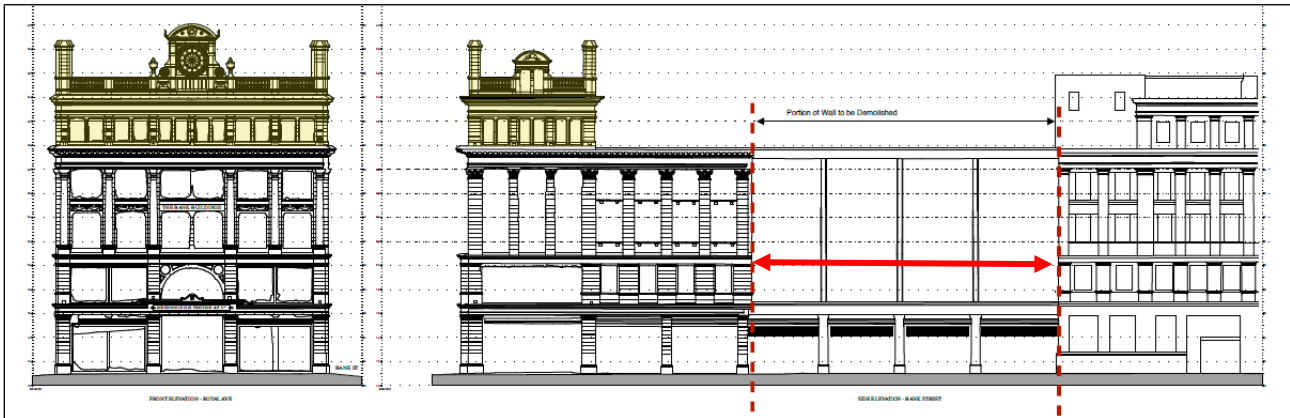


Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

Summary	
Committee Meeting Date: 9th April 2019	
Application ID:	LA04/2019/0578/LBC
Proposal: Conservation led works to Bank Buildings involving the removal of the 1970s brick wall insertion from the Bank Street façade.	Location: Bank Building (bounded by Castle Street Bank Street and Royal Avenue) Royal Avenue Belfast
Referral Route: Involves partial dismantling of a listed building.	
Recommendation:	Grant consent with conditions
Applicant Name and Address: Primark Limited PO Box 644 47 Mary Street Dublin Dublin 1	Agent Name and Address: Turley Hamilton House 3 Joy Street Belfast BT2 8LE
<p>Executive Summary: This application relates to Bank Buildings, a category B1 listed building located within the City Centre at the junction of Castle Street and Royal Avenue. The site is located within Belfast 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 buildings was severely damaged by a fire that started on 28 August 2018. A significant proportion of the internal structure was burnt away and collapsed or was severely damaged. The external facades were also subject to damage. A safety cordon has been established in the interests of public safety around the building and has now been reduced to allow accessibility by pedestrians throughout the city centre, although restriction remain in place for vehicular traffic. A previous conservation led listed building consent to take down the façade above the fourth floor cornice line on the Bank Street façade, stabilisation and weatherproofing was approved and has subsequently been implemented.</p> <p>This application seeks to demolish a portion of the external wall on Bank Street which was constructed in the 1970s following bomb damage to the building. The portion of wall to be removed is finished in red brick.</p> <p>Historic Environment Division has raised no objection to the proposal subject to condition.</p> <p>No representations have been received regarding this proposal to date.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u> It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to approve the application, including finalisation of the wording of the conditions.</p>	

**Consultations:****Consultation Type****Consultee****Response**

Statutory

Historic Environment
Division (HED)No objection subject to
condition

Non Statutory

Building Control Belfast City
Council

No Objection

Representations: None Received**1.0 Description of the Site and Proposal**

1.1 Bank Buildings is a grade B1 listed building located in the city centre at the junction of Royal Avenue and Castle Street. The building fronts onto Royal Avenue to the east and is bounded by Castle Street to the south and Bank Street to the north. It is attached to Nos. 29-35 Castle Street (formerly 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 (Tecso), 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 Building is a multi-bay classically styled five-storey building finished in red sandstone and polished granite. It was constructed between 1880 and 1899. Bank Buildings was designed by William Henry Lynn. Lynn, one of the preminent 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. 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 an enlarged floor space for the Primark retail store. Following the fire, Primark re-opened its store in the Commonwealth House extension in December 2018.

1.5 Bank Buildings was listed in 1980 (ref: HB26/50/153).

1.6 The building was recently severely damaged by a fire that started on 28 August 2018. A significant proportion of the internal structure either collapsed or was severely damaged. The external facades were also subject to damage. A previous conservation led listed building consent to take down the façade above the fourth floor cornice line on the Bank Street façade, stabilisation and weatherproofing has been implemented.

1.7 This application seeks Listed Building Consent for conservation led works to remove a section of 1970s brick wall along the Bank Street Elevation which was constructed in the 1970s following bomb damage to the building. This is to facilitate the next phase in the building's potential restoration, which involves removal of the 1970s internal frame (works which does not require listed building consent). This internal demolition and strip out includes the entire floors and frame constructed in the 1970s following bomb damage. The 1970s portion of external wall is structurally dependent on the internal and the structural report indicates that the external wall must be demolished in tandem with the internal frame.

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

- Design and Access Statement
- Hall Black Douglas Conservation Statement (Hall Black Douglas LBC 2 Application) incorporating a Structural Report and Methodology Statement for demolition

2.0 Planning History

2.1 LA04/2018/2393/LBC – 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, Bank Buildings (bounded by Castle Street Bank Street and Royal Avenue), Royal Avenue, Belfast. Consent granted 26/10/18 and works have been completed.

2.2 Recent planning applications for the refurbishment and rear extension (Commonwealth House) are set out below:

2.3 Z/2013/0530/F - Refurbishment of existing retail premises and extension to include the redevelopment (demolition and new build extension) of adjacent building including all associated site infrastructure works, ands bound by Royal Avenue Castle Street, Bank Street and Bank Square including Primark at Bank Buildings and former Commonwealth House at 29-43 Castle Street. Permission granted 02/10/13.

2.4 Z/2013/0527/LBC - Refurbishment of existing retail premises (Bank Buildings) and extension to include the redevelopment (demolition and new build extension) of adjacent building including all associated site infrastructure works, Lands bound by Royal Avenue, Castle Street, Bank Street and Bank Square including Primark at Bank Buildings and former Commonwealth House at 29-43 Castle Street, Belfast, BT1 1GH. Consent granted

3.0 Consultation Responses

3.1 The application was advertised in the local press on 22nd March 2019. Department for Communities Historic Environment Division (HED) was formally consulted along with Building Control and Economic Development Unit. The formal consultation period ends on 05 April 2019.

3.2 The Planning Service has received the following consultation responses.

3.3 Historic Environment Division

Content with proposal subject to condition:

'The application (LA04/2019/0578/LBC) for conservation led works to Bank Buildings involving the removal of the 1970s brick wall insertion from the Bank Street façade. LA04/2019/0578/LBC impacts upon HB2650153 Bank (Primark) Buildings, Castel Place, Belfast 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 building, and on the basis of the information provided, advises:

HED is content with the proposal subject to a condition regarding the finish of a replacement wall. Condition 3 set out below requires that a replacement shall be erected within 2years from the date of the consent subject to a details to be agreed with the Council and HED.

3.4 Building Control (Belfast City Council)

Building Control is satisfied that this modern façade, constructed of cavity brickwork and blockwork, is structurally dependent on the now fire-damaged steel frame which is built into, and provides lateral support to the façade. The need to remove the fire damage steel frame may be regarded as sufficient structural justification for removal and replacement of the 1970's façade.

3.5 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 created 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 created 4 cul-de-sacs in the city centre. Pedestrians needed to undertake significant diversions to navigate the city centre however this improved on 3rd December 2018 and, 27th February and 26th March 2019 when areas of the cordon were reduced.
 - On 03 December 2018 a temporary walkway was erected from Donegall Place to Royal Avenue allowing 8 of the 22 organisations to reopen if they decided to do so. 2 of these 8

businesses decided not to reopen for various reasons with 1 of them sharing it was due to their lack of confidence in the footfall returning.

- On 08th December 2018 Primark opened the new extension in Castle Street which raised footfall not only in Castle Street but in the surrounding areas. Some business reported an uplift in business but not to the same level prior to the fire.
- On 27 February 2019 a walkway was erected from Fountain Street to Castle Street allowing 10 businesses to reopen if they wished. The offices have since relocated and decided not to re-open in Norwich Union House. 2 retail businesses also decided not to reopen and are trading from other locations.
- On 26 March 2019 a walkway will opened from Castle Street to Donegall Place allowing 3 businesses to reopen; actual opening dates to begin trading will vary from 26 March into April.
- To understand the overall economic impact, consideration also needs to be given to how consumer behaviours and shopping patterns of city centre users have altered because of the cordon. It is likely that user habits within the city centre could have fundamentally changed.
- In terms of footfall, figures for certain areas of the city are more positive as set out in the table below. However, the figures demonstrate that the absence of the Castle Place/Donegall junction negatively impacted upon footfall levels in the month after the fire with some areas reporting a reduction of almost 50%; this has now tapered off but is still significant (almost 25% on Royal Avenue). The table below provides an analysis of city centre footfall figures:

Table 1: Footfall Figures

Mth 1 (31.12.18-27.01.19)	Corn Market	Donegall Place	Fountain Street	Ann Street	Royal Avenue
This Month	156,559	141,663	127,206	131,150	91,498
Previous Month	275,802	237,966	193,401	194,658	172,021
Previous Year (2018)	137,899	137,968	90,063	86,612	121,153
Year on Year Change %	+13.5%	+2.7%	+41.2%	+51.4%	-24.5%

Source: Belfast One BID

- Bank Street will remain closed for 2-3 years during the Bank Buildings rebuild which have and will continue to have a negative impact on the businesses in the Bank Square area.
- The Council is working closely with public and private partners to develop activities to drive footfall into the area and to encourage spend. This will include short-term interventions as well as longer-term plans to build and maintain vibrancy in the city centre.

4.0 Representations

4.1 No representations have been received to date. Any representations received will be reported to Members via the Late Items report.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 Regional Planning Policy

- Regional development Strategy 2035
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)
- Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage

5.2 Local Planning Policy

- Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001
- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP) 2004
- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015

6.0 Planning Assessment

Legislative Requirements

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

6.2 Section 91(2) of the Act requires that the 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 when it possesses.

The Structural Condition of Bank Buildings

6.3 Banks Buildings was significantly damaged following the fire that started on 28 August 2018. The structural condition of the building following the fire is a key consideration on the assessment of this application. As a result of the fire a significant proportion of the internal structure has either collapsed or is severely damaged. Since the previous grant of Listed Building Consent (Ref: LA04/2018/2393/LBC) in October 2018, removal of the external façade above the 4th floor cornice line and stabilisation works in the form of support towers of shipping containers and weatherproofing have taken place.

6.4 For public safety reasons vehicular access on Royal Avenue, Donegall Place and Castle Street remains prohibited however, pedestrian access is no longer restricted following stabilisation works allowing the free flow of pedestrian movements throughout the city centre. At present the building remains in a vulnerable position whilst its restoration is awaited.

6.5 The next phase of the works is the removal of the 1970s floors and frame. These works do not require listed building consent because they do not involve the alteration or removal of historic fabric and therefore they would not affect the character of the listed building of special architectural or historic interest. The Hall Black Douglas report states that these works are due to commence following completion of the façade retention scheme. The application for listed building consent before the Planning Committee seeks permission to demolish the 1970s section of external wall to Bank Street to facilitate the removal of the 1970s internal frame. The section of wall proposed to be demolished was built in the 1970s following bomb damage to the building and at that time a significant portion of the internal building was also reconstructed. At that time of reconstruction the building was not listed.

6.6 The removal of the internal frame due to its severe damage in the fire would result in instability of the 1970s portion of the external wall as the latter is structurally dependent on the internal frame. The structural report indicates that the external wall must be demolished in tandem with the internal

frame. Building Control has verified this position and state that the wall proposed to be demolished is structurally dependent on the fire damaged steel frame which is built into and provides lateral support to the wall.

6.7 In addition, the Hall Black Douglas report indicates there is a need for site access from Bank Street and a possible urgent need for access to NIE substations and temporary connections should issues arise with the underground supply during future building works. At present the container buttresses block the Bank Street thoroughfare, however, demolition of the 1970s portion of external wall will provide access if required.

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

6.8 Bank Buildings is a Category B1 Listed Building, listed for its special architectural and historic qualities including its symmetrical multi-bay, red sandstone and polished granite classical style reflecting High Victorian style.

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

- Demolition of all internal structures down to the top of the existing ground floor slab
- Removal of all fixtures and fittings
- Clearing of all demolition arisings and debris and removal from site
- Removal of the wall by hand demolition from top down
- Weatherproofing of internal elevations

6.10 Hand demolition will ensure that the walls either side of the 1970s insertion are protected from damage. The methodology statement indicates that during the demolition phase the condition of the existing façade will be inspected and monitored and that careful consideration will be given to any existing item that may be classed as having conservation value. Such items will be carefully removed and inspected to determine whether they will be retained. If retained, such items will be logged, palletted and transported to the storage facility.

6.11 Policy BH 10 of PPS 6 (Demolition of a Listed Building) relates to proposals to demolish a Listed Building (either in full or in part) and sets out a presumption in favour of the retention of listed buildings. However, in exceptional circumstances consent can be granted where the building cannot be retained in its original or a reasonably modified form. The Policy confirms 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.

6.12 The heritage value of Bank Buildings and surrounding listed buildings in the immediate vicinity remains at risk given the current state of Bank Buildings. Removal of the 1970s wall is required to enable further stabilisation and allow redevelopment to commence. It is considered that these represent exceptional grounds for the removal of the 1970s section of the external wall on the Bank Street Elevation.

6.13 Policy BH 8 of PPS 6 (Extension or Alteration to a Listed Building) relates to proposals to extend or alter a Listed Building. The works are considered necessary to facilitate the long-term retention of the listed building. The section of wall proposed to be demolished was constructed in the 1970s using a red brick finish and is not part of the original building constructed in 1899-1900. The proposal allows the essential character, setting and features of special interest of the listed building to remain.

6.14 HED has raised no objection to the proposal and has advised that the 'existing brickwork is of an inappropriate finish, and a replacement brick with a more mellow red brick will be a betterment. This brick work was installed after bomb damage in 1975 which required the reconstruction of this section of the elevation. The building was not listed until 1980'. The 1970s wall cannot be removed indefinitely because a long-term "hole" in the façade would be harmful to the character and special qualities of the listed building. The Council is in pre-application discussions with the applicant about the future of the building. The façade will be rebuilt as part of any future scheme. However, it is considered necessary to impose a long-stop date by which time the façade will need to be re-built. It is considered that 2 years is a reasonable timeframe to allow redevelopment.

Public Safety

6.15 The erection of stabilising towers has enabled pedestrian routes to be re-opened providing complete accessibility throughout the City centre.

Benefits for the Community

6.16 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.

6.17 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.'

6.18 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.

6.19 The works that have taken place to date i.e. removal of façade above the fourth floor cornice line on the Bank Street elevation and stabilisation works have enabled a phased reduction to the cordon (see below) allowing the majority of businesses affected by the fire to re-open, although some business have chosen not to re-open and others have relocated.

- On 03 December 2018 a temporary walkway was erected from Donegall Place to Royal Avenue allowing 8 of the 22 organisations to reopen. 2 of these businesses decided not to reopen.
- On 08 December 2018 Primark opened its new extension in Castle Street which raised footfall not only in Castle Street but in surrounding areas. Some businesses reported an uplift but not to the same level prior to the fire.
- On 27 February 2019 a walkway was erected from Fountain Street to Castle Street allowing 10 businesses to reopen if they wished. The offices at Norwich Union House have since relocated and decided not to reopen.
- On 26 March 2019 a walkway opened from Castle Street to Donegall Place allowing 3 businesses to reopen.

6.20 The Council's Economic Development Unit has indicated that Bank Street is likely to remain closed for the next 2-3 years during the rebuild which will continue to have a negative impact on businesses in the Bank Square area. The Council is working closely with public and private partners to develop activities to drive footfall into the area and encourage spend. This will include

short term interventions as well as longer term plans to build and maintain the vibrancy of the city centre.

6.21 Given the continued objective to drive economic vibrancy in the city centre this application is a further step towards the economic regeneration of the area and the restoration of Bank Buildings.

Summary of Recommendation:

It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to approve the application, including finalisation of the wording of the conditions. In addition, informative 1 advises that the works are commenced as soon as practically possible.

Conditions:

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 portion of wall to be demolished as shown on Drawing No. 02 received on 14 March 2019.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to the extent of works.

3. Within 2 years from the date of this consent a replacement wall shall be constructed either in accordance with a valid planning permission and listed building consent, or in accordance with details that shall have first been submitted and approved in writing by the Council.

Reason: To protect the quality and integrity of the listed building is

4. Unless the 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 Keltbray Specialist Contractor Methodology Statement for Demolition at Appendix 2 of the Hall Black Douglas LBC2 Application report received on 14 March 2019.

Reason: In the interests of the conservation and potential restoration of the building.

5. Access shall be afforded to the 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 and in the interests of safeguarding the special architectural and historic qualities of the listed building.

Informative

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

Notification to Department (if relevant)

Date of Notification to Department: Not required

ANNEX	
Date Valid	14th March 2019
Date First Advertised	22 nd March 2019
Date Last Advertised	
Drawing Numbers and Title	
Drawing No. 01 – Location Map	
Drawing No. 02 – LBC2 Demolitions	