

Delegated Application

Development Management Officer Report	
Case Officer: Peter McKeeman	
Application ID: LA04/2024/1735/DCA	Target Date:
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
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 of Press Advertisement:	25 th October 2024
ES Requested: No	
Consultations: BCC Conservation	
Letters of Support	
Letters of Objection	3
Petitions	
Signatures	
Number of Petitions of Objection and signatures	
Summary of Issues: - Demolition	

Site Visit Report	
Site Location Plan:	
	
Date of Site Visit: 6 th November 2024	
Characteristics of the Site and Area	
The existing dwelling is a three bay, two storey dwelling faced in red brick (in Flemish bond) with gabled bay (with flat fronted bay window to the ground floor and roundel to apex) to the left-hand side, bowed bay to the right-hand side with conical roof. Sandstone lintels over openings. The building falls within the Somerton Road Conservation Area. The prevailing area is primarily residential.	
Description of 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.	
Representations	
The council received 3 letters of objection in total, from 2 different third parties. There are 12 objections on the corresponding full application, LA04/2024/1651/F. The 3 objections on this proposal relate primarily to the full application, rather than the demolition. However, the objections to the demolition are considered below.	

1. The proposal will contravene the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act, 1990. The irreversible destruction of the façade of a Victorian building designed by its neoclassical features would result in loss of local distinctiveness and inflict significant harm on the architectural heritage of the area.

Council Response: The concerns raised regarding the impact on the architectural heritage of the Somerton Conservation Area are noted. However, the proposal does not involve the demolition of the principal Victorian Villa which contributes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The original building, including its primary frontage, form, scale, roofscape and key architectural detailing, is to be retained. The demolition works are confined to later additions and the existing rear return. These elements are located to the rear of the property and make a considerably lesser contribution to the significance of the building and to the wider character of the Conservation Area than the principal historic structure. As such, the proposal would not result in the loss of defining architectural features of the original Victorian building.

Planning Assessment of Policy and Other Material Considerations

Section 45 (1) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that regard must be had to the local development plan (LDP), so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. Where regard is to be had to the LDP, Section 6 (4) of the Act requires that the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Demolition

The proposed development would see a small section of the existing return retained with the rest demolished and a longer return added. The conservation officer states that demolition of the existing return would result in a loss of local distinctiveness and detailing which is of significance in this case. The council have acknowledged these comments.

The proposal involves the demolition of the existing building and its replacement with a purpose-designed residential development. Whilst the council's conservation officer maintains concerns regarding the extent and scale of the proposed return, the scheme has been subject to significant amended throughout the assessment process. These revisions have included 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 replacement building would retain key characteristics of the prevailing built form within the conservation area through its scale, materials, roofscape and vertical emphasis. Whilst introducing a contemporary design of appropriate quality. While the existing building makes a positive contribution to the conservation area, BH2 requires consideration of both the contribution of the existing structure and the quality of the replacement development. In this case, the council considers that the architectural quality of the replacement building, together with the enhancements secured through the iterative design process, would ensure that the redevelopment of the site preserves and enhances the overall character and appearance of the conservation area. Accordingly, the demolition is considered to be in accordance with policy BH2.

Having regard to the retention of the principal historic building, the limited extent of the demolition proposed, and the quality of the replacement development, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the character of the Somerton Road Conservation Area.

Neighbour Notification Checked	N/A
Summary of Recommendation <i>Consent Granted</i>	
Conditions LA04/2024/1735/DCA 1. The demolition hereby granted must be begun within five years from the date of this consent. Reason: As required by Section 105 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Informatives 1. This application should be read in conjunction with LA04/2024/1651/F.	
Case Officer Signature: PMcK Date: 12/06/2026	
Appointed Officer Signature: Paul O'Reilly Date: 07/08/2026	