

Planning Committee

Development Management Report	
Committee Date: 13 th October 2026	
Application ID: LA04/2024/1651/F & LA04/2024/1735/DCA	
Proposal: Partial demolition of existing rear return, construction of a replacement 3 storey rear return, re-roofing of original front building along with facade alterations.	Location: 79 Somerton Road, Belfast, BT15 4DG
Referral Route: Councillor referral under paragraph 3.8.1 of the Scheme of Delegation (request for referral of application to Committee from an Elected Member – Cllr Whyte)	
Recommendation: Approval subject to conditions	
Applicant Name and Address: Chris Graham Choice Housing Ireland Ltd 37-41 May Street Belfast BT1 4DN	Agent Name and Address: Andrew Beattie The FCM Partnership B1.13 Portview Trade Centre 310 Newtownards Road Belfast BT4 1HE
Date Valid: 16 th October 2024	
Target Date: 29 th January 2025	
Contact Officer: Lisa Walshe, Planning Manager (Development Management)	
Background: The application site is residential facility operated by Choice. The proposal seeks demolition consent for the removal of a 2.5 storey rear return and full permission to replace it with new 2.5 storey return. Other proposed works include re-roofing the original building with new blue-black slates and construction of wheelchair ramp access. The application site comprises a 2.5 storey building set in ample sized, landscaped grounds. The key issues for consideration of the application are set out below. • Principle of development at this location • Scale massing and design • Impact on Somerton Conservation Area • Impact on neighbouring amenity • Waste management • Access and Transport • Demolition • Trees • Climate Change	

The Council has received 13 no third-party representations from 4 persons in respect of the full application, all of which are objections to the scheme. In respect of the demolition consent, 3 no representations have been received from 3 persons of which are also objections to the scheme. These are summarised in the main reports which can be found at **Appendices 1 and 2**.

No objections have been received from statutory consultees, subject to conditions.

Internally, the Council's Conservation Officer has objected to the demolition of the original return and raised concerns over the length of the proposed extension. Officers considered these points and concluded that due to the size of the site and generous existing natural and built screening, that the proposal is acceptable on balance.

The Council's Tree Officer has no objection in principle but suggested a revised landscaping plan that includes a more appropriate tree species with fastigate, narrow crowns along the common boundary with number 81 Somerton Road which can be secured via a negative condition.

The proposal is considered acceptable in respect of principle, access and parking, impact on amenity and other relevant land-use planning considerations. The proposal is considered compliant with relevant policies.

Under Sections 86 and 105(6) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, councils have a duty to notify the Department for Infrastructure where, prior to a decision being taken on an application for demolition consent in a conservation area, the council intends to grant consent and specialist conservation advice raises concern about the proposed demolition. In this case, DfI were duly notified on 7 August 2026 and replied on 21 August 2026, confirming that it does not consider it necessary for the demolition application to be referred to it for determination. A copy of the original delegated case officer reports are provided at **Appendices 1 and 2**. A copy of DfI's reply is appended (**Appendix 3**). The issuing of the decision was then on hold pending the expiry of the re-consultation period. In the meantime, a request was received from Councillor Whyte for the application to be referred to the Committee. The grounds for the request were concerns regarding the design, scale and impact on the Conservation Area.

Whilst concerns have been raised by neighbouring residents and the Council's Conservation Officer, the proposal has been amended three times to ensure an appropriate form of development including the introduction of a stepped building form responding to the site's natural topography, the incorporation of hipped roof elements to reduce perceived bulk and massing, and the reconfiguration of the bay projections to provide a more traditional rhythm and articulation across the elevations. The extension is necessary to facilitate the modernisation and ongoing operation of the residential care facility.

Recommendation

Having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission and Conservation Area Consent are 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 and any other issues that arise, provided the issues are not substantive.

APPENDICES

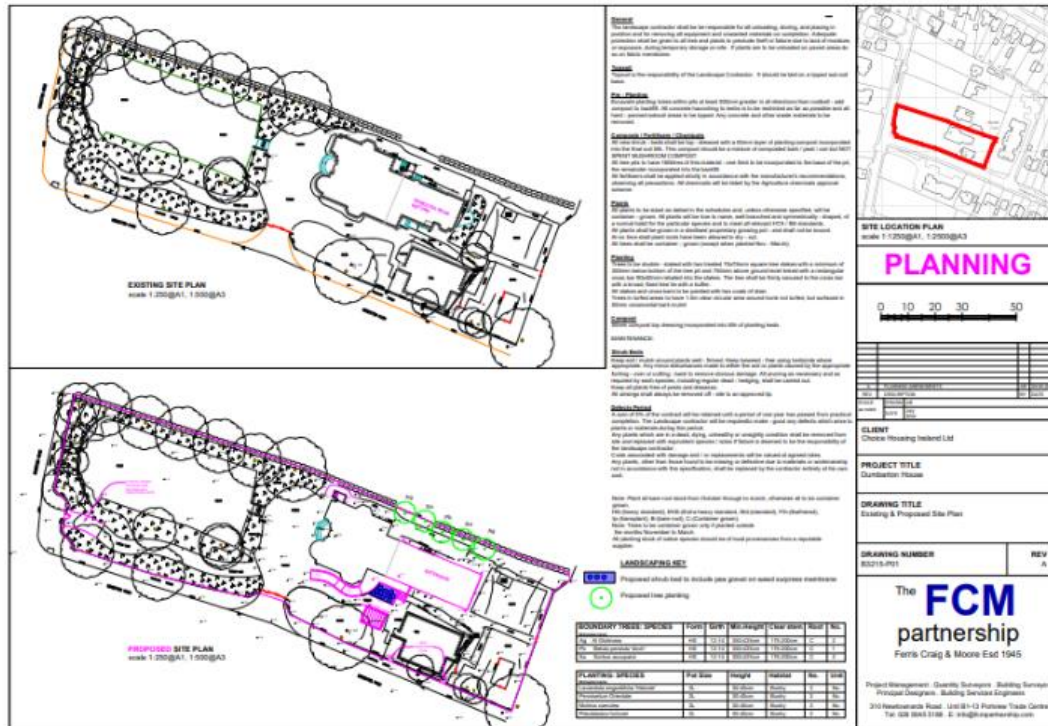
Appendix 1. Case Officer report for application ref. LA04/2024/1651/F

Appendix 2. Case Officer report for application ref. LA04/2024/1735/DCA

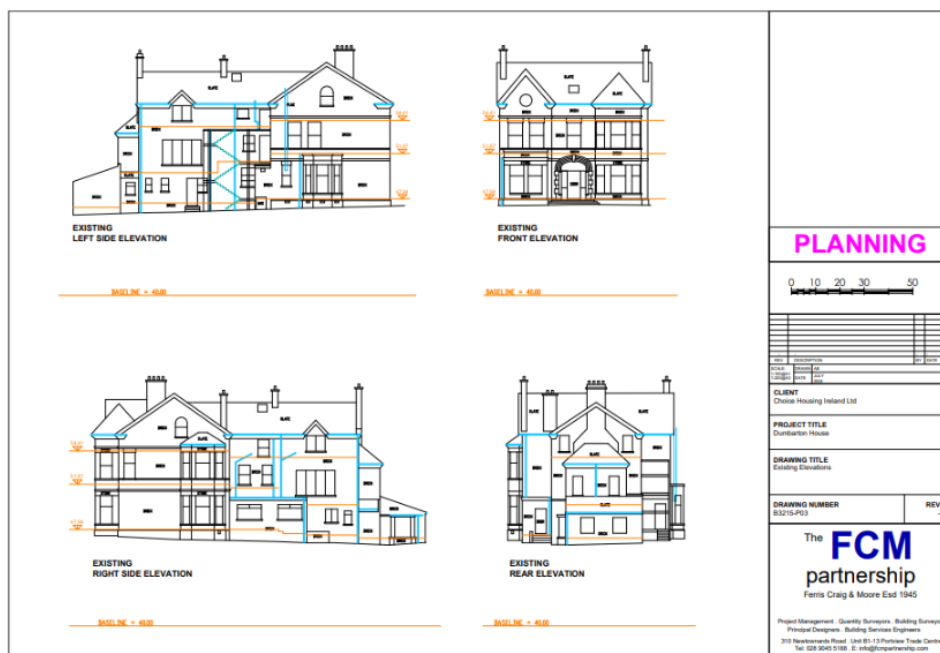
Appendix 3. Response from Department for Infrastructure Planning

DRAWINGS AND IMAGERY

Site Location Plan; Existing and Proposed Block Plans:

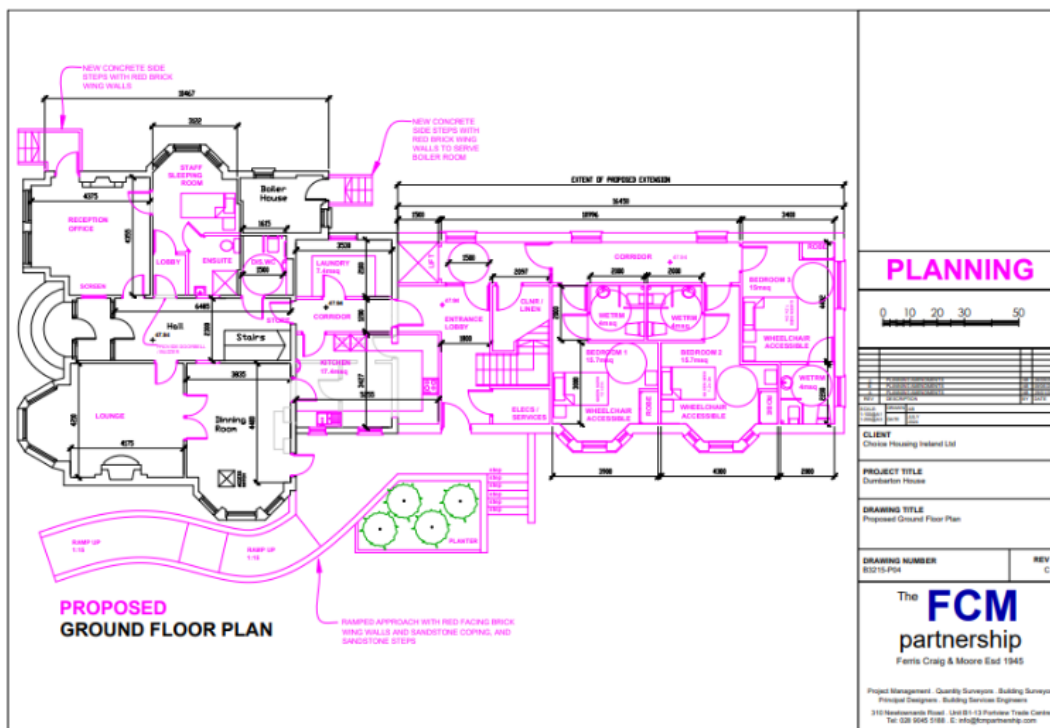


Existing Elevations:

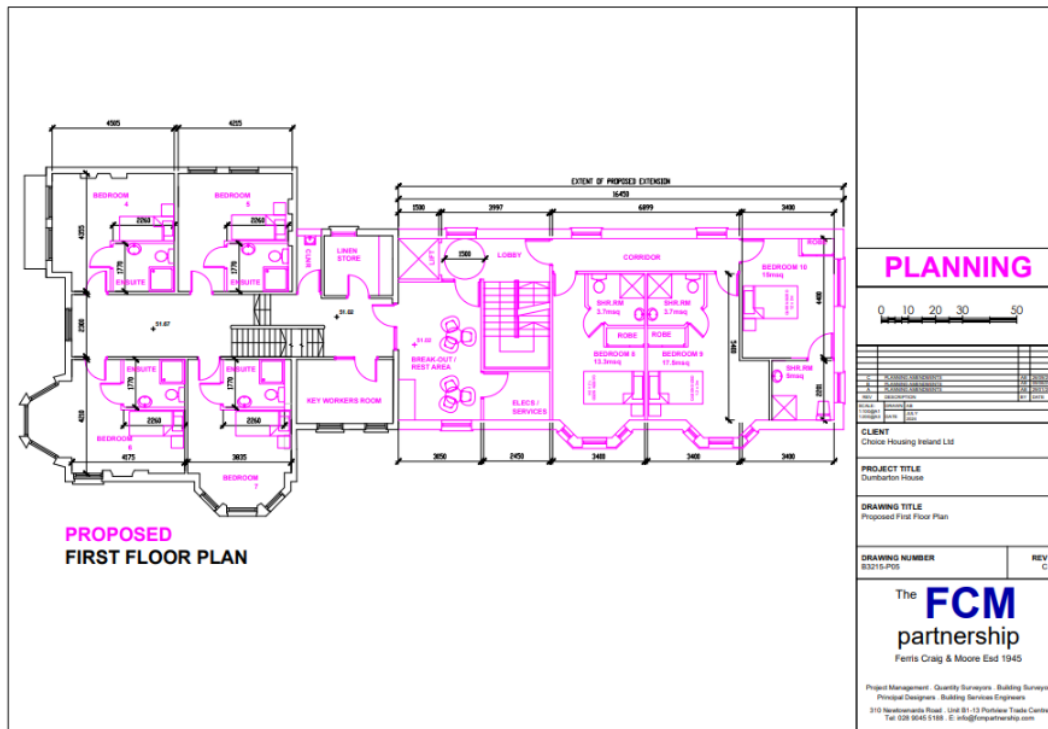


Proposed Elevations:

Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Second Floor Plan

