

## Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

Summary	
<b>Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022</b>	
<b>Application ID:</b> LA04/2022/0207/F	
<b>Proposal:</b> Proposed change of use from D1 use class (church halls) to B1(a) use class (offices) including ancillary storage (Amended Description)	<b>Location:</b> The Old School House, Townsend Street Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast
<b>Referral Route:</b> Planning Service recommendation to approve is contrary to a statutory consultee's recommendation - Northern Ireland Water (NIW) recommend refusal	
<b>Recommendation: Approval</b>	
<b>Applicant Name and Address:</b> Townsend Street Presbyterian Church 32 Townsend Street Belfast BT13 2ES	<b>Agent Name and Address:</b> Whittaker & Watt Architects 379 Antrim Road Newtownabbey BT36 5EB
<b>Executive Summary:</b>  <p>The proposal is for a change of use of listed building -The Old School House, which currently has use class D1 community. It is in use as a church hall associated with Townsend Street Presbyterian Church – which is also a listed building. The Old Schoolhouse is situated to the rear of the church. It is proposed the building is used for office space- use class - B1(a). The building is to be used as the administrative offices of the Ulster Orchestra.</p> <p>The building has 3no. floors. The ground floor includes offices, file storage, meeting room and other ancillary facilities, whilst the first floor contains open plan office space, training room and a breakout area. No office accommodation is included on the second floor. Occasionally the Ulster Orchestra will use the space to meet prior to rehearsal, which currently happens within the adjacent Church.</p> <p>Historic Environment Division raise no objection to the proposal.</p> <p>The application is brought to Committee as Northern Ireland Water object to the proposal as there is insufficient capacity at the wastewater treatment works. The applicant has submitted calculations which indicate there will be a reduction in the amount of water usage as a result of the 'change of use'. Officers consider that there would be no significant impact on the infrastructure from this development relative to its current use.</p> <p>There are no other objections to the proposed development.</p>	

The proposal is in keeping with development plan designations and with all other planning policy. The proposal complies with the SPPS -'listed buildings' (paragraph 6.13) and accords with policy BH7 of PPS6.

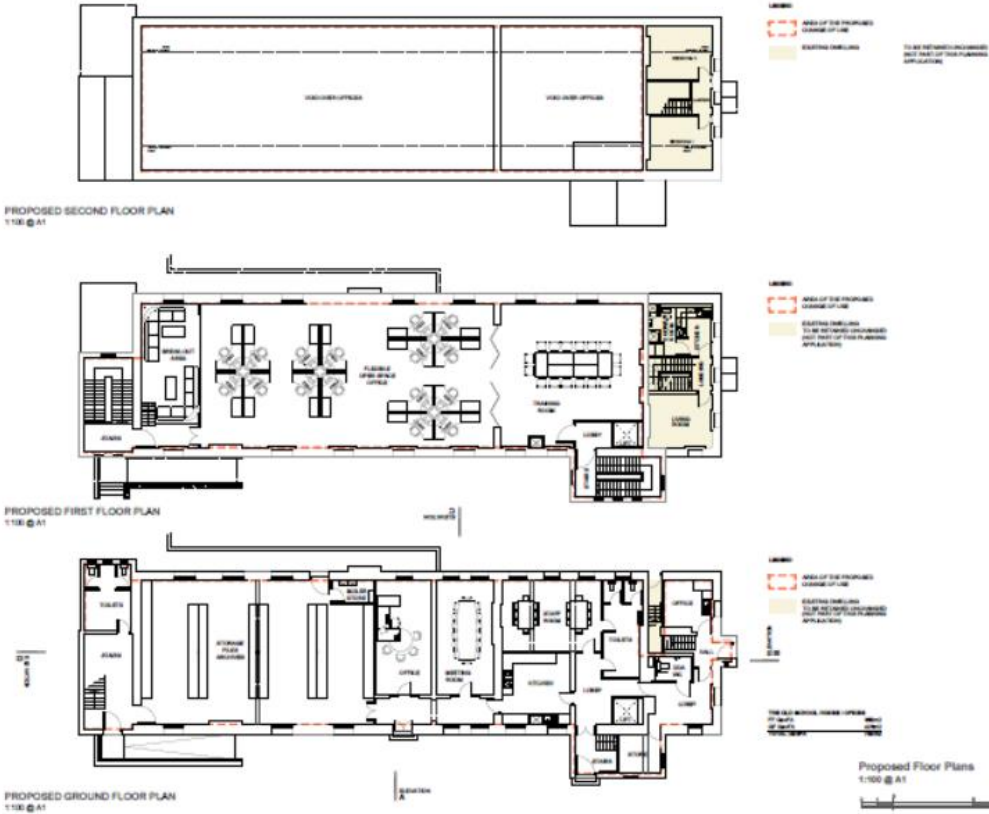
There is an application for 'Listed Building Consent' associated with this application (LA04/2022/0208/LBC).

**Recommendation**

Approval subject to Conditions with delegated authority sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of Conditions.

Case Officer Report

Site Location Plan



Consultations:

Consultation Type	Consultee	Response
Statutory	Historic Environment Division (HED)	Content
Statutory	DFI Roads - Hydebank	Content
Statutory	NI Water - Single Units East - Planning Consultations	Advice
Non Statutory	Env Health Belfast City Council	Substantive Response Received
Non Statutory	Env Health Belfast City Council	
Statutory	Historic Environment Division (HED)	Content
Statutory	NI Water - Single Units East - Planning Consultations	
Non Statutory	Env Health Belfast City Council	Content
<b>Representations:</b>		
Letters of Support	None Received	
Letters of Objection	None Received	
Number of Support Petitions and signatures	No Petitions Received	
Number of Petitions of Objection and signatures	No Petitions Received	
<b>Characteristics of the Site and Area</b>		
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Description of Proposed Development</b> It is proposed to change the use of the 3 storey listed building - Old School House from church hall (Class D1) (Planning (use classes) Order 2015) to office (Class B1a - use class order 2015) including ancillary storage. The proposal description has been amended to include reference to the ancillary file storage room on the ground floor.  The ground floor includes offices, file storage, meeting room and other ancillary facilities, whilst the first floor contains open plan office space, training room and a breakout area. No office accommodation is included on the second floor. It is anticipated the office will be occupied by the Ulster Orchestra administration team. The Ulster Orchestra intend to use the Church for rehearsing. The orchestra will gather in the space at ground floor level on occasion, prior to rehearsing in the adjacent Church.  It is considered that orchestral rehearsal is ancillary to main church use, hence planning permission is not required with regard to using the Church for orchestra rehearsals.  There is an associated application for Listed Building Consent running concurrently with this Full application – Planning reference number LA04/2022/0208/LBC.	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Description of Site</b>  The site is a church hall located to the rear of Townsend Street Presbyterian Church at no.32 Townsend Street. Both the church and church hall are listed buildings. The church hall is a three storey detached hall, built in 1876-78 as a school, lecture hall and sexton's house. The church which it sits behind is also listed.	

Townsend Street runs from Peters Hill to Falls Road. It is developed on the west side only. The Westlink is located east of Townsend Street. The inner city urban area is characterised by a mix of high density residential terrace housing, commercial uses and car parking.



### Planning Assessment of Policy and other Material Considerations

#### 3.0 Site History

**LA04/2021/0638/LBC** - Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast, BT13 2ES, Replace the Existing Wall between Townsend Enterprise Park and Townsend Presbyterian Church with Security Railings as a Temporary Measure for a Period of 5 Years Approved 16.07.2021.

**Z/2010/1234/F** - Townsend Street Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast, BT13 2ES. Proposed new external ramps for level access, internal accessible toilet and lift facility. Approved 05.07.2011

**Z/2010/1241/LBC** Townsend Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast, Bt13 2ES. Provision for accessible entrances and facilities including external ramps and new accessible toilet and lift internally. Approved 05.07.2011

#### 4.0 Policy Framework

##### 4.1 Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001

##### 4.2 Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP) 2004 & 2015

The extant development plan is the BUAP 2001. However, given the stage at which the Draft BMAP has reached pre-adoption through a period of independent examination, Draft BMAP remains a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The weight to be afforded is a matter of judgement for the decision maker in each particular case.

##### 4.3 Belfast Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy 2035

The Belfast Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy 2035 will guide future planning application decision making to support the sustainable spatial growth of the city up to 2035. The draft Plan Strategy has been subject to examination by the Planning Appeals Commission and the Council has been provided with a copy of their Report, together with a Direction from DfI in relation to additional required steps before it can be considered adopted. Paragraph 1.10 states that a transitional period will operate until such times as a Council's Plan Strategy has been adopted. Accordingly, whilst the Draft Plan Strategy is

	now a material consideration it has limited weight until it is adopted and during the transitional period planning authorities will apply existing policy together with the SPPS
4.4	<b>Strategic Planning Policy Statement (NI) (SPPS)</b> The provisions of the SPPS apply to the whole of Northern Ireland and are material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals. The SPPS will eventually supersede all PPSs once the Plan Strategy of the Local development Plan is adopted by local Councils. Until such times as a council adopts their Plan Strategy, existing policies (PPSs) will continue to apply alongside the SPPS. Where there is conflict between the SPPS and existing policies, this will be resolved in favour of the SPPS.
4.5	<b>Planning Policy Statements 6 – Planning Archaeology and the Built Heritage.</b> <b>Policy BH7 – Change of use of Listed Buildings</b> The Department will normally permit the change of use of a listed building where this secures its upkeep and survival and the character and architectural or historic interest of the building would be preserved or enhanced. Proposals for a change of use should incorporate details of all intended alterations to the building and its curtilage to demonstrate their effect on its appearance, character and setting.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Statutory Consultees Responses</b>
5.1	DfI Roads- offer no objection to this proposal.
5.2	DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) -HED considered the effects of the proposal on the listed building and is content that the proposal is in keeping with planning policy subject to conditions
5.3	Northern Ireland Water (NIW) has recommended refusal, stating that there is insufficient capacity for wastewater treatment to service the proposed development.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Non Statutory Consultees Responses</b>
6.1	BCC Environmental Health has examined the plans and considered the proposed development in terms of noise, air pollution, general amenity, ambient. EH raised no objection to the proposal.
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Representations</b>
7.1	The application has been neighbour notified and advertised in the local press. No representations or objection has been received.
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
9.1	<b>Principle of Development</b> The site is located on white land in the BUAP 2001 and dBMAP 2004 & adopted version of BMAP 2015 (subsequently declared unlawful). The principle of change of use from church hall to office is acceptable with regard to the extant development plan and in consideration of the requirements of PPS6.
9.2	<b>Assessment</b>
9.3	<b>Suitability of site and building for 'Proposed Office Use'</b> The proposed change of use of the 'Old School House' will secure the ongoing viability and upkeep of the listed building. There are no changes proposed to the internal layout of the building. The internal fabric will not be altered. As such the change of use respects the essential character and historic and architectural interest of the building; and features of

special interest remain intact and unimpaired- The proposed office use in keeping with policy set out in the SPPS at paragraph 6.13.

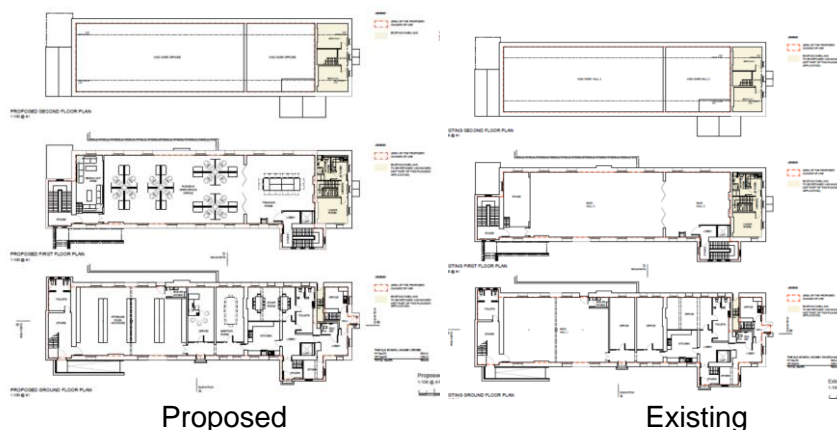
Historic Environment Division are keen to see listed buildings being utilised. When old buildings remain empty over time they degrade and fall into states of disrepair. The likelihood of survival of an old building improves with occupation, and so the key to the survival and upkeep of a listed building is to keep it in active use.

While the most appropriate use of an historic building is often that for which it was designed, new compatible uses should be found for historic buildings where they can no longer reasonably be expected to serve their original use.

Using the upper floors as office space requires no building works/alteration to the building- the space will be re-decorated and furniture will be imported. The ground floor space is to be used for storage and occasionally an area where orchestra members can gather prior to rehearsals in adjacent Church. HED are content that the use of the building is compatible with its fabric, in line with policy BH7 (change of use of listed buildings) of PPS6.

HED is content that the existing plan form of the building will be retained and consider that the architectural and historic interest of the building will be preserved. HED notes that the accompanying design and access statement states that 'The proposed change of use does not include any interior or exterior interventions to the character and / or building fabric of the building' and assessment for this change of use application is on the basis of the information submitted

The principle of change of use is considered acceptable by HED.



#### 9.4 **Impact on character of the area and residential amenity**

There is no change to the exterior of the building, the appearance of the site will not change. The onsite car parking is located along the northern façade of the church and provides 12 car parking spaces including 1 disabled accessible space. There is available on street parking to the front of the church and the site is well served by public transport – including the Glider – which runs along the Falls road close to this building.

The proposed office use is not expected to generate an increase of people attending the building daily. There is on-street parking availability to facilitate any overflow. Residential properties nearby are located to the north west at Greenland Street and Boundary Street. These residents will not be impacted by any overflow parking, as visitors or staff would be inclined to park close to the office/church on Townsend Street. The character of the area



9.5

will not change and there will be no impact on residential amenity as a result of this change of use.

#### Northern Ireland Water (NIW)

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) has recommended refusal, stating that there is insufficient capacity for waste water treatment to service the proposed development.

NIW state that the P1 form indicates an increase in staff and persons attending the premises daily, meaning extra discharge to the network. Question 25 of the originally submitted P1 form indicated an increase of 14 persons daily, 12 employees and 2 'others attending'.

Average No. of persons attending premises daily	Existing	Expected increase	Total
Employees	5	12	17
Others Attending*	2	2	4
Total	7	14	21

\* Others attending include visitors, customers, diners, spectators, pupils etc.

These figures have since been amended and now indicate a reduction in the number of people attending the premises.

Average No. of persons attending premises daily	Existing	Expected increase	Total
Employees	5	12	17
Others Attending*	25	-21	4
Total	30	-9	21

\* Others attending include visitors, customers, diners, spectators, pupils etc.

Furthermore, the agent has forwarded an assessment of the existing and proposed sewage generated in accordance with British Waters Code of Practice: Flows and Loads; it confirms that the proposed change of use will not cause any increase in the volume of sewage generated within the site.

#### Existing use (church halls):

• Staff	5 x 100 l/s/day =	500 l/s/day
• Visitors	25 x 100 l/s/day =	2500 l/s/day
• Total		3000 l/s/day

#### Proposed use (offices):

• Staff	17 x 100 l/s/day =	1700 l/s/day
• Visitors	4 x 100 l/s/day =	400 l/s/day
• Total		2100 l/s/day

It is stated that the proposed change of use will result in a reduction of 900 l/s/day of daily sewage effluent volume discharged to the sewage system.

NIW has been reconsulted with the above figures – they continue to object to the proposal due to concerns that there is insufficient capacity at the Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW).



	Following submission of the additional information from the agent, it is considered that there would be no significant impact on existing infrastructure from this development relative to its current use.
9.6	Having regard to the policy context and other material considerations above, the proposal is considered acceptable and planning permission is recommended subject to conditions.
10	<b>Summary of Recommendation:</b> Planning Approval is recommended subject to conditions stated below.
11	<p><b>Conditions</b></p> <p><b>1</b> The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission. Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</p> <p><b>2</b> No new plumbing, pipes, soil-stacks, flues, vents or ductwork shall be fixed on the external faces of the building other than those shown on the drawings hereby approved. Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 80 of The Planning Act (NI) 2011.</p> <p><b>3</b> No new grilles, security alarms, lighting, security or other cameras or other fixtures shall be mounted on the external faces of the building other than those shown on the drawings hereby approved. Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 80 of The Planning Act (NI) 2011.</p> <p><b>4</b> All new external and internal works and finishes and works of making good to the retained fabric, shall match the existing original work adjacent in respect of methods, detailed execution and finished appearance unless otherwise approved in writing by the Council, in conjunction with HED. Detailed finishes schedules and samples are required for approval on any changes proposed. Reason: to ensure that the materials used are of appropriate quality in the interests of maintaining the character and appearance of the listed building and the setting of the listed building</p> <p><b>Informatives</b> The applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation responses received by the Council in respect of this application. The responses can be viewed at <a href="https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/tools/public-access-info.htm">https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/tools/public-access-info.htm</a></p> <p>The drawings referenced in this decision notice above are the site location map and those proposed drawings numbered 01, 02, 04 published to the Planning Portal NI 04/02/2022.</p>

## ANNEX

**Date Valid**

19th January 2022

<b>Date First Advertised</b>	18th February 2022
<b>Date Last Advertised</b>	
<b>Details of Neighbour Notification (all addresses)</b> The Owner/Occupier, 38 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2EJ The Owner/Occupier, Unit 14,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 14,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 14,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 14,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 15,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 15,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 16,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 16,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 17,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 18,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 18,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 19,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 20,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 21,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 21,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 23,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 24,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 26,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 27,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, Unit 28,Townsend Enterprise Park,28 Townsend Street,Belfast,Antrim,BT13 2ES The Owner/Occupier, 	

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Unit 30, Townsend Business Park, 28 Townsend Street, Belfast, Antrim, BT13 2ES  
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Unit 31, Townsend Enterprise Park, 28 Townsend Street, Belfast, Antrim, BT13 2ES  
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Unit 34, Townsend Business Park, 28 Townsend Street, Belfast, Antrim, BT13 2ES  
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Units 23 & 24, Townsend Enterprise Park, 28 Townsend Street, Belfast, Antrim, BT13 2ES  
The Owner/Occupier,  
Units 25 & 26, Townsend Enterprise Park, 28 Townsend Street, Belfast, Antrim, BT13 2ES

**Date of Last Neighbour Notification**

23rd February 2022

<b>Date of EIA Determination</b>	
<b>ES Requested</b>	No
<b>Planning History</b>  <p>Ref ID: LA04/2021/0638/LBC          Proposal: Replace the Existing Wall between Townsend Enterprise Park and Townsend Presbyterian Church with Security Railings as a Temporary Measure for a Period of 5 Years          Address: Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast, BT13 2ES,          Decision: CG          Decision Date: 16.07.2021</p> <p>Ref ID: LA04/2022/0208/LBC          Proposal: Change of use from D1 use class (Church Halls) to B1(a) use class (offices).          Address: The Old School House, Townsend Street, Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast, BT13 2ES.,          Decision:          Decision Date:</p> <p>Ref ID: LA04/2022/0207/F          Proposal: Proposed change of use from D1 use class (church halls) to B1(a) use class (offices).          Address: The Old School House, Townsend Street, Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast, BT13 2ES.,          Decision:          Decision Date:</p> <p>Ref ID: Z/1985/0776          Proposal: ERECTION OF BOILER HOUSE          Address: 32 TOWNSEND STREET          Decision:          Decision Date:</p> <p>Ref ID: Z/2003/1245/F          Proposal: Replacement of defective roof covering.          Address: Townsend Street Presbyterian Church, Townsend Street, Belfast, BT13 2ES          Decision:          Decision Date: 21.07.2003</p> <p>Ref ID: Z/2010/1241/LBC          Proposal: Provision for accessible entrances and facilities including external ramps and new accessible toilet and lift internally.          Address: Townsend Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast, Bt13 2ES.,</p>	

Decision:

Decision Date: 05.07.2011

Ref ID: Z/2010/1234/F

Proposal: Proposed new external ramps for level access, internal accessible toilet and lift facility.

Address: Townsend Street Presbyterian Church, 32 Townsend Street, Belfast, BT13 2ES,

Decision:

Decision Date: 05.07.2011

### **Summary of Consultee Responses**

### **Drawing Numbers and Title**

Drawing No.  
Type:  
Status: Submitted

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**Notification to Department (if relevant)**

Date of Notification to Department:

Response of Department: