# Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

Summary					
Committee Meeting Date: 20 September 2022					
Application ID: LA04/2021/1985/F					
Proposal: Proposed erection of 15no. storey building comprising 60no. apartments with ancillary facilities and all other associated site works (amendment to previous approval Z/2011/0472/F).	Location: 35-41 Queen's Square, Belfast, BT1 3FG				
Referral Route: Major Development					
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions and a Section 76 Agreement				
Applicant Name and Address:	Agent Name and Address:				
Duncairn Ltd	TSA Planning				
PO Box 145	20 May Street				
Level6	Belfast				
10a Prospect Hill	BT1 4NL				
Douglas					

#### **Executive Summary:**

Isle of Man IM99 1FY

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of 15no. storey building comprising 60no. apartments with ancillary facilities and all other associated site works (amendment to previous approval Z/2011/0472/F).

The main issues to be considered in the determination of this application are:-

- The principle of development at this location;
- The acceptability of the design;
- Impact on character of the area and the setting of listed buildings;
- Access, parking and servicing arrangements; and
- Environmental Considerations Drainage, Contamination, Noise

The site is located within Belfast City Centre and within Victoria Street/ Oxford Street Draft Area of Townscape Character in draft BMAP. The site is also within the City Centre and the main office area in the BUAP. There is an extant planning permission on the site (Z/2011/0472/F) which is an important material consideration and a fall-back position for the applicant which could be implemented.

A number of listed buildings/features are within the vicinity of the site including McHugh's (adjacent), Custom House, 4 Queen's Square, Albert Clock and the Calder Fountain. HED consider that the proposed development fails to satisfy the policy requirements of SPPS 6.12 and BH11 (Development affecting the setting of a listed building) of PPS 6. BCC Conservation Officer considers the proposal would have an adverse impact on the character of the area. However, given the existing permission, the principle of a 16 storey building has been established on the site and it is considered that there would be no greater harm to the setting of the listed buildings

or the proposed Area of Townscape Character with the proposed development. Furthermore, during the processing of this application Officers have worked collaboratively with HED and the applicant to seek to improve the design quality of the proposed development. The revised scheme is considered a substantial improvement over the extant scheme in design terms.

The Urban Design Officer offers no objections to the proposal given the fall-back position. DFI River has sought confirmation of how run-off will be dealt with. Officers do not consider this to be a substantive issue, drainage arrangements were in place for the extant scheme and it is considered that this technical matter can be satisfactorily resolved. Delegated authority is requested to liaise with DFI Rivers Agency to deal with this issue. All other consultees offer no objection to the proposed development.

No third party objections have been received.

#### Recommendation

Having regard to the development plan, relevant policy context and other material considerations including the extant permission on the site for a similar scaled development, the proposed development is considered acceptable and it is recommended that planning permission is granted.

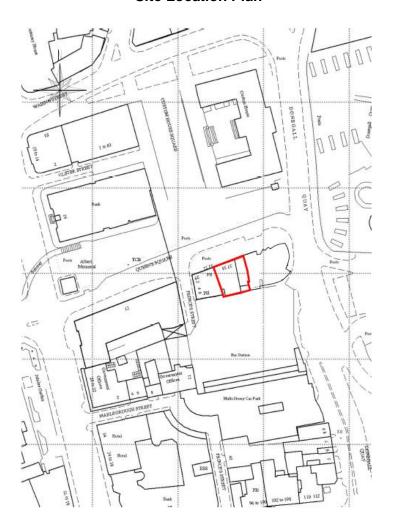
Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions and the Section 76 and to deal with any DFI Rivers comments and other issues which might arise.

Signature(s):			

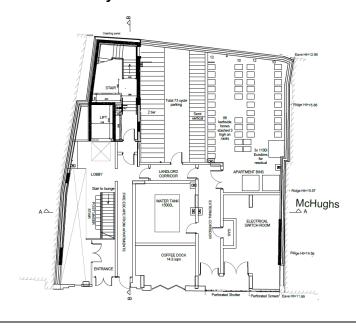
## **Case Officer Report**

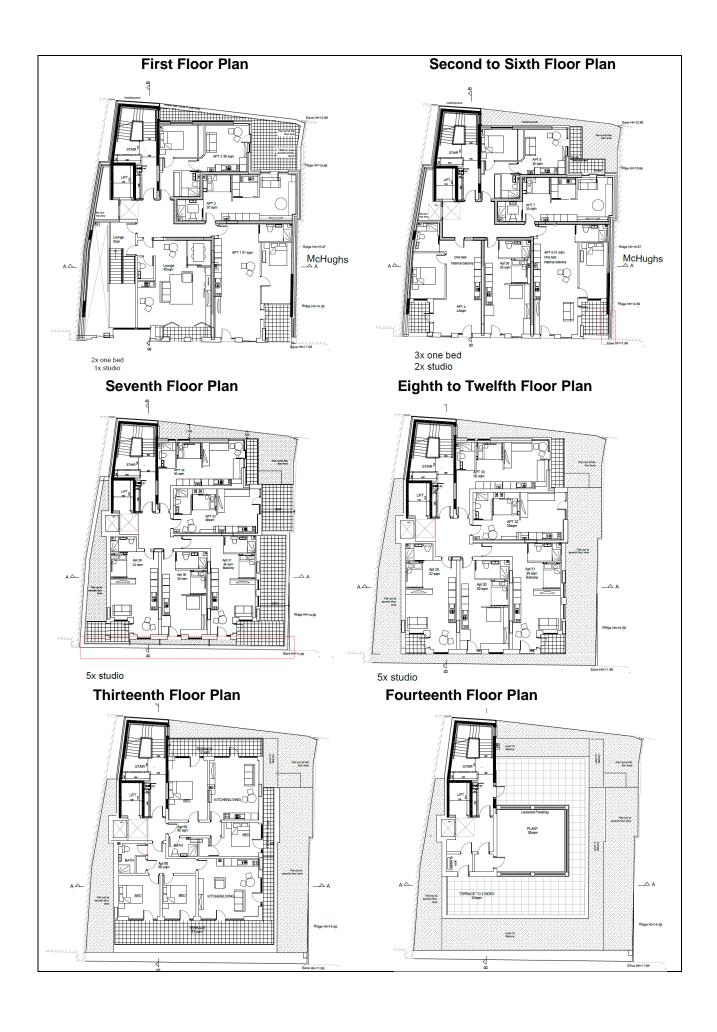
### 1.0 Drawings

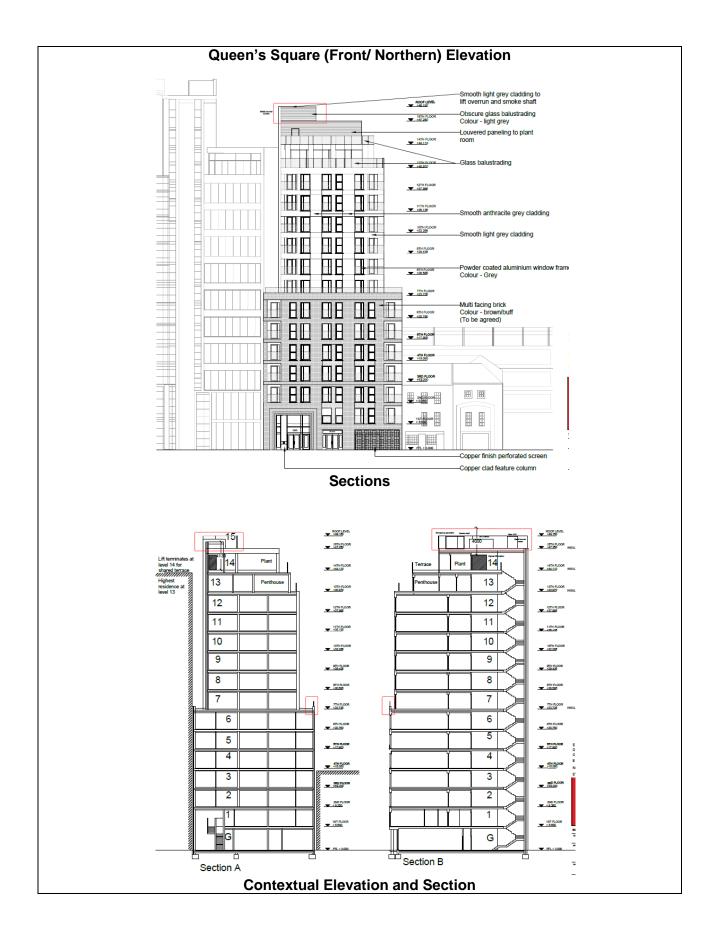
### Site Location Plan

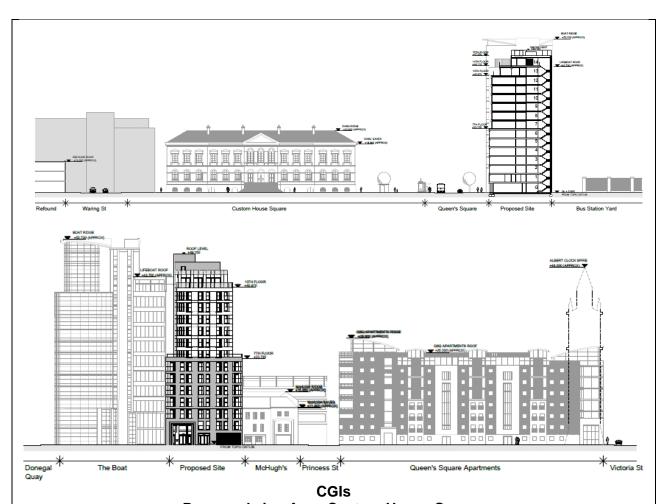


Site Layout/Ground Floor Plan



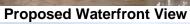








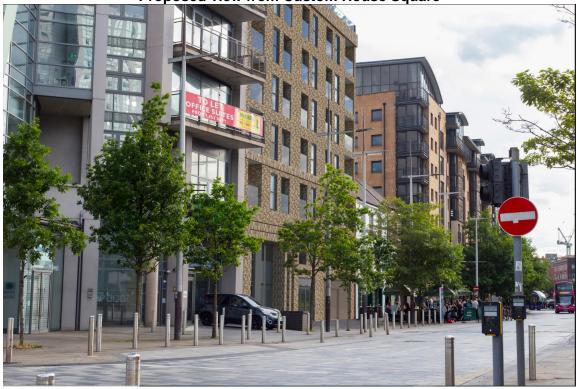






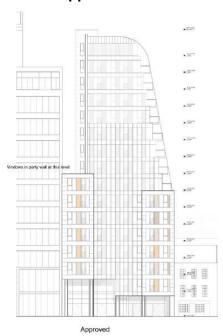


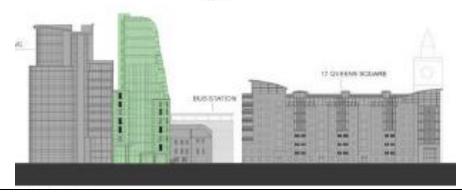
Proposed view from Custom House Square





Previous Approval – Z/2011/0472/F





### 2.0 Characteristics of the Site and Area

The site is located in Belfast City Centre and fronts onto Queen's Square and Custom House Square. There are a number of mixed uses in the area including residential, offices and commercial uses. The site sits between McHugh's Public House to the immediate west and the 'Boat' residential/commercial development to the immediate east. Laganside Bus Station is located to the immediate south of the site. The majority of the previous three storey building on the site has been demolished (a small portion of the wall fronting Queen's Square and immediately adjacent to McHugh's has been retained to safeguard the neighbouring property) and works on the extant approval commenced in 2018 but have not progressed. The site is currently enclosed with hoarding.

### 3.0 Description of Proposal

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of 15no. storey building comprising 60no. apartments with ancillary facilities and all other associated site works. The proposed development is an amendment to a previously approved 16 storey building for 60 apartments.

### 4.0 Planning Assessment of Policy and Other Material Considerations

### 4.1 **Policy Context**

### **Regional Planning Policy**

- Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)
- Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS 3) Access, Parking and Movement
- Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6) Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage
- Planning Policy Statement 15 (PPS 15) Flood Risk

#### **Local Planning Policy Context**

- Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) BUAP
- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004)
- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014)
- Belfast Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy 2035

### **Other Material Considerations**

- Developer Contribution Framework
- Belfast Agenda

### Planning History

**LA04/2021/0427/PAN** - Proposed erection of 15 storey building comprising of 60no. apartments (mix of studio, I and 2 bedroom) with ancillary facilities including residents lounge, coffee station, and all associated plant and works. (Amendment to 16 storey approval Z/2011/0472/F), 35-41 Queens Square, Belfast. PAN Acceptable 08.03.2021.

**LA04/2018/1396/DC** - Discharge of Condition ref Z/2011/0472/F - Condition 3, 35-41 Queens Square, Belfast, BT1 3FG. Condition discharged 16.07.18

**Z/2011/0472/F** - Demolition of existing 3 storey building and erection of new 16 storey building comprising 60No. apartments with ancillary facilities and commercial use at

4.2

ground and first floor, 35-41 Queens Square, Belfast, BT1 3FG.Permission granted 18.11.2013 by the former Department of the Environment (DOE).

### 4.3 Status of Previous Planning Approval Z/2011/0472/F

- Planning Permission was granted for the demolition of the 3 storey building on the site and the erection of new 16 storey building comprising 60 apartments with ancillary facilities and commercial use at ground and first floor on the site on 18 November 2013 (Ref: Z/2011/0472/F). The proposed development seeks an amendment to this approval and the applicant indicated on the P1 application form that this approval had been extant. Officers advised upon receipt of the application that it had not been proven that the permission had been enacted and had recommended that a Certificate of Lawful Existing Development (CLUED) be submitted to demonstrate that commencement of the permission had taken place.
- 4.3.2 Subsequently the applicant's team provided a response which included relevant case law and requested that the Council consider that evidence presented (to demonstrate enactment of planning approval Z/2011/0472/F) which constitutes a material consideration be assessed within the remit of the determination of this current application. Following advice from Legal Services and having considered the case law presented by the applicant, officers are satisfied that the evidence presented by the applicant to determine whether the previous approval is extant can be appropriately assessed within the remit of this application i.e. without a formal determination (CLUED). Notwithstanding, the submission of a CLUED is considered good practice in such circumstances.
- 4.3.3 In assessing this matter regard has been had to the following issues:-
  - Pre-commencement conditions
  - Evidence of Commencement of Works

These issues are assessed below.

### 4.4 Pre-commencement conditions

4.4.1 Two pre-commencement conditions were attached to planning approval Z/2011/0472/F as set out below:

### 4.4.2 <u>Condition 2:-</u>

No development shall commence until the Department has received in writing a further update of the risk assessment to health and environmental receptors as presented in the Pentland MacDonald report entitled Contamination Assessment, 35-41 Queens Square, Belfast, dated August 2011 (Re PM11-1075). In the event of unacceptable risks being identified, then a remediation strategy should be prepared and submitted in support of the proposed development. This update should provide:

- a. A revised human health and hydrogeological risk assessment which has been informed by the additional site data as detailed in NIEA LRM response to Planning of the 5th December 2011.
- b. A revised gas risk assessment which has been informed by the required additional monitoring data.
- c. A remediation strategy should acceptable risks be identified. This strategy should include the remediation objectives and criteria and demonstrate the

management of all unacceptable risks to health and the water environment to ensure the land will be in a condition suitable for the proposed development.

Reason: Protection of health and environmental receptors to ensure the site is suitable for use.

#### Condition 3:-

4.4.3

In the event of a piled foundation being used, then a piling risk assessment should be completed and submitted in writing to the Department for its agreement, prior to the development being commenced.

Reason: Protection of health and environmental receptors.

- Condition 3 was formally discharged by the Council on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018 prior to the expiry date of the permission. (Planning Ref: LA04/2018/1396/DC).
- A.4.5 No formal discharge was received in respect of Condition 2. However, the applicant has indicated that an updated Risk Assessment was submitted to the Council prior to the expiration of the planning approval and provided evidence of discussions between Environmental Health, NIEA and the applicant's team to demonstrate that steps had been taken to address the condition at least 4 months prior to the expiration of the permission. Planning Service has no record of the updated Risk Assessment being received. The applicant's team contends that 'There has without doubt been compliance in substance with the condition regardless of whether the condition has been properly discharged or not. It has been evidenced that steps were taken by Pentland MacDonald to address the condition in consultation with both the authoritative bodies responsible for assessment of contamination report; namely, EHO and NIEA.'
- The applicant's team has provided relevant Case Law and following consultation with legal services officers are satisfied that condition No. 2 of planning approval Z/2011/0472/F is not a true conditions precedent given how the condition is framed, i.e. it states that 'No development shall commence until the Department has received in writing a further update of the risk assessment to health and environmental receptors'. The condition does not go so far as to require that approval is necessary from the Council. Therefore, submission of an updated Risk Report would in theory have been sufficient to discharge the requirements of this condition but would have effectively failed to enable the Council to consider and agree such information.
- Officers also acknowledge the evidence that steps were proposed to carry out an updated Risk Assessment prior to the expiration of the permission and on balance consider that reasonable steps had been taken to discharge the condition.

### 4.5 Evidence of Commencement of Works

The applicant has submitted evidence which demonstrates that piling took place on the site prior to the expiration date of planning approval Z/2011/0472/F. This evidence has been verified by Building Control records which confirm that a commencement inspection relating to piling was carried out on 01 November 2018 prior to the expiration of the planning permission. On the basis of the information presented officers are satisfied that lawful commencement of development took place prior to the

expiration date of planning approval Z/2011/0472/F.

4.5.2 In conclusion officers consider that based on the condition precedent, commencement of the development Z/2011/0472/F is considered lawful and as a result the previous approval represents a lawful fall-back position for the application and is a relevant material consideration in the determination of this application which is of significant weight.

#### 4.6 Consultations

### 4.6.1 **Statutory Consultations**

**DFI Roads –** No objection subject to conditions.

**DFI Rivers Agency –** No objection to Policies FLD 1,2, 4, and 5. Further information required to satisfy Policy FLD 3.

**NI Water –** No objection.

NIEA - No objection subject to conditions.

**HED** – HB - Proposal fails to satisfy the policy requirements of SPPS 6.12 and BH11 of PPS6. HM – No objection subject to conditions. Final response awaited.

### 4.6.2 **Non-Statutory Consultations**

**Environmental Health** – No objections subject to conditions.

**Economic Development Unit** - Employability and skills related Developer Contributions Section 76 clauses should not be applied for the construction or operational phases of the development.

**BCC Urban Design Officer** – No objection subject to condition.

**BCC Conservation Officer** – Unable to support, contribution to the character and appearance of the proposed ATC would be less than that made by the buildings which previously existed on site.

**BCC Waste Management Team** – No objection.

**BCC City Regeneration and Development Team** – CRD supports the redevelopment of this site for residential use. However, the quality of the residential environment does not appear to reflect the ambitions of BCCRIS.

**NIHE** – Would support up to 20% social housing scheme on this site.

Belfast City Airport - No objection.

### 4.7 Representations

The application has been advertised and neighbours notified. No third-party objections have been received.

### 4.8 Planning Assessment

### 4.8.1 Key Issues

The key issues to be considered in the assessment of this application are:

- The principle of development at this location:
- The acceptability of the design;
- Impact on character of the area and the setting of listed buildings;
- Access, parking and servicing arrangements; and
- Environmental Considerations Drainage, Contamination, Noise

### **Development Plan Context**

- 4.8.2 Section 6(4) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that in making any determinations under the Act, regard is to be had to the local development plan, and the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- The adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) in 2014 was declared unlawful as a result of a judgement in the court of appeal delivered on 18 May 2017. This means that the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP) provides the statutory plan context for the area.
- Draft BMAP 2015 (dBMAP 2014), in its most recent, post-examination form remains a significant material consideration when making planning decisions. It was at the most advanced stage possible prior to adoption. However, in assessing this application regard is also had to the provisions of draft BMAP which was published in 2004 (dBMAP 2004).
- In dBMAP (v2004) the site is within the city centre, the proposed ATC at Victoria Street/Oxford Street and within Laganside North and the Docks Character Area and the Belfast City Core Area of Parking Restraint. In dBMAP (v2014) the site is also within the city centre, the proposed ATC at Victoria Street/Oxford Street (CC 026) and within the Laganside and Docks Character Area (CC015) and the Belfast City Core Area of Parking Restraint (CC 025). Within the BUAP the site is within the city centre and the main office area.
- 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 the Department for Infrastructure in relation to additional required steps before it can be adopted. Paragraph 1.10 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 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 this transitional period existing policies will be applied including the SPPS and relevant PPSs.

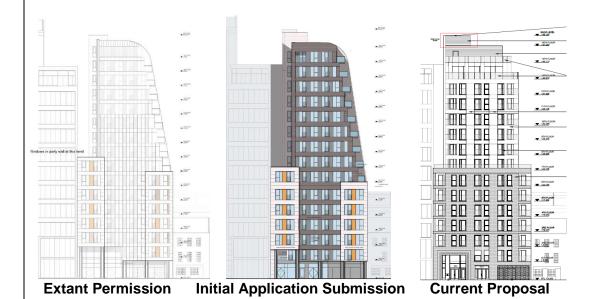
### 4.9 Principle of Proposed Uses

- 4.9.1 Policy SFG3 of the RDS seeks to enhance the role of Belfast City Centre as the regional capital and focus of administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities. Policy SFG2 of the RDS seeks to grow the population of the City of Belfast.
- The SPPS sets out five core planning principles of the planning system, including improving health and well-being, supporting sustainable economic growth, creating and enhancing shared space, and supporting good design and place making. The SPPS states at paragraph 1.13 (page 7) that a number of policy statements, including PPS3 and PPS 6, remain applicable under 'transitional arrangements.
- The proposed uses comprise residential and a small commercial ground floor element. Both are considered acceptable in principle and compatible with surrounding uses in this city centre location and compliant with relevant planning policy. The extant approval establishes the acceptability of the proposed uses on this site. The proposed uses are

considered to meet the core principles of the RDS, the SPPS and objectives of the Belfast Agenda. Further assessment of the proposed development is set out below.

### 4.10 Scale, Height, Massing, Design and Layout

- 4.10.1 Upon receipt of the application the proposed design of the development mirrored that of the extant permission and included features such as the curved side on the western elevation and a reduction in the degree of curtain glazing. The height, scale and massing is not significantly different from the extant scheme which represents a lawful fall-back position for the applicant. In terms of changes to the extant scheme the applicant's team has indicated that 'some necessary design changes regarding floor to ceiling height clearance prompted the need for the revised planning application before the Council. The overall scale, massing, height and design of the building have closely followed the approval. The scheme omits 1no floor of accommodation (now 15 storeys) to achieve the required floor to ceiling clearance.'
- Having established the lawful fallback position officers, including the Senior Urban Design Officer engaged collaboratively with HED and the applicant's team to address design issues with a focus on drawing cues from the existing historic context which includes a number of listed buildings/features and improving the design of the proposed building in terms of materials and fenestration including strong rhythms/patterns and greater solid-to-void ratios than the extant approval. The images below set out a visual representation of the evolution of the design from the extant approval to the original submission with this current application to the revised final design. A key design change when compared to the approved scheme includes a breaking up the overall composition into a lower seven storey brick podium and a setback eight storey tower above and illustrates a significant betterment to the external appearance of the proposed development which relates better to the surrounding context.



4.10.3

The proposed development comprises a 15 storey block (max. height 46.15m) situated between the 11-15 storey 'Boat' Building (max height c.49.7 m) and the 3 storey listed McHugh's Bar building. The development fronts onto Queen's Square and Custom House Square. To the rear (south) sits the Laganside Bus Centre. The proposed building will sit c.3.5m below the adjoining Boat building.

- The building is significantly taller than the majority of the surrounding context including the adjacent 3 storey listed McHugh's Building, 8 storey Queen's Square apartments, 4 storey 4 Queens Square (Former First Trust Bank) and Custom House. The height, scale and massing is strongly influenced by the height and scale of the adjoining taller Boat building which is 11 storey high immediately adjacent to the site and rises to 15 storeys along Queen's Square/Donegall Quay.
- 4.10.5 The Urban Design Officer considers that the design changes which include the brick base/ podium (20.0m high) provides a stronger lower shoulder height which when read with the apartment building on the opposite side of Prince's Street, provides a more balanced framing of the listed McHugh's and presents a scale of development which is more in keeping with neighbouring buildings around Custom House Square.
- The proposed block comprises 60 apartments on floors 1 to 14. The ground floor comprises a small commercial kiosk (coffee dock), entrance lobby/reception and ancillary facilities including bike/bin storage and utility services. The primary (northern) elevation fronting Queen's Square/Custom House Square comprises two distinct elements;- i.e. the solid brick base and the lighter, narrower upper element. The brick base is defined by the lower 7 storeys and the upper element comprises 8 storeys.
- 4.10.7 Above the shoulder height (7<sup>th</sup> floor level) the building is set back by c.0.9m from the front elevation and c.2.3m from the side (western) elevation and c.1.9m from the eastern elevation at the widest point. Further setbacks on the northern (Front) elevation are proposed at 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Floor Level. The upper element of the proposed development is distinct from the lower brick base and this design approach intentionally seeks to create a 'lighter' top element which cumulatively with the setbacks at upper levels seek to mitigate the visual mass of the upper element. The Urban Design Officer considers that the removal of the curved profile and the setting back of the upper floors allows this element to take on a more subservient role which doesn't unduly draw the eye.
- 4.10.8 The brick base lower element draws design cues from the adjacent McHugh's in terms of the vertical emphasis, rhythm and proportions of window openings. In addition, the proposed primary external material at lower level i.e. brown/buff coloured brick (specification to be agreed) seeks to provide a 'solid' base and relates to the stone colour of Custom House and the Albert Clock whilst also tying in with the colour palette of the Queen's Square Apartments. The eaves level of McHugh's is referenced through a minor cornice at 2<sup>nd</sup> floor level whilst a deeper parapet with a glass balustrade on top is proposed at shoulder height. Balconies are proposed along the front (northern), side (western) and rear (southern) elevations adding variety to the elevations and providing private amenity space to all of the apartments.
- 4.10.9 The size and rhythm of windows with a vertical emphasis on the upper element and the alignment and width of the central piers is carried through from the lower element unifying the design across the primary façade.
- 4.10.11 The rear (southern) elevation is proposed to be finished primarily in smooth light grey cladding which will be similar finish to the existing finish light coloured cladding on the adjacent Boat and will sit adjacent to the light-coloured rendered rear of McHugh's. This view will be prominent from the south-east along Donegall Quay and the proposed materials are considered acceptable.
- The western elevation adjacent to McHugh's continues the brick base treatment at lower level and incorporates blind windows, the proportions and rhythms of which replicate the windows in the upper floors above. The parapet and glass balustrade on

the front elevation is continued along the western elevation and together with blind windows provide sufficient architectural detailing to break up the visual mass.

4.10.13

The relationship with the Boat is also acknowledged in the design for example at ground floor level where a double height entrance is proposed adjacent to the Boat which steps down to a more domestic scale to tie in with the adjacent listed McHugh's on the western side of the building.

4.10.14

At ground floor level the proposed coffee dock with provide active frontage at street level. The backlit copper screen along the front elevation will screen the service areas and provide visual interest particularly at nightime.

4.10.15

BUAP Tall Buildings Policy CC 12 states that high buildings must be sympathetic in scale to the traditional height of buildings in the City Centre. The policy seeks to ensure that high buildings:-

- Do not mar or dominate the surrounding hills or the scale of attractive Belfast views;
- Relate sympathetically in design to the urban structure of the city;
- Relate sympathetically to their immediate surroundings;
- Relate sympathetically to buildings or groups of buildings of architectural and historic interest

4.10.16

The BUAP states that 'Belfast does not have the tradition of high point or slab blocks, commercial or residential, normally associated with large urban areas. The centre has been built to a traditional height of mainly 4 to 6 storeys. The City has a unique hill setting and consequently tall buildings can be incongruous as well as blocking out sections of the hills, particularly as viewed from the approaches to the City Centre'.

4.10.17

The BUAP was published in 1990 and over the intervening three decades buildings higher than 6 storeys have been approved and built in the city centre including the Queens Square apartments (8 storeys) and the adjacent Boat Building (11 to 15 Storeys). The extant permission for 16 storeys has also been approved. As a result the urban context is different to that at the time when the statutory BUAP was published. Notwithstanding, it is considered that the proposed development is sufficiently removed from the surrounding hills so as not to mar or dominate them. Views into the development will be short to medium range and will be screened to a degree from certain viewpoints for example to the east/south-east by the adjoining Boat development. It is considered that the proposed development to buildings of historic value is considered below.

4.10.18

The proposed scale, height and massing are considered incongruous with the surrounding context and character of the area and do not comply with the criterion (a) of Policy QD 1 of PPS 7, criterion 2 of the Laganside North and Docks Character Area Urban Design Criteria (dBMAP 2014) and Policy CC 12 of the BUAP. Notwithstanding, the applicant has a lawful fall-back position which can be implemented. The Urban Design Officer considers that the final design solution is more cognisant of surrounding context when compared to that previously approved. Overall the current proposal is considered a betterment over the lawful-fallback in terms of design as it better relates to the surrounding context and draws clear contextual references to surrounding buildings including the listed McHugh's. The extant permission is considered to have significant weight in the determination of this application as such the proposed height, scale and massing are on balance considered acceptable.

#### 4.11 Materials

- 4.11.1 The external finishes include brown-buff brick on the base and smooth light grey and anthracite coloured cladding on the upper floors including the lift overrun and smoke shaft, powder coated aluminium grey windows, glass balustrades, copper finish perforated screening along the service area to the front of the building, copper clad feature column and louvred panelling to plant room.
- 4.11.2 HED considers the proposed buff/brown brick to be appropriate and in keeping with the colour and tones of the stonework of Albert Clock and Custom House, both of which form the immediate historic context of this application site. The Urban Design officer raises no concerns regarding the proposed palette of materials and recommends a to ensure prior approval of all external materials which is set out below. The proposed materials are considered to comply with criterion (g) of Policy QD 1, PPS 7.

### 4.12 Amenity Provision/Space Standards

- 4.12.1 Forty-three of the apartments have access to a private terrace ranging from 2.4sqm to 31sqm. This is considered an improvement on the previous approved scheme which provided 18 balconies. A communal roof terrace is also provided at the 14th floor a further communal terrace is proposed on the first floor in conjunction with the residents' lounge. The average amenity space per apartment is 6.2sqm. This is below the recommended standards set out in Creating Places but is higher than the average amenity space per apartment in the extant approval which was 2.6sqm.
- 4.12.2 Policy OS2 of PPS 8 (Public Open Space in New Residential developments) requires new developments of over 25 units to make provision for public open space. Policy OS 2 states that 'An exception will also be considered in cases where residential development is designed to integrate with and make use of adjoining public open space'. The site fronts onto an existing area of open space at Custom House Square and it is considered that the proposed development will integrate with and make use of this existing open space. The proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy OS 2.
- 4.12.3 Each of the apartments has an outlook to the front, side or rear of the proposed development which is acceptable. The apartments vary in size with 40 1bed/studios varying from 30–36sqm, 18, 1bedroom apartments (36-55sqm) and 2, 2 bed apartments (60 sqm) and are in accordance with the recommended space standards as set out in PPS 7 and in the emerging draft LDP. Whilst the Policy in PPS 7 does not apply to this proposal the recommended space standards are nevertheless a useful guide in ensuring the provision of good quality residential accommodation. All of the 1 bed apartments meet the space standards for a 1 person apartment however only 6 meet the standard for a 1 bed, 2 person apartment. The majority of proposed apartments are 1 bed units designed for single occupancy and do not provide for flexible dwelling types. However, given the policy position and that the fall-back approved 60 units comprising 47 studio apartment, 12, 1 bed apartments and 1, 2 bed apartment the unit mix is considered an improvement and on balance acceptable.
- Given the size of the development local neighbourhood facilities are not required to be provided and therefore criterion (d) of Policy QD 1 does not apply to the development. The development is well located in Belfast City Centre to avail of existing neighbourhood facilities/amenities in the area.

### 4.13 Impact on the Character of the Area and the setting of listed buildings/features



- McHughs Public House
   Custom House
   First Trust Bank
   Albert Memorial Clock
   Calder Fountain
   HB26/50/274
   HB26/50/062
   HB26/50/056
   HB26/50/055
   HB26/50/155
- 4.13.1 HED advise that the proposed development affects a number of listed buildings/structures of special architectural or historic interest as set out in Section 80 and protected under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 which are identified coloured blue on the plan above and set out below.
  - HB26 50 274 McHughs Bar, 31-33 Queens Square Grade B2
  - HB26 50 155 Calder Fountain, Custom House Square Grade B1
  - HB26 50 062 Custom House, Custom House Square Grade B+
  - HB26 50 056 First Trust Bank, 4 Queens Square Grade B+
  - HB26 50 055 Albert Clock, Queens Square Grade A
- HED has been involved in detailed design discussions with the Council and the applicant's team through the processing of this planning application
- 4.13.3 HED acknowledge the previous planning approval for this application (Z/2011/0471/F) and advise that their responses to that application dated 16th May 2011, 31st January 2012 and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013, regarding the adverse impact of the scale and mass on the listed buildings remain relevant. They advise that the application site is located within the immediate setting of Queen's Square and Custom House Square and the proposal significantly compromises the setting of the listed buildings as set out above. HED consider that the tall building is incongruous for this historic context. However, they acknowledge the ongoing engagement with the agent regarding this application and welcome the removal of the curved roof/ wall feature to the upper floors and considers the simple rectangular block-form is more appropriate within the historic context of Queens Square.
- 4.13.4 HED consider the proposed buff/brown brick to the building base-block to be appropriate and in keeping with the colour and tones of the stonework of Albert Clock and Custom House, both of which form the immediate historic context of this application site. They also consider that the façade composition more appropriate with vertically proportioned openings balanced with horizontal articulation taking cues from the eaves height of the listed McHugh's and the existing Queen's Square apartment complex (corner of Queens Square and Victoria Street). HED welcomes the reduction in the extent of balconies and refinement of the west elevation overlooking the listed McHugh's Building.
- 4.13.5 HED further advises that the collection of ad-hoc small-scale roof structures housing plant, machinery and smoke shafts and consider these elements appear unresolved and visually prominent due to their exposed location and have recommended that

these structures be screened. The applicant has provided revised drawings which included screening around the rooftop elements and following assessment HED has informally advised that they consider the roof top structures have been rationalised and although there is additional massing to enclose the lift shaft/ AOV etc. the visual impact has reduced. Formal comments are awaited to confirm this position.

- 4.13.4 Notwithstanding, overall HED considers that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on the listed buildings and in its current form fails to satisfy the policy requirements of SPPS 6.12 and BH11of PPS6.
- The site lies with the proposed ATC at Victoria Street/Oxford Street and the Conservation Officer considers that the scale, height, proportions and materials, the proposed building would result in an adverse impact on the reading of this historic Custom House Square. The Conservation Officer notes that the amended plans show a more defined 7 storey base reflective of a building height that may be of a more appropriate scale in the context of the Square however queries the effectiveness of this architectural approach. The Conservation Officer also notes that the west elevation of the proposal is now less noisy than the first submitted drawings which is preferrable in the wider context of the Albert Memorial Clock.
- Officers acknowledge HED's and the Conservation Officer's overall position however, significant weight is given to the extant approval and lawful fall back position. Furthermore, both HED and the Conservation Officer acknowledge the design improvements that have been secured. It is considered that the proposal would be of no greater harm to the setting of the listed buildings and the character of the local area that the extant approval and therefore is on balance considered acceptable.

### 4.14 Access, Parking and Servicing

- Pedestrian access and servicing to the building will be provided directly from Queen's Square. No incurtilage parking is proposed. Cycle parking for 73 bicycles is proposed at ground floor level. Given the sustainable city centre location, which is well served by public transport and easily accessible for pedestrians and cyclists the zero parking level is considered acceptable. The Travel Plan proposes the implementation of a Travel Co-Ordinator to promote sustainable transport measures for occupants. DFI Roads consider the Travel Plan acceptable. In addition, Green Travel measures have been secured to support the zero parking level and include the submission of a final Travel Plan which will be subject to review, a travel card for 3 years for each residential unit and membership of a Cycle Club for a period of 3 years for each residential unit.
- Servicing of the site is proposed from Queen's Square. The Service Management Plan states that the 'A representative from the Building Management Team will be responsible for agreeing the delivery times of vehicles to the development. This person will be the Servicing Manager' and that 'All deliveries will be undertaken during off peak periods on the adjacent road network'.
- 4.14.3 It is proposed that waste will be stored in dedicated bin areas on the ground floor and will be wheeled out to the footway by members of by members of the Building Management team.
- DFI Roads has no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions which are set out below. The development complies with the SPPS and PPS 3.

- 4.14.5 BCC Waste Management Team consider that adequate space is available to comply with waste management requirements. Further assessment of Waste Management arrangements will be carried out under Building Regulation requirements.
- 4.15 Environmental Considerations

### 4.15.1 Drainage

The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment. The proposal has been considered against policies FLD 1-5 of Revised PPS15. DFI Rivers have raised no objections under Policies FLD 1, 2, 4 and 5. DFI Rivers has sought further information i.e. relevant correspondence indicating how runoff from the site will be disposed of safely to satisfy Policy FLD 3. Officers do not consider this to be a substantive issue, drainage arrangements were in place for the extant scheme and it is considered that this technical matter can be satisfactorily resolved. Delegated authority is requested to liaise with DFI Rivers Agency to deal with this issue.

NI Water advise that although Belfast WWTW and catchment are operating above design capacity this proposal can be approved on the basis of extant approval (Z/2011/0472/F) and consequently advise that there is available capacity at the Waste Water Treatment Works to serve the development and that there is a public foul sewer and water main within 20m of the proposed development boundary which can adequately service these proposals.

### 4.15.3 Contamination

The application is supported by a Land Contamination Assessment which has been considered by both DAERA, NIEA and Environmental Health. Neither have raised objections and both have provided conditions/informatives if permission is granted.

### 4.15.4 **Noise**

The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment which has been considered by Environmental Health who have no objections based on noise grounds subject to conditions.

### 4.15.5 Air Quality

The application is supported by an Air Quality Impact Assessment. Environmental Health has reviewed the proposal and has no objection subject to conditions regarding the installation of the gas boilers and standby generator and implementation of Dust Management measures as set out below.

#### 4.16 4.16.1 **Developer Obligations**

Para 5.69 of the SPPS states that 'Planning authorities can require developers to bear the costs of work required to facilitate their development proposals.' Relevant further guidance is provided by the Council's Developer Contribution Framework, adopted in 2020.

4.16.2 Green Travel Measures in the form of a travel card for each apartment for a period of 3 years and membership of a cycle club for 3 years have been secured to offset the zero paring level and include.

### 4.17 **Pre-Application Community Consultation**

In accordance with the requirements of Section 27 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011, the applicant served a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) on Belfast City Council on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 (LA04/2021/0427/PAN). Belfast City Council responded confirming that the PAN and associated approach met the requirements of Section 27 of the Planning

Act and was acceptable subject to contacting neighbouring businesses via email due to the pandemic and an extended consultation period due to the Easter holiday period falling within the proposed consultation timeframe. A dedicated website was proposed between 29<sup>th</sup> March and 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and was extended to 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2021 following feedback from officers.

4.17.3

A Pre-Application Community Consultation Report has been produced to comply with the statutory requirement laid out in Section 28 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The purpose of a PACC report is to confirm that pre-application community consultation has taken place in line with statutory minimum requirements. The report has confirmed advertising for the public (website) event and that the website event in lieu of the public event took place in accordance with section 5 of The Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. The report also confirmed that '840 packs containing information leaflets (Appendix 4), comment cards and self-addressed envelopes were distributed to residents and businesses within a 200m radius of the edge of the proposed development site'. The report states that 5 comments were left via the digital comment card and 2 responses were received by post.

4.17.4

The issues raised in the comments included support for residential units in the city centre, suggestion to include ground floor commercial/café use, that high rise building should be kept to a minimum, additional balconies should be provided along with more storage/communal storage pods and a suggestion to make the building less tall and glass filled and concerns over the height of the proposed development and the mix of housing stock.

4.17.5

The PACC report states that 'The consultation process was thorough, and the team consulted effectively with stakeholder groups and local representatives. The development team is committed to ongoing consultation during the planning application submission phase. Local listening has not ceased but is being openly encouraged throughout this process.'

The Pre-Community Consultation Report submitted satisfactorily demonstrates that the applicant has complied with the requirements of Sections 27 and 28 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 and Section 5 of The Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has adhered to Council recommendations during the PAN process. The PACC report is considered acceptable.

### **Neighbour Notification Checked**

Yes

#### **Summary of Recommendation:**

Having regard to the development plan, relevant policy context and other material considerations including the extant permission on the site for a similar scaled development, the proposed development is considered acceptable and it is recommended that full planning permission is granted.

Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions and the Section 76 and to deal with any DFI Rivers comments and other issues which might arise.

### Draft Conditions:

1. 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.

2. No external finishes shall applied unless in accordance with a written specification and a physical sample panel, details of which shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council.

The sample panel shall be provided on site and made available for inspection by the Council for the duration of the construction works.

The sample panel shall show the make, type, size, colour, bond, pointing, coursing, jointing, profile and texture of the external finishes.

Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the proposed Area of Townscape Character and to respect the character of the setting of the listed buildings/features.

3. Prior to commencement of development on site, site clearance or site preparation, a final Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) should be produced by the appointed contractor. The CEMP should include all necessary measures to control noise, dust and vibration during the demolition/construction phase, demonstrating the use of 'best practicable means'. The CEMP must demonstrate that noise and vibration levels will not have an adverse impact on nearby premises (including commercial premises). The CEMP must have due regard to Parts 1 and 2 of BS 5228:2009+A1:2014 – 'Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites. Noise and Vibration' and to IAQM - 'Guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction'. The CEMP and associated records must be made available to the Council at any time upon request.

Reason: Protection against adverse impacts arising from noise, dust and vibration.

- 4. Prior to installation of any glazing and the required alternative means of ventilation, the applicant must submit to and have agreed in writing by the Planning Authority, a report detailing the final glazing schedule and alternative means of ventilation. This schedule must demonstrate that the glazing and alternative means of ventilation meet the following minimum sound reduction values, as presented in F.R. Mark & Associates report entitled "Noise Impact Assessment, Proposal: Studio Apartment Development, Location: 35-41 Queens Square, Belfast" and dated May 2021:
  - 31dB Rw+Ctr for glazing and alternative means of ventilation to living rooms.
  - 36dB Rw+Ctr, with minimum 42dB Rw, for glazing and alternative means of ventilation to bedrooms.

Reason: Protection of residential amenity.

5. Prior to occupation of the hereby permitted development, the approved final glazing schedule and approved alternative means of ventilation shall be installed.

Reason: Protection of residential amenity.

6. Prior to occupation of the hereby permitted development, the developer shall verify that the glazing schedule and alternative means of ventilation, as approved, have been installed. This should be by way of a written declaration from the supplier and installation contractor confirming such installation.

Reason: Protection of residential amenity.

7. The rated sound level from the operation of all combined plant and equipment, associated with the hereby permitted development, must not exceed 52dB LAeq, 15mins during the night-time period (23:00 to 07:00) at the façade of any noise sensitive receptor, when measured or determined in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019 'Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound'.

Reason: Protection of residential amenity.

8. Gas boilers and the standby generator for the hereby approved development shall be installed and maintained in accordance with the technical specifications detailed within Appendix B (Proposed Plant) of the RPS Proposed Studio Apartment Development, 35 – 41 Queens Square Belfast. Air Quality Technical Note NI2329. F03. July 2022. The flue of any combustion plant shall terminate above the roof level of the building, which that combustion plant serves.

Reason: To ensure that ambient air pollution related to the site is appropriately dealt with, in the interests of human health.

9. Dust management measures, as detailed within Appendix B of the RPS: Air Quality Impact Assessment, Proposed Studio Apartment Development 35-41 Queen's Square, July 2022 shall be implemented throughout the duration of the construction phase of the hereby approved development.

Reason: To ensure that ambient air pollution related to the site is appropriately dealt with, in the interests of human health and amenity.

10. No site works of any nature or development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work (POW) has been prepared by a qualified archaeologist, submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by Belfast City Council in consultation with Historic Environment Division, Department for Communities.

The POW shall provide for:

- The identification and evaluation of archaeological remains within the site;
- Mitigation of the impacts of development through licensed excavation recording or by preservation of remains in-situ:
- Post-excavation analysis sufficient to prepare an archaeological report, to
- publication standard if necessary; and
- Preparation of the digital, documentary and material archive for
- deposition.

Reason: to ensure that archaeological remains within the application site are properly identified, and protected or appropriately recorded.

11. No site works of any nature or development shall take place other than in accordance with the programme of archaeological work approved under condition 10.

Reason: to ensure that archaeological remains within the application site are properly identified, and protected or appropriately recorded.

12. A programme of post-excavation analysis, preparation of an archaeological report, dissemination of results and preparation of the excavation archive shall be undertaken in accordance with the programme of archaeological work approved under condition 10. These measures shall be implemented and a final archaeological report shall be submitted to

Belfast City Council within 12 months of the completion of archaeological site works, or as otherwise agreed in writing with Belfast City Council.

Reason: To ensure that the results of archaeological works are appropriately analysed and disseminated and the excavation archive is prepared to a suitable standard for deposition.

13. If during the development works, new contamination or risks are encountered which have not previously been identified, works shall cease and the Planning Authority shall be notified immediately. This new contamination shall be fully investigated in accordance with best practice. In the event of unacceptable risks being identified, a Remediation Strategy and subsequent Verification Report shall be agreed with the Planning Authority in writing, prior to the development being occupied. If required, the Verification Report shall be completed by competent persons in accordance with best practice and must demonstrate that the remediation measures have been implemented and that the site is now fit for end-use.

Reason: Protection of human health.

14. If during the development works, new contamination or risks are encountered which have not previously been identified, works should cease and the Planning Authority shall be notified immediately. This new contamination shall be fully investigated in accordance with the Land Contamination: Risk Management (LCRM) guidance available at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/landcontamination-how-to-manage-the-risks">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/landcontamination-how-to-manage-the-risks</a>

In the event of unacceptable risks being identified, a remediation strategy shall be submitted prior to occupation and agreed in writing by the Council and subsequently implemented and verified to its satisfaction.

Reason: Protection of environmental receptors to ensure the site is suitable for use.

15. After completing the remediation works under Condition 14; and prior to occupation of the development, a verification report shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Council. This report should be completed by competent persons in accordance with the Land Contamination: Risk Management (LCRM) guidance available at

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/landcontamination-how-to-manage-the-risks

16. The verification report should present all the remediation, waste management and monitoring works undertaken and demonstrate the effectiveness of the works in managing all the risks and wastes in achieving the remedial objectives.

Reason: Protection of environmental receptors to ensure the site is suitable for use.

17. No development or piling work should commence on this site until a piling risk assessment has been submitted in writing and agreed with the Planning Authority. Piling risk assessments should be undertaken in accordance with the methodology contained within the Environment Agency document on "Piling and Penetrative Ground Improvement Methods on Land Affected by Contamination: Guidance on Pollution Prevention" available at

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http:/cdn.environmentagency.gov.uk/scho0202bisw-e-e.pdf.

Reason: Protection of environmental receptors to ensure the site is suitable for use.

18. The development shall not be occupied until provision has been made for cycle parking in accordance with the approved plan. These facilities shall be permanently retained.

Reason: To ensure acceptable cycle parking facilities on the site and to encourage alternative modes of transport to the private car.

19. The development hereby permitted shall operate in accordance with the Service Yard Management Plan.

Reason: In the interests of road safety.

### Notification to Department (if relevant) Not required

Although an objection has been received from a statutory consultee (HED: Historic Buildings) the proposal is not significantly different in terms of scale, height and massing to the extant approval and (Z/2011/0472/F) therefore the objection is not considered significant.

Representation from Elected Members:- None

ANNEX		
Date Valid	22nd September 2021	
Date First Advertised	1st October 2021	
Date Last Advertised	5 <sup>th</sup> August 2022	
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The Owner/Occupier, 39-43, Queens Square		
The Owner/Occupier, 3rd Floor 'Boat & Lifeboat', The Boat, 49 Queens		
Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG		
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The Owner/Occupier, 47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG		
The Owner/Occupier, 4th Floor, The Lifeboat, 45 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG		
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The Owner/Occupier, Apartment 8,37-41, Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FL
The Owner/Occupier, Apartment 9,37-41, Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FL
The Owner/Occupier, Blueprint, The Boat, 49 Queen's Square, Belfast, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, British Council NI, The Boat, 49 Queen's Square, Belfast, BT 1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Grafton Recruitment, The Boat, 49 Queen's Square, Belfast, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Ground Floor To 2nd Floor 'The Boat', The Boat, 49 Queens
Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Laganside Bus Centre, 2-8 Marlborough Street, Belfast, BT1 3FF
The Owner/Occupier, McHugh's Bar, 29-31 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Mott MacDonald, The Boat, 49 Queen's Square, Belfast, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Office 2,47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Office 3,47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Office 4,47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Office 5,47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Office 6,47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Office 7,47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Office 8,47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Office 9,47 Queens Square, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 3FG
The Owner/Occupier, Sharman D Neill Ltd. The Boat, 49 Queen's Square, Belfast, BT1 3FG
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The Owner/Occupier, The Lifeboat,45 Queens Square,Belfast,Antrim,BT1 3FG			
Date of Last Neighbour Notification	27 <sup>th</sup> July 2022		
Date of EIA Determination	N/A		
ES Requested	No		
Drawing Numbers and Title			

- 01 Site Location Plan Published 23/09/21
- 03b Ground Floor Plan Published 21/07/22
- 04a First Floor Plan Published 20/07/22
- 07B Seventh Floor Plan Published 13/09/22
- 15C Roof Plan Published 13/09/22
- 16C East Side Elevation Published 13/09/22
- 17C West Side Elevation Published 13/09/22
- 18C Rear Elevation Published 13/09/22
- 19C Front Elevation Published 13/09/22
- 20C Section A and B Published 13/09/22
- 21A Second-Sixth Floor Plans Published 13/09/22
- 22 Eighth-Twelfth Floor Plans Published 20/07/22
- 23A Section Details Published 13/09/22
- 24 Entrance Section Details Published 20/07/22
- 25B Proposed Context Elevation & Section Published 13/09/22
- 26 Existing Context Elevations & Section Published 20/07/22
- 27 Party Wall Stability Method Sequence Published 20/07/22
- 28 Lift Installation layout Published 23/08/22