved stone surround and carved pediment stating completion date '1900'. Other prominent features included dormer windows, giant Corinthian columns, decorative lintels and strongly defined cornices.

1.5 The Bank Buildings was designed by William Henry Lynn. Lynn, one of the preeminent Belfast-based architects of the late-19th and early-20th centuries, was a former pupil of Charles Lanyon with whom he entered into partnership (forming the firm, Lanyon & Lynn). On first occupation, the building was used as a commercial warehouse by a textile merchant. The company continued to trade from the building until the 1970s. The building narrowly avoided damage during the 1941 Belfast Blitz. A rear extension was added in 1952 (Commonwealth House). Bank Buildings was acquired by Boots in 1973. According to the Listing description, the building was largely gutted by an incendiary device in 1975. It was extensively refurbished in 1979 following its purchase by Primark and reopened as a clothing store, which has been its use since then. More recently, Commonwealth House at the rear has been demolished and a new extension built to provide enlarged floor space for the Primark retail store.

1.6 Bank Buildings was Listed in 1980 (ref. HB26/50/153). A copy of the Listing description is provided at Appendix A.

1.7 The building was recently severely damaged by a fire that initiated on 28 August 2018. It took many hours to bring the fire under control and 3 days to extinguish it completely. As a result, a significant proportion of the internal structure has either collapsed or was severely damaged and the external facades subject to further damage. The exterior of the building has also been damaged. In its present condition, the building's physical fabric remains unstable and extremely vulnerable.

1.8 The application seeks Listed Building Consent for conservation led works involving the taking down, recording and assessment of the building above the fourth floor cornice line to Bank Street, Castle Street and Royal Avenue, including the chimneys (i.e. the areas shown yellow on the submitted plans).

1.9 The application is accompanied by plans and drawings and the following reports:

- Outline Conservation Statement
- Conservation Engineer's Initial Commentary Report
- Structural Report
- Design and Access Statement

2.0 Planning History

2.1 There are no planning decisions on or near the site which are of particular relevance to the current application. Members may wish to note that planning permission and Listed Building Consent were granted in October 2013 for the refurbishment of the existing retail premises and rear extension to include the redevelopment of the adjacent building, Commonwealth House (Z/2013/0530/F and Z/2013/0527/LBC). These works are nearly complete.

3.0 Consultation responses

3.1 The application was publicised in the press on 06 October 2018. Department for Communities Historic Environment Division (HED) were formally consulted as a statutory consultee. A number of local amenity groups have been made aware of the application. The formal consultation period ends on 22 October 2018.

3.2 The planning service has received the following consultation responses to date. Any further representations will be reported to Members via the Late Items report.

3.3 Historic Environment Division

No objection:

'Historic Environment Division (HED) has been consulted with respect to an application for conservation led works involving the taking down, recording and assessment for restoration purposes of the building above the fourth floor cornice line (LA04/2018/2393/LBC) at Bank Buildings Castle Place Belfast Co Antrim BT1 1BL (Grade B1) which is of special architectural and historic importance and is protected by Section 80 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

Historic Environment Division (HED) has considered the impacts of the proposal on the site/monument/building/designation and on the basis of the information provided, advises that the proposals satisfy the policy requirements of SPPS (Paras 6.13 to 6.15) and Policies BH8 and BH10 of PPS6, subject to conditions.'

3.4 Belfast Civic Trust

Supports the application:

'The Belfast Civic Trust is supportive of the proposal to remove the top two storeys of the Bank Buildings (as a result of fire damage) and replace them with the same style as proposed in the planning application.' [Officer comment – the proposal is to record and dismantle the top of the building above fourth cornice level to help inform potential future restoration of the building. The proposal does not include the rebuilding of Bank Buildings at this time]

3.5 Ulster Architectural Heritage

Supports the application and comments as follows:

'Ulster Architectural Heritage (UAH) welcomes this, phase 1, application for the adoption of a conservation led approach to address the fire damage caused to the Bank Buildings, Castle Street/Royal Avenue.

UAH supports the recommendations contained in the Hall Black Douglas/Sinclair Johnstone report with one proviso – the report states that the means and method of temporary support for the structure is the responsibility of the contractor Keltbray, but no details are attached. UAH is of the opinion that outline detail on both the design of the temporary support and the sequencing of its construction relative to the controlled dismantling above the fourth-floor cornice should be available to planners at this stage. This information should be added to the documentation attached to the application. Any significant delay in provision of the above, or any requirement to generate a separate application, may unnecessarily prolong the process leading, in turn, to increased problems for surrounding businesses.'

3.6 Building Control (Belfast City Council)

Having reviewed the evidence provided to date, Building Control is supportive of the proposal in order to allow works to take place as safely as practicable so that the remainder of the building can be stabilised. The proposal is to salvage as much of the stonework as possible above fourth floor level and reconstruct the elements removed as part of the restoration of the building. Building Control advises that if the relevant sections as detailed on the application are not removed, an unacceptably high level of risk will exist to site operatives engaged in the process of erecting the façade retention scheme, which is an essential step in stabilising the remainder of the building.

3.7 Economic Development (Belfast City Council)

A summary of their comments is provided below:

- The Council's Economic Development team has been engaging with traders and representative bodies to manage the detrimental impact of the fire on the businesses within the city

- There are around 300 businesses in the area adjacent to the fire site – the majority of which are retail businesses. Organisations affected include a mixture of independent, multinational businesses and third sector organisations. These businesses are estimated to employ between 2,500 and 3,775 people and are estimated to have generated between £240m and £260m GVA in 2017. Overall, the affected area accounts for 2.2-3.3% of Belfast’s total GVA
- Even before the fire, vacancy rates in the city centre were almost twice the average of other United Kingdom cities (23% v 12%). The added challenge of the fire – and the impact on footfall since the end of August – means that the city is under some considerable pressure to remain a viable proposition and a compelling draw for customers
- The immediate economic impact of the fire and resulting safety cordon has had a detrimental impact upon these traders and the economic wellbeing of the city centre. This includes:
 - 22 organisations have been effectively closed from 28 August. The economic impact has led to staff redundancies and relocations to other store outlets, where possible
 - Businesses outside the cordon are experiencing difficult trading conditions. Anecdotal evidence from local traders have reported decreased in sales levels between 20% and 70% amongst the hardest hit areas
- The cordon creates a physical barrier to pedestrian and traffic (including public transport) flow in the city centre. The Castle Street junction is a key thoroughfare for accessing the retail and business community located in the heart of the city centre. The impact of the cordon has created 4 cul-de-sacs in the city centre. Pedestrians need to undertake significant diversions to navigate the city centre
- In terms of footfall, some areas report a reduction of nearly 50%. In some areas footfall is up, but in others it has dropped off very significantly. The table below provides an analysis of city centre footfall figures:

	Avg 4 weeks August (before fire)	Avg 4 weeks Sept (after fire)	Avg 4 weeks Sept (2017)	Delta with August	Delta with 2017
Ann Street	165,075	162,836	124,900	-1.4%	30.4%
Castle Court	178,447	91,200	181,364	-48.9%	-49.7%
Corn Market	196,205	243,825	172,555	24.3%	41.3%
Donegall Place	185,506	143,432	153,483	-22.7%	-6.5%
Fountain Street	125,312	136,916	100,000	9.3%	36.9%

- There has been a 12% reduction in car parking revenue in the three weeks following the fire compared with the preceding four weeks. Public transport passenger numbers have fallen by 28,250 (4%) compared with the previous year
- Estimated loss of revenue to the city centre is between £1million and £3 million per month in the short term. This does not take account of long-term economic impact of the fire, nor does it consider the impact for affected retail businesses when entering peak trading season of Christmas. Consideration will also need to be given to how consumer behaviours and shopping patterns of city centre users are altered as a result of the cordon being in place. The longer the cordon remains in place, the greater the likelihood that user habits within the city centre fundamentally change.

3.8 Representations

The Council has received seven objections that raise the following points:

- Concerns that the proposal will cause Castle Street, Bank Street and Royal Avenue junction to be shut off to pedestrians and traffic including buses
- The timescale is too long. Concerns about the timescale of the process and the disruption to the small traders in Castle Street and surrounding businesses. The situation needs to be resolved swiftly and urgently for small traders
- The temporary walkway is not sufficient to allow the volume of people that would regular travel up and down Castle Street. This in turn will reduce footfall for the surrounding traders. The situation has had a detrimental impact on livelihoods
- The businesses and area are already suffering. The businesses in this area have lost significant business due to the fire, they still need to pay work-related bills, rent, wages, heating etc. As well as keep homes, cars etc
- Lack of clarity for traders

4 **Planning Policy Context**

Local Planning Policy

Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001

Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP) 2004

Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015

Regional Planning Policy

Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)

- Listed Buildings Paras. 6.12 – 6.15

Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6): Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage

- Policy BH 8: Extension or Alteration of a Listed Building
- Policy BH 10: Demolition of a Listed Building

5 **Planning Assessment**

Legislative requirements

5.8 Section 6(4) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires that the City Council, when making any determination, does so in accordance with the Local Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.9 Section 91(2) of the Act requires that the City Council, when making its decision, must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the [Listed] building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The structural condition of Bank Buildings following the fire

5.10 Bank Buildings has been significantly damaged following the fire that initiated on 28 August 2018. The structural condition of the building following the fire is a key consideration in the assessment of the application.

5.11 According to the applicant's conservation report, all elements of the original timber structure (roofs and floors) have been completely destroyed. Steel flitch beams and original cast iron columns have either collapsed, are severely twisted and buckled, or have lost the integrity at their bearings onto the perimeter walls. This has resulted in loss of restraint/support to the outer wall to enable it to resist horizontal wind loads. A substantial amount of collapsed debris, including steel beams and columns, are balanced on the floor and against the perimeter walls.

5.12 Part of the steel structure and precast floors constructed following the fire in 1975 have remained. The steelwork to the roof plant area and boiler is badly damaged, but the internal frames appear to have suffered to a lesser degree. There are also a number of badly supported steel frames at roof level.

5.13 The building has also suffered external damage, notably:

- Original timber mansard structure and stone surrounded dormers at fourth level have been completely destroyed and collapsed inside the building;
- Reduced structural support for outer walls;
- Reduced structural support to chimneys and decorative features;
- Compromised structural capacity due to extreme heat exposure;
- Damaged chimneys;
- Significant deterioration to decorative stone features;
- Damaged load-bearing granite columns;
- Cracked and spalled stone parapets;
- Timber heads and arches over windows burned away or cracked;
- Complete loss of single glazed sash windows.

5.14 The applicant's conservation report states that the primary threat to the building's heritage significance is its exceptionally fragile physical condition as a consequence of the recent fire. The deterioration of the remaining physical fabric will only be exacerbated and further destabilised by its ongoing exposure to wind-load, water ingress and freeze/thaw action.

5.15 Building Control has verified the condition of the building:

'The front façade and portions of the two side facades are a maximum of 29m high and given the lack of lateral restraint and the apparent damage to the masonry, there is a serious risk that a significant section of the building may fail at any time. We are also aware that both the sandstone and granite are likely to have been subject to thermal shock which may have caused damage to the structural integrity of the material, which offers no guarantee of the potential ability of the structure to continue performing even over the short term. There are a number of photographs

clearly showing massive fracturing of sandstone elements and cracking of clay brickwork.

The elements that are most precarious and are evidently badly damaged, from the area that extends above what was fourth floor level on the Castle Place elevations and the return walls above this level. These are the elements proposed for careful removal in the planning application and include the clock feature (which is supported at the rear on a cast iron beam spanning parallel to the front elevation, the sandstone bearings of which are badly split and appear extremely precarious); and a number of decorative 'chimney features which are badly cracked at the base. These areas are shaded yellow on the Existing Elevations drawing submitted with the planning application. We have come to the conclusion that the majority of the masonry above fourth floor level will have to be removed in order to allow the remainder of the building to be saved.'

Health and safety of site operatives

- 5.16 The very precarious nature of the top of the building above fourth floor cornice line means that it has been unsafe for site operatives to put in place a façade retention scheme to stabilise the building. This means that the building as a whole remains at risk. Building Control has provided the following advice on this issue:

'We have concluded, after reviewing all of the information provided to us to date, that a key aspect of reducing to an acceptable level the degree of risk to site operatives who will be involved in the next phase of safeguarding the remaining structure (erection of façade retention system), is removing the elements shaded yellow on the Existing Elevations drawing submitted as part of the planning application. The precarious nature of these high-level elements, irrespective of the type of facade retention system proposed, means operatives will have to work very close to the external walls of the building for a number of weeks to connect the elements of the retaining structure to the masonry facades. Our opinion is that the level of risk to life for operatives working close to the building without removal of the elements shaded in yellow would be unacceptably high. Thus, we consider that removal of the 'yellow' sections is an essential step in efforts to save the remainder of the building. It should be noted that design and installation of a retention scheme is also complicated by the low ground bearing capacity and extensive network of utilities infrastructure/services below the building, which is likely to elongate the time required to install the retention system whilst safeguarding the integrity of numerous buried key utilities.'

The effect of the works on the special qualities of the Listed Building

- 5.17 Bank Buildings is a Category B1 Listed Building, listed for its special architectural and historic qualities, as described elsewhere in this report.
- 5.18 The applicant provides the following assessment of the heritage value of Bank Buildings following the fire:

- i) The existing elevational perimeter has remained in situ, demonstrating resilience through recent high winds and storm conditions, and potential exists to carefully stabilise the existing facades;
- ii) Following stabilisation, further opportunity exists to restore and re-construct the building with a minimal loss of historic fabric as is practically possible to retain historic authenticity;
- iii) Surviving high quality architectural record drawings supports understanding of the physical fabric, and an archive of historic information, including photographs, provides a sound base on which to make a range of conservation decisions, including detailed replication of damaged stone elements and the re-construction of the rood structure;
- iv) A range of sophisticated technology is available to the conservation team, such as the use of non-contact 3D digitisers, to safely record historic fabric in-situ and produce accurate replications of complex historic features.

5.19 The application demonstrates a conservation-led approach to the potential restoration of the building which involves recording and carefully removing the top of the building above fourth floor cornice level which is at most structural risk. This would in turn allow the remainder of the building to be safely stabilised so that further monitoring of its condition can take place.

5.20 The application is accompanied by a method statement for these works. Key elements of the method statement include:

- Initial laser scanning and photographic survey to record each individual stone element above fourth floor;
- Identify by numbering/coding each individual stone so that all stonework can be clearly identified and located in-situ;
- A photographic record of the structures to be dismantled;
- The style of construction for the brickwork to be recorded;
- All stonework elements will be individually marked in situ;
- The structure will be dismantled in a systematic manner;
- All building materials will be retained and stored away from site in a secure, dry and clean environment to remove the possibility of construction damage and material deterioration;
- Cast copy of decorative elements should be made before dismantling;
- Record original method of construction of masonry structures;
- Care to be taken by contractors not to damage stone elements;
- Samples of mortar to be taken for laboratory testing and matching.

5.21 Policy BH10 of PPS 6 relates to proposals to demolish a Listed Building (either whole or in part). It confirms that there is a presumption in favour of retaining Listed Buildings. However, it allows for consent to be issued if there are exceptional reasons why the building cannot be retained in its original, or a reasonably modified form. It goes on to confirm that when Listed Building Consent is granted for demolition, this will *normally* be conditional on prior agreement for the redevelopment of the site and appropriate arrangements for recording the building before its demolition.

- 5.22 As has been described, the building is in a structurally perilous state and is at risk of collapsing. If it were to collapse, not only would it significantly put at risk the heritage value of the existing building, it could also damage nearby Listed Buildings located adjacent the site. The building cannot be made safe at this time because of its dangerous state above fourth floor cornice level. Only if this element is carefully dismantled, can the remainder of the building be made safe.
- 5.23 The proposal to dismantle the top floor above the fourth-floor cornice line will allow that element to be recorded and assessed. This will in turn allow the remainder of the building to be assessed in terms of its structural stability and features.
- 5.24 It is considered that these represent exceptional grounds for the removal of the upper part of the building and provides opportunity for potential future restoration of Bank Buildings. Given the nature of the proposed works, and the uncertainty around the structural condition of the rest of the building, no redevelopment proposals can reasonably be submitted at this time. In accordance with Policy BH10, this the part of the building is to be dismantled recorded as set out in the methodology provided with the application.
- 5.25 Policy BH8 of PPS 6 relates to proposals to extend or alter a Listed Building. The proposal is considered acceptable having regard to Policy BH8 as the works are required to help facilitate retention of the building, thereby retaining its essential character, setting and features of special interest.
- 5.26 HED has advised that the proposal satisfies the policy requirements of the SPPS and Policies BH8 and BH10 of PPS6, subject to conditions. Conditions are discussed in the following section of this report.
- 5.27 The application's conservation-led approach is welcomed and it is recommended that Listed Building Consent is granted for the proposed works.

Public safety

- 5.28 Building Control has provided the following specialist advice in relation to public safety:

'We have concluded after examining all available evidence that a rotational collapse of the front and/or side masonry above a level of approximately 19m onto Castle Place/Royal Avenue /Castle Street/Bank Street remains a possibility. Tilt sensors placed on the building have logged lateral movements of the facades in high wind condition, which have mostly recovered after the winds have subsided – however, in some locations the deflection has not fully recovered. A report by Engineers on behalf of the owners has noted that not all of the movement that has occurred appears to be attributable to environmental conditions. Data from tilt sensors suggest a slight twisting of the front elevation and permanent movement outwards of part of the North façade. It should be noted that the effect of the debris pushing against the inside of the external walls is difficult to quantify with accuracy, and that the masonry may over coming weeks be subject to freeze/thaw action as we move into winter.'

A minor collapse precipitated by environmental or other factors, for example vibration, might trigger a much larger collapse and as such we consider that the sooner the more precarious elements of the building are carefully removed the better. It may then also be possible afterwards to reduce the extent of the public exclusion zone around the building along the East façade (Castle Place). Despite the fact that we have had two significant wind events in storms Ali and Callum, neither of which have resulted in any collapse of the building (major or minor), we cannot consider this as a guarantee that a sudden collapse will not occur. Reduction in height of walls which form what appear to be the most severely damaged elements that are currently visible, and which would pose the highest risk in a collapse scenario due to their height above ground and the substantial momentum this falling debris would have upon hitting the ground, will act to reduce this risk.'

These comments confirm that considerable risk that still exists to public safety as a result of the building that remains in situ post the fire.

Benefits for the community

- 5.29 Paragraph 6.5 (d) of PPS 6 confirms that, amongst other considerations, the extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community, in particular by contributing to the economic regeneration of the area or the enhancement of its environment (including other listed buildings), is relevant to the consideration of Listed Building applications such as this.
- 5.30 At paragraph 6.25 (c) of PPS 6, under the supporting narrative for Policy BH 10, it confirms that 'There may very exceptionally be cases where the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community, which have to be weighed against the arguments in favour of preservation.'
- 5.31 The severe damage caused to Bank Buildings as a result of the fire necessitated the erection of a safety cordon in the vicinity of the building in order to protect the health and safety of the general public in the event of collapse of the building.
- 5.32 This cordon was erected whilst the fire was taking place, and following the fire being extinguished, a revised, smaller cordon was put in place, and is still in situ today due to the existing and live risk to health and safety that the building poses.
- 5.33 Significant work and assessment of the state of Bank Buildings has been undertaken by the building's owners, with proposals put forward to consider the health and safety risk arising from the instability of the building itself, however the evidence submitted is insufficient to justify the reduction of the cordon, in order to maintain the safety of the public.
- 5.34 As reported by the Council's Economic Development team, the impact of the cordon being in place on the community and the economy of the City Centre is severe. There are 22 organisations have been effectively closed from 28 August and have been unable to trade from their locations within the cordon area from this date. These include a mixture of independent and multinational businesses,

as well as offices situated on upper floors. The economic impact of this has led to staff redundancies and relocations to other store outlets, where possible.

- 5.35 The cordon acts as a barrier and restricts pedestrian and vehicular access through Castle Place junction, and as a result pedestrians need to undertake significant diversions using alternative, longer routes to navigate the City Centre. In addition, buses are unable to penetrate into the centre of the City and are subject to significant delays and revised timetabling.
- 5.36 The result of the cordon, and the necessary diversions as indicated above, is that footfall in the City Centre is significantly down and there is severe economic hardship for local businesses and the City Centre as a whole. The latest figures indicate that footfall in the City is down by as much as 49% in the worst affected areas (compared to the same time last year).
- 5.37 Whilst the cordon closes 22 business, the impact is felt much further across the City Centre. The cordon effectively creates 4 cul-de-sacs within which the footfall is significantly lower, and this is translating into consumer spending being down by up to 70% in the worst affected areas. There is also concern that the continuation of the situation may lead to fundamental long-term changes in user habits within the city centre.
- 5.38 As can be seen from the above, in order to maintain the economic success of the City Centre, there is an urgency to reduce the safety cordon as soon as practicable, to allow those businesses affected by the cordon to fully open again and to significantly increase and drive footfall specifically within this part of, but also across the whole City Centre. This is of paramount importance for economic impact in the run up to Christmas when high street spending is significant, upon which many businesses rely for year-round economic success. As stated above, based on the currently submitted information, the cordon cannot be reduced for health and safety reasons until such time as the works proposed by the application have taken place.

Conditions

- 5.39 In view of the structural vulnerability of the building, an informative encourages the works to be undertaken as soon as practicable (see informative 1 below).
- 5.40 The works are to be limited to above the fourth-floor cornice line in the areas shown in yellow as set out in the application (condition 2).
- 5.41 The upper part of the building is to be recorded and dismantled in accordance with a satisfactory methodology. An updated methodology has been submitted in response to advice from HED. The methodology will be secured by condition (condition 3).
- 5.42 HED has requested that salvaged materials are stored in a single, secure and covered, frost and damp free storage facility. Access should be afforded to the stored materials at all reasonable times (condition 4).

- 5.43 Access should be afforded to the City Council (or HED on behalf of the City Council) to oversee and review the works (condition 5).
- 5.44 HED has requested that the internal structure, some of which may be historically significant, is recorded and reviewed as part of the removal process. This will be dealt with at a later phase of the process.
- 5.45 These conditions have been agreed in principle with the applicant.

Summary of Recommendation:

Having regard to the assessment set out in this report, it is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to grant Listed Building Consent subject to conditions. In addition, informative 1 advises that the works are commenced as soon as practically possible.

Conditions (provisional):

1. The works hereby granted must commence within 1 year from the date of this consent.

Reason: As required by Section 94 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
2. The works hereby granted shall be limited to the areas shown yellow on Drawing Number 4518-HBD-EX-002-01 received on 05 October 2018.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to the extent of the works.
3. Unless the City Council grants its prior written approval to any variation, the works hereby granted shall be carried out, as far as is practicable, in accordance with the Revised Sinclair Johnston Methodology Statement for Initial Remedial Works at Appendix 1 of the Outline Conservation Statement received on 18 October 2018 (dated October 2018 and produced by Hall Black Douglas).

Reason: In the interests of the conservation and potential restoration of the building.
4. Unless the City Council grants its prior written approval to any variation, the dismantled materials shall be stored in a secure and covered environment that is dry, frost and damp free. The materials shall be stored on pallets or similar above floor level. Access to the stored materials shall be afforded to the City Council at all reasonable times.

Reason: To preserve and safeguard the dismantled materials.
5. Access shall be afforded to the City Council during the works at all reasonable times.

Reason: To ensure compliance with the methodology and provide further specialist advice on the works as required, in the interests of safeguarding the special architectural and historic qualities of the Listed Building.

Informatives

1. Despite the timeframe for implementation set out at Condition 1, due to the vulnerable structural condition of the building and the severe economic and community impact of the fire, Belfast City Council expect the works to commence as soon as practically possible following the issue of this consent.

Notification to Department (if relevant): Not required

Representations from Elected members: None

Annex A – Copy of Listing description for Bank Buildings (ref. HB26/50/15)

Historic Building Details

HB Ref No:
HB26/50/153

Extent of Listing:
Shop

Date of Construction:
1880 - 1899

Address :
Bank Buildings Castle Place Belfast Co Antrim BT1 1BL

Townland:
Town Parks

Survey 2:
B1

Date of Listing:
27/06/1980 00:00:00

Date of De-listing:

Current Use:
Shop

Former Use
Bank

Conservation Area:
Yes

Industrial Archaeology:
No

Vernacular:
No

Thatched:
No

Monument:
No

Derelict:
No

OS Map No:

130-13

IG Ref:J3378 7430

Owner Category

Commercial

Exterior Description and Setting

Attached symmetrical multi-bay five-storey with attic red sandstone and polished granite classically-styled department store, built between 1885 and 1900, to the designs of W.H. Lynn. Rectangular on plan facing east onto Castle Place with multi-bay side elevations fronting onto Castle Street and Bank Street. Largely gutted by bomb damage in 1975, extensively refurbished c.1979. Replacement natural slate half-hipped roof to the front block set behind balustrade parapet with tall stepped profiled chimneystacks (or ventilation shafts) rising from the four corners. Replacement mansard type roof to the remainder with natural slate steep pitches to the attic storey having dormer windows. Copper-lined segmental-pedimented clock dormer breaking through the parapet to the centre of the front elevation with a metal clock face set in a decoratively carved stone surround and a cartouche to the pediment stating completion date '1900'. Dormer flanked by scrolled brackets set on swagged panels and flanked by a pair of urns. To the centre of both side elevations to the front block is a further segmental-pedimented dormer with cartouches to the pediment and paired windows framed by Doric pilasters. All dormers have slated cheeks with dentilled cornices. The roofs to the side elevations have segmental-pedimented dormers with single-pane timber sash windows. To the west end of the south elevation is a tripartite attic block having oculi with swag surrounds, dentilled cornice and surmounted by two chimneystacks. Red sandstone ashlar walling with polished red granite walling to the ground floor and to the first floor of the front block and polished black granite plinth course. Continuous cornice over the ground and first floors with a dentilled and modillioned crown cornice over the third floor and a further dentilled cornice over the attic storey. Square-headed window openings with single-pane timber sash windows to the side elevations, bipartite timber casement to the front elevation and large display windows to the ground floor. Symmetrical front east elevation is six windows side with a series of paired window openings to the attic storey having torus moulded surrounds flanked by squat Doric pilasters having a scallop detail to the base. Giant Corinthian order of polished red granite engaged columns frame the second and third floor windows set into sandstone Doric pilasters with fluted egg-and-dart capitals. Decorative lintel panels between the second and third floors having floral festoons and supported on quarter-engaged Doric pilasters. The two central windows are divided by a polished granite Doric pilaster with the lintel panel having gilded lettering; 'THE BANK BUILDINGS'. The first floor has a central large thermal window with glazed oculi to the spandrels flanked by polished granite pilasters rising to the full-span cornice and corresponding to the principal entrance below. To either side is a large bipartite fixed-pane display window. Central double-height glazed entrance screen to the ground floor and shop display window to either side all framed by channel-rusticated polished granite Doric pilasters with the cornice rising slightly above the entrance having a scrolled centrepiece and a bronze plaque to the fascia stating; 'ROBERTSON. LEDLIE. FERGUSON & Co.Ltd.'. South side elevation is twenty windows wide

with the easternmost three windows continuing the detailing of the front elevation. The second and third floor windows are framed by Giant Ionic order sandstone pilasters. Architrave surrounds to second and third floor windows with projecting moulded sills supported on brackets. The first floor windows are deeply recessed with a continuous moulded sill course having raised-and-fielded apron panels and splayed outer sills. The ground floor has a series of large display windows (as per front elevation) with ceramic tiled walls. Rear elevation abutted by a six-storey office building built c.1950. North side elevation has the three easternmost windows detailed as per front elevation with the following four windows (now blind) detailed as per the south side elevation. The central section to this elevation is rebuilt in red brick c.1980 with the remainder detailed as per south elevation built in red brick with red sandstone ashlar ground floor and mouldings. All windows to this elevation are blind with the ground floor having ceramic tiled bays to the eastern half. Setting Located on a prominent city centre site at the junction of Royal Avenue, Castle Place, Castle Street and Donegall Place and facing east. Roof: Natural slate RWG: internal Walling : Red sandstone ashlar / polished red granite Windows: timber

Architects

Lynn, William Henry

Historical Information

The Bank Buildings, situated at Castle Place and facing towards High Street, is a five-storey turn-of-the-century red sandstone building, designed in 1895 by William Henry Lynn (1829-1915). Lynn, one of the preeminent Belfast-based architects of the late-19th and early-20th centuries, was a former pupil of Charles Lanyon with whom he entered into partnership in 1854 (forming the firm, Lanyon & Lynn); the partnership was dissolved in 1872 after which time Lynn established an independent practise. The Bank Buildings is amongst Lynn's later contracts; construction of the building commenced as early as 1885 when Lynn rebuilt part of the former buildings on the site in Dumfries Stone. Lynn continued to build along Castle Street; however the main block facing onto Castle Place was not constructed until 1899-1900. Between 1885 and 1900 all of the construction was undertaken by James Henry & Sons of the Crumlin Road (Irish Builder, 1888, p. 16; 1900, p. 394; Dictionary of Irish Architects). In 1885 the initial block of the Bank Buildings was valued at £650; this was raised to £2,050 by 1891 when the last stage of construction ceased prior to the work of 1899-1900. In 1901, with the completion of Lynn's monumental classical facade, the total value of the Bank Buildings was set at £4,000. In that year the Belfast Street Directory noted that the Bank Buildings were occupied by Robertson, Ledlie, Ferguson & Co. Ltd., textile merchants who utilised the Bank Buildings as a commercial warehouse; the directory described the firm as 'wholesale and retail linen merchants, woollen drapers, silk merchants and general house furnishers' (Belfast Street Directory – 1901). Robert, Ledlie, Ferguson & Co. Ltd., continued to trade from the Bank Buildings until the 1970s; by the cancellation of the Annual Revisions in 1930 the value of the building had been increased to £5,750, partially due to the incorporation of buildings on Castle Street in 1925. In 1932 the foundations of the building were repaired whilst alterations to the shop fronts were carried out in 1938 by Hobart & Heron; as a result of the repair work the value of the Bank Buildings was increased to £8,000 by the First General Revaluation of property in Northern Ireland (1935). No further valuation of the structure was undertaken for over two decades due to the outbreak of the Second World War; during the Belfast Blitz of 1941 the Bank Buildings narrowly avoided demolition by falling bombs which levelled much of neighbouring High Street. Despite the war the Bank Buildings continued to operate; by 1943 the commercial property was utilised as a general store, furniture warehouse, linen emporium and had a clothing department for ladies and gents (Belfast Street Directory – 1943). In the aftermath of the war an extension was added on Castle Street in 1952 and as a result the Bank Buildings were increased

in value to £10,520 under the second general revaluation which ended in 1972. The Bank Buildings derives its name from Cunningham's Bank which was founded in 1787 but only operated as a bank until its closure in 1798; Patton states that the former bank was converted into a number of dwellings, one of which was utilised by the Bishop of Down as his palace (prior to moving to St. Patrick's Presbytery in the early-19th century – see HB26/50/158). In 1855 the dwellings were replaced by a four-storey Italianate building by Hawkins, Robertson & Co., a textile firm that became Robertson, Ledlie, Ferguson & Co. Ltd. in the late-19th century. The current building, therefore, is the third known structure to occupy the current site (Patton, p. 55). Already established as one of the most successful architects of the Victorian-era, Brett states that in his later years, W. H. Lynn 'was determined to produce a building more appropriate to the new century [and] the Bank Buildings do indeed constitute a bridge to the twentieth century,' made possible by the employment of a steel-framed construction method. Brett commended the 'successful compromise between a classical style in the upper part of the building and a great expanse of plate glass below [however] the effect is somewhat spoiled' by the way the Corinthian columns were installed; 'a most alarming and vertiginous feature of an otherwise dignified design' (Brett, p. 63). Larmour, writing in 1987, went further in criticising the design, calling Lynn's Bank Buildings 'an ungainly looking stone brute in a heavy classical mode [which is] not the pioneering steel framed structure that has been sometimes claimed; rather it is in the conventional manner of the time with cast iron piers inside.' The clock, which was added upon the buildings completion in 1900, was installed by Sharman D. Neill, a local clockmaker who later had offices at 36-38 Donegall Place (HB26/50/031). Larmour states that the last major block added to the Bank Buildings was the modern six-storey extension on Castle Street which was added in 1952 and was designed by Hobart & Heron who had previously undertaken alteration and repair work at the site (Larmour, p. 65). Robert, Ledlie, Ferguson & Co. Ltd. continued to operate from the site until 1969 when their shares were sold to House of Fraser; however the site was acquired by Boots in 1973 when the company bought over House of Fraser. The facade of the Bank Buildings was damaged in 1975 when three bombs exploded outside the building, resulting in a fire that damaged much of the interiors. The building was not repaired and reopened until 1979 when the Dublin clothing firm, Primark, took over the property and restored the facade and the fire damage. The Bank Buildings were listed in 1980 and have continued to be occupied by Primark for over three decades.

References Primary Sources 1. PRONI OS/6/1/61/1 – First Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1832-33 2. PRONI OS/6/1/61/2 – Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1858 3. PRONI OS/6/1/61/3 – Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1901-02 4. PRONI OS/6/1/61/4 – Fourth Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1931 5. PRONI OS/6/1/61/5 – Fifth Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1938 6. PRONI VAL/12/B/43/E/1-24 – Annual Revisions 1862-1930 7. PRONI VAL/3/B/3/18 – First General Revaluation of Northern Ireland 1935 8. PRONI VAL/4/B/7/36 – Second General Revaluation of Northern Ireland 1956-72 9. Belfast Street Directories (1880-1943) 10. Irish Builder, Vol. 30 (15 Jan 1888); Vol. 42 (15 Jun 1900); Vol. 80 (14 May 1938) 11. First Survey Record – HB26/50/153 (1979) 12. First Survey Image – HB26/50/153 (1980) Secondary Sources 1. Brett, C. E. B., 'Buildings of Belfast: 1700-1914' Belfast: Friar's Bush Press, 1985. 2. Larmour, P., 'Belfast: An illustrated architectural guide' Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1987. 3. Patton, M., 'Central Belfast: An historical gazetteer' Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1993. Online Resources 1. Dictionary of Irish Architects - <http://www.dia.ie>

Criteria for Listing

Architectural Interest

A. Style B. Proportion C. Ornamentation D. Plan Form H-. Alterations detracting from building J. Setting

Historic Interest

X. Local Interest V. Authorship

Evaluation

Symmetrical multi-bay five-storey with attic red sandstone and polished granite classically-styled department store, built between 1885 and 1900, to the designs of W.H. Lynn. Rectangular on plan facing east onto Castle Place with multi-bay side elevations fronting onto Castle Street and Bank Street. Occupying the site of a former bank founded in the late eighteenth-century, Bank Buildings replaced a four-storey Italianate bank dating from 1855. Often cited as Ireland's first steel-framed building, the structural method is clearly expressed through the grid-like fenestration and high window to wall ratio, while the decorative stonework is still clearly of the late nineteenth-century. This is a fine example of High Victorian style reflecting the aspirations of Belfast as a mercantile centre well as a testimonial to the achievements of W.H. Lynn.

General Comments

Date of Survey

29 November 2012