

Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

Summary	
Committee Meeting Date:	19 March 2024
Application ID: LA04/2024/0054/F	LA04/2024/0054/F
Proposal: Change of use to conference centre facility with associated use as events/entertainment space	Location: Former Print Hall, Ground floor, 122-144 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1DN
Referral Route: Belfast City Council has an interest in the land.	
Recommendation:	Approval
Applicant Name and Address: The Limelight Belfast Ltd 17 Clarendon Road Belfast BT1 3BG	Agent Name and Address: Clyde Shanks Ltd 2nd Floor 7 Exchange Place Belfast BT1 2NA
<p>Executive Summary: Permanent full planning permission is sought for a change of use of former printing hall and premises to conference centre facility with associated use as events/entertainment space.</p> <p>The site is located within the development limits for Belfast. The site does not have any particular zoning within either the BUAP 2001 or draft BMAP 2015. It is located within the City Centre, Scotch/Cathedral character area and City Centre Area of Parking Constraint under draft BMAP. The site comprises part of the listed Belfast Telegraph Building.</p> <p>The key issues to be considered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of development and use; • Impact on amenity; • Impact on the listed building; • Provision of parking and access. <p>The application was neighbour notified and advertised in the local press. No third-party representations have been received.</p> <p>DFI Roads, Environmental Health, and Historic Environment Division have all been consulted. None have any objections to the proposal.</p> <p>There have been two previous temporary permissions for a similar use on this site by the same applicant with no detrimental impact on amenity. On balance, considering the previous temporary planning permissions granted to date and a live application for renewal of an expired permission for the overall redevelopment of the site, it is recommended that permission is granted.</p> <p>Recommendation: Having regard to the policy context and other material considerations, it is recommended that the application is approved, subject to conditions.</p>	

Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive.

Case Officer Report

Site Location Plan



Characteristics of the Site and Area	
1.0	Description of Proposed Development
1.1	The proposal seeks full planning permission for a change of use to conference centre facility with associated use as events/entertainment space.
2.0	Description of Site
2.1	The site comprises most of the ground floor of Nos. 122-144 Royal Avenue, Belfast. The building is four storeys in height and is finished in a mixture of red brick, render and cladding. The ground floor of the property was previously a printing hall and associated commercial space for Belfast Telegraph and is currently in use as a temporary event space.
2.2	The surrounding area is defined by mixed use, with a large student accommodation block currently under construction adjacent to the site. Belfast Central Library and a number of commercial units including a hair salon are located in the surrounding area.
3.3	The site includes part of a Grade B2 Listed Building at Nos. 124-144 Royal Avenue (former Belfast Telegraph building). The site is outside but opposite the Cathedral Conservation Area to the east.
Planning Assessment of Policy and other Material Considerations	
3.0	Site History
3.1	LA04/2024/0190/F - Renewal of planning permission ref: LA04/2018/1991/F for the demolition of existing non listed buildings and redevelopment of site with 6-8 storey buildings to accommodate office led mixed use development comprising Class B1 (a) office, ancillary Class B2 industrial floorspace, active ground floor uses retail (A1), restaurants, cafes and bars (sui generis); basement parking and associated access and circulation. Proposals include the retention and restoration of the listed Seaver building comprising façade restoration; new roof and reintroduction of dormers, replacement windows and reinstatement of original entrance to southern façade. Pending decision.
3.2	LA04/2022/0155/F - Extension of time for temporary change of use of and alterations of former printing hall to event space for a period of 18 months. Expired 20 February 2024
3.3	LA04/2021/2825/A - Retention of mesh banner signage (19.1m by 9.84m) for a temporary period of 24months – Refused 15 th April 2022.
3.4	LA04/2021/1586/A - Proposed mesh banner signage (19.1m x 9.84m) for a temporary basis of 24months – Refused 11 th November 2021.
3.5	LA04/2020/0662/A - Mesh banner signage (19.1m X 9.84m) (temporary for 1 year) – Granted for 1 year – 27 th August 2020 for 1 year only.
3.6	LA04/2019/0878/F - Extension of time for temporary change of use of and alterations of former printing hall to event space for a period of 3 years – Granted on 16 th October 2019 for 2 years – Expired 16 th October 2021.
3.7	LA04/2018/1991/F - Former Belfast Telegraph complex at, 124-144 Royal Avenue and, 1-29 Little Donegall Street, Belfast, BT1 1DN - Demolition of existing non listed buildings and redevelopment of site to accommodate office led mixed use development comprising Class

	B1 (a) office, ancillary Class B2 industrial floorspace, active ground floor uses retail (A1), restaurants, cafes and bars (sui generis); basement parking and associated access and circulation. Proposals include the retention and restoration of the listed Seaver building comprising façade restoration, new roof and reintroduction of dormers, replacement windows and reinstatement of original entrance to southern façade [amended scheme] – Granted – 19 th February 2019 – Expires 21 st February 2024.
3.8	LA04/2018/1968/LBC - Former Belfast Telegraph complex at, 124-144 Royal Avenue and, 1-29 Little Donegall Street, Belfast, BT1 1DN., Demolition of attached structures, retention and restoration of the listed Seaver building comprising internal reconfiguration works, façade restoration of dormers, replacement windows and reinstatement of original entrance to southern façade – Consent Granted – 19 th February 2019 – Expires 20 th February 2024.
3.9	LA04/2017/2209/F - Temporary change of use of former printing hall to event space for a period of 2 years including internal alterations and creation of two emergency exits onto Donegall Street - Granted on 29 th November 2017 for a period of 1 year – Expired 28 th November 2018.
3.10	Z/2004/0303/F 124-144 Royal Avenue, Belfast Adjustments to existing roof to facilitate the installation of a new printing press – Granted.
4.0	Planning Policy
4.1	Development Plan – operational policies Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035
4.2	Development Plan – zoning, designations and proposals maps Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) BUAP Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014)
4.4	Regional Planning Policy Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)
5.0	Statutory Consultees Responses
5.1	DFC Historic Environments Division – No objection subject to conditions.
5.2	DFI Roads – No objection subject to conditions.
6.0	Non-Statutory Consultees Responses
6.1	BCC Environmental Health – No objection subject to conditions.
7.0	Representations
7.1	The application has been neighbour notified and advertised in the local press. No representations have been received.
8.0	Development Plan zonings
8.1	The Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 shows the site as white un-zoned land.

8.2	<p>Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2004 version:</p> <p>The site is located within the city centre boundary and the Scotch and Cathedral quarter character area.</p>
8.3	<p>Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2014 version (previously adopted and subsequently quashed):</p> <p>The site is located within the city centre boundary and the Scotch and Cathedral quarter character area.</p>
9.0	Assessment
9.1	<p>The key issues in the assessment of the proposed development include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of development and use; • Impact on amenity; • Impact on the listed building; • Provision of parking and access.
9.2	<p>Development Plan Context</p> <p>Section 6(4) of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Act 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.</p> <p>9.3 Section 45(1) of the Act states that in determining planning applications, the Council must have regard to the local development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.</p> <p>9.4 The Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) when fully completed will replace the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 as the statutory Development Plan for the city. The Belfast LDP will comprise two parts. Part 1 is the Plan Strategy, which contains strategic and operational policies and was adopted on 02 May 2023. Part 2 is the Local Policies Plan, which will provide the zonings and proposals maps for Belfast and has not yet been published. The zonings and proposals maps in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 remain part of the statutory local development plan until the Local Policies Plan is adopted.</p> <p>9.5 <u>Operational policies:</u> the Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application. These are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy BH1 • Policy BH2 • Policy CC1 • Policy RET1 • Policy RET6 • Policy ENV1 • Policy TLC1 • Policy TRAN2 • Policy TRAN3 • Policy TRAN4 • Policy TRAN8

9.6	<p>Proposals Maps: Until such time as the Local Policies Plan is adopted, the Council must have regard to the land-use zonings, designations and proposals maps in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001, both versions of the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (v2004 and v2014) (draft BMAP 2015) and other relevant area plans. The weight to be afforded to these proposals maps is a matter for the decision maker. It is considered that significant weight should be given to the most recent version of dBMAP 2015 (v2014) given its advanced stage in the adoption process, save for retail policies relating to Sprucefield which remain contentious.</p>
9.7	<p>The application site is located on un-zoned “white land” in accordance with the BUAP. However, the site is located within the City Centre and the Scotch and Cathedral Quarters for Belfast as designated by both iterations of Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015, the 2004 and 2014 versions. It is outside the Primary Retail Core in both versions of dBMAP.</p>
	<p><u>Principle of development and use</u></p>
9.8	<p>The proposal is compatible in principle with other city centre uses given its commercial nature and is a non-retail ground floor use outside the primary retail frontage (PRF) of the city centre, as defined in dBMAP 2015. It is also considered to be a main town centre use and its location within the boundary of Belfast City Centre complies with Policy RET 1 of the LDP.</p>
9.10	<p>The supporting statement from the applicant states that although the proposal is for a permanent period, it acknowledges that there are plans to redevelop the site for a mixed-use scheme and that they will vacate the site once the other plans are ready to be implemented. This would be a matter from the landowner/landlord of the site.</p>
9.11	<p>Policy CC1 supports mixed use development limit within development opportunity areas consistent with a number of principles. New development shall be directed towards sites within the development opportunities areas, including the Inner North West. The site is located within this area. However, given the nature of the proposal which is for change of use the ground floor of existing buildings, it is not considered proportionate nor necessary to require the proposal to come forward in accordance with a masterplan, nor are the other requirements of Policy CC1 considered applicable.</p>
9.12	<p>The proposal does not include any physical alterations. Consideration is also given to the planning history, notably planning permission ref. LA04/2018/1991/F (see Site History). This has expired but a renewal has been submitted under ref. LA04/2024/0190/F. This, if approved, would be more likely to contribute to the delivery of the regeneration strategy for the area. The permanent approval of this use may hinder the aims of this policy. However, the applicant has confirmed that there will be a 6-month break clause in the lease which will enable the landowner to evict the applicant when they finally are ready to redevelop the site. These lease terms will ensure a permanent approval will not restrict any realisation of wider regeneration aims for the site and its wider context. As the council is part owner of the site it will be able to have control over this. The rationale for a permanent approval this time around is to remove the increasing frequency and necessity to seek occasional licences from the Courts for the wide range of entertainment space that the venue lends itself to.</p>
9.13	<p><u>Previous Temporary Permissions</u></p> <p>The previous planning permission on this site was for the temporary use of the ground floor as an event space and expired on the 20 February 2024. The guiding principle for approving a use on a temporary basis is to allow for a ‘test run’. Generally, no more than two consecutive temporary permissions should be approved and any application for a renewal should either be given a permanent permission or refused. This is the third such application for an event space at this site. However, the proposal for conference facilities with an associated event space does not sit on all fours with, and can therefore be distinguished from, the previous two temporary permissions which were solely for use as an event space.</p>

9.14	<p>The rationale for granting the previous permissions for a limited period was to allow Environmental Health to monitor impacts on nearby premises and to ensure no conflict on potential future development, specifically at the nearby site, 2-14 Little Donegal Street. These comments were based on an historic approval for a mixed-use development including 18 apartments under reference Z/2007/2120/F at 2-14 Little Donegall Street. It is however noted that this permission expired on 8 September 2016. An application to renew under ref. LA04/2016/1915/F was refused on 12th December 2018. There has been no further planning history on 2-14 Little Donegall Street therefore it is not considered likely that residential units will be developed on this site in the near future.</p>
9.15	<p><u>Impact on Amenity</u></p> <p>In respect of noise, nuisance and disturbance from the proposed use, Environmental Health has been consulted and offer no objection on the basis that theirs and Building Control's records showed no receipt of noise complaints.</p>
9.16	<p>Environmental Health also assessed potential impacts on air quality as a result of the proposal and advise that if the proposed development is to include any centralised combustion plant (biomass, CHP or gas boilers, etc.), an Air Quality Impact Assessment may be required which considers relevant human health receptors and impact on local air quality. In such a scenario they would require technical information relating to the proposed centralised combustion plant be provided to Planning Service and request if planning permission is forthcoming it is on the condition that this information is submitted. However, the proposal is for change of use only and any additional plant or equipment may require separate planning permission in its own right and does not form part of the prospective permission to be granted.</p>
9.17	<p>No commercial cooking operations will be undertaken within the development; outside catering will be provided for conferencing events.</p>
9.18	<p><u>Contaminated Land</u></p> <p>It has been confirmed by the agent that there are no proposed groundworks at the development site and therefore Environmental Health is content.</p>
9.19	<p><u>Impact on Listed Buildings</u></p> <p>The site partly comprises a Grade B2 Listed Building, although no physical alterations are proposed to the building. DfC HED was consulted and considered the effects of the proposal on listing buildings. It advises that the proposal is compliant with the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) para(s) 6.13 and Policy BH1 of the Belfast LDP strategy and thus offers no objection. It is considered that the proposal would not harm the special architectural or historic qualities of the Listed Building, or its setting, and that the proposal is compliant with the SPPS and Policy BH1.</p>
9.20	<p><u>Parking Provision and Access</u></p> <p>The applicant has submitted a transport statement incorporating a Transport Assessment, travel plan, and service management plan in line with policies TRAN 3 and 4. The application site is in an accessible city centre location, with provision of cycle parking, access to public transport and convenient walking distance to other parts of the city centre and public car parks. Consideration as to the nature of the proposal as an events and music venue and a tourist attraction, it is acknowledged that visitors to the city centre and the proposal will less likely need to requiring use of a private car. DfI Roads were consulted and have no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions.</p>
9.21	<p>In respect of access to the venue, Policy TRAN 2 is relevant. This seeks to ensure access to existing buildings via alterations where opportunities arise. The site in on the ground floor of the building at street level and accessed via double doors. The internal layout can</p>

<p>9.22</p>	<p>easily accommodate persons with disabilities. As such it would not be necessary to request modifications to the building to improve accessibility. Policy TRAN 2 is satisfied.</p> <p>DfI Roads has stipulated that it is content subject to conditions. However, it has requested that parking provision is secured by condition. This condition is not relevant to the proposal as no hard surfaced areas and no parking are proposed, nor is this necessary given the sustainable location of the site, and therefore should be excluded from the final decision.</p>
<p>10.0</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p>	<p>Summary of Recommendation: Approval</p> <p>Having regard to the policy context and other material considerations above, the proposal is considered acceptable and approval is recommended.</p> <p>Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive.</p>
<p>11.0</p> <p>11.1</p> <p>11.2</p> <p>11.3</p> <p>11.4</p> <p>11.5</p>	<p>Conditions</p> <p>The development hereby permitted must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.</p> <p>The change of use hereby approved shall relates to the ground floor of the site and as shown on the approved plans:</p> <p>Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to the extent of the permission.</p> <p>A minimum of 12 No. cycle parking spaces and stands shall be provided and permanently retained within the development for use by staff and visitors to the development.</p> <p>Reason: to encourage the use of alternative modes of transport for development users.</p> <p>The development hereby permitted shall operate in accordance with the approved Event Management Plan dated December 2023 and published on the Planning Portal on 24 January 2024.</p> <p>Reason: in the interests of road safety and the convenience of road users.</p> <p>The development hereby permitted shall operate in accordance with the approved Travel Plan, including the Service Management Plan dated December 2023 and published on the Planning Portal on 24 January 2024. The Site Operator will offer access to the Translink iLink Initiative and the Bike2Work Initiative or equivalent measures agreed by DfI Roads.</p> <p>Reason: To encourage the use of alternative modes of transport to the private car in accordance with the Transportation Principles.</p>

ANNEX	
Date Valid	19 January 2024
Date First Advertised	2 February 2024
Date Last Advertised	2 February 2024
Details of Neighbour Notification (all addresses)	
<p>The Owner/Occupier, 1-21 ,Little Donegall Street Belfast BT1 2JD</p>	
<p>The Owner/Occupier 95-97 DONEGALL STREET BELFAST BT1 2AH</p>	
<p>The Owner/Occupier DONEGALL STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH DONEGALL STREET BELFAST BT1 2FJ</p>	
<p>The Owner/Occupier GROUND & 1ST FLOORS 95-97 DONEGALL STREET BELFAST BT1 2AH</p>	
<p>The Owner/Occupier METROPOL HOUSE 2-10 YORK STREET BELFAST BT15 1AQ</p>	
<p>The Owner/Occupier 10 UNION STREET BELFAST BT1 2JF</p>	
<p>The Owner/Occupier 10A UNION STREET BELFAST BT1 2JF</p>	

The Owner/Occupier
12-14 UNION STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2JF

The Owner/Occupier
1ST FLOOR
98-102 DONEGALL STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2GW

The Owner/Occupier
2ND FLOOR
98-102 DONEGALL STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2GW

The Owner/Occupier
31A LITTLE DONEGALL STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2JD

The Owner/Occupier
33 LITTLE DONEGALL STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2JD

The Owner/Occupier
35 LITTLE DONEGALL STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2JD

The Owner/Occupier
4 UNION STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2JF

The Owner/Occupier
6-8 UNION STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2J

The Owner/Occupier
96 DONEGALL STREET
BELFAST
BT1 2GW

The Owner/Occupier
98-102 DONEGALL STREET
BELFAST

BT1 2GW

OFFICES 1ST AND PART 2ND FLOOR
2-14 LITTLE DONEGALL STREET
TOWN PARKS
BELFAST
BT1 2JD

CENTRAL LIBRARY ROYAL AVENUE
TOWN PARKS
BELFAST
BT1 1EA

Academy Restaurant
University of Ulster
York Street
Belfast
BT15 1ED

University of Ulster
York Street
Belfast
BT15 1ED