

Committee Report

Development Management Report	
Application ID: LA04/2025/1140/F and LA04/2025/0976/LBC	Date of Committee:
Proposal: Alterations to shopfront	Location: 35-39 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1FD
Referral Route: Referral to the Planning Committee under Section 3.8.5 (C) Those made by the Council	
Recommendation: Approval	
Applicant Name and Address: Ruairi O'Donnell Belfast City Council 9-21 Adelaide Street Belfast BT2 8DJ	Agent Name and Address: Ruairi O'Donnell Belfast City Council 9-21 Adelaide Street Belfast BT2 8DJ
Date Valid: 8 th July 2025	
Target Date: 21 st October 2025	
Contact Officer: Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management)	
Executive Summary: <p>The application seeks Full and Listed Building Consent for 'Alterations to Shopfront' at 35-39 Royal Avenue.</p> <p>The temporary shopfront will be made of timber with 3 no. downlighters installed and 8 no. fixed uplighters. The existing ridge height and massing of the building is not impacted by the proposal.</p> <p>35-39 Royal Avenue is a Grade B2 listed building of special architectural or historic interest (ref. HB26/50/226).</p> <p>The key issues are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principle of the development at this location Impact on the listed building Impact on the Belfast City Centre Conservation Area <p>The proposed development is sympathetic to the essential characteristic, scale, height, massing and alignment of nearby listed building/s by way of its scale, form, materials and detailing. It is also considered the proposal represents an enhancement of the Conservation Area.</p> <p>DFC Historic Environment Division (HED) were consulted in relation to the proposal and are content. Belfast City Council's Conservation Area Officer (CAO) offered no objection to the proposal, subject to condition.</p>	

The application has been advertised in local press and relevant neighbours have been notified. No representation has been received from third-parties or neighbours.

Recommendation

Having had regard to the development plan, relevant planning policies, and consultation responses it is considered that the full and listed building consent is approved.

Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions and deal with any other matters which may arise so long as they are not substantive.

Case Officer Report

Site Location Plan and Site Layout

Site Location Map



Existing Elevation



Proposed Elevation

Fourth Floor
13.70m

Third Floor
12.48m

Second Floor
9.72m

First Floor
6.84m

GROUND FLOOR
0.00m

Recessed part of shopfront as existing

Recessed part of shopfront as existing

Ulster Bank

Ulster Ba

Proposed lighting works : 3no. downlighters (Holophone DWL.1.LA023.AY.C4.W011.NIR) installed at shop front and 8no. uplighters (Halophane PBHF.NANF.9405213.08.NIR) at front of bulding

Timber fascia
Signage subject to further advertising application.

Timber console

Timber capital

Secondary recessed timber fascia
To conceal depth of existing shopfront.
Depth will be reduced subject to site investigations

Timber pilaster
Width shown based on existing column.
Where possible pilasters will be narrowed subject to site investigations.

Timber plinth block

Recessed part of shopfront as existing

Recessed part of shopfront as existing

Characteristics of the Site and Area	
1.0	Description of Proposed Development The application seeks Full planning permission (LA04/2025/1140/F) alongside Listed Building Consent (LA04/2025/0976/LBC) for alterations to shopfront at No. 35-39 Royal Avenue (Grade B2 listed).
1.1	

	Submitted documentation with the application form indicates that the proposal is to alter the shopfront temporarily. The temporary timber shopfront will conceal the depth of the existing historic shopfront.
2.0	<p>Description of Site</p> <p>The site is located at 35-39 Royal Avenue, a Grade B2 listed building (HB26/50/226) which is of special architectural or historic interest. The subject property is a 5-storey red-brick Victorian Era building with retail and/or commercial units occupying the ground floor. The site is also in the setting of Grade B1 listed building 41-51 Royal Avenue (HB26/50/227)</p> <p>The surrounding area is characterised predominantly by commercial and business uses, including Use class A1 (Shops), A2 (Financial, Professional and other services) and B2 (Business).</p> <p>The site is located within the City Centre and within the City Centre Conservation Area.</p>
Planning Assessment of Policy and other Material Considerations	
3.0	Site History
3.1	<p>Planning history relevant to the site is listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Z/2011/0009/LBC – repairs to roof, guttering, downpipe, front elevation masonry and reinforcement of dormer windows • Z/2002/2272/F – change of use from storage to retail on the first floor with internal alterations and refurbishments • Z/1995/2985 – change of use from fast food restaurant to retail unit, including construction of new shopfront • Z/1995/2986 – shop signage of fascia with projecting sign
4.0	Policy Framework
4.1	<p>Development Plan – operational policies</p> <p>Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035 (LDP)</p> <p>BH1 – Listed Buildings</p> <p>BH2 – Conservation Areas</p> <p>DES1 – Principles of Urban Design</p>
4.2	<p>Development Plan – zoning, designations and proposals maps</p> <p>Belfast Urban Area Plan (2001) (BUAP)</p> <p>Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004) (dBMAP)</p> <p>Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2014) (dBMAP)</p> <p>Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035</p>
4.3	<p>Regional Planning Policy</p> <p>Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)</p> <p>Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS).</p>
4.4	<p>Other Relevant Policies</p> <p>Belfast Agenda</p>

5.0	Statutory Consultees Responses DfC HED - No objection. BCC CAO - No objection.
6.0	Publicity and Representations
6.1	The application was advertised on the 18 th July 2025. No representations have been received in relation to this proposal.
7.0	Development Plan Context
7.1	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.
7.2	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.
7.3	The local development plan is now the Belfast Local Development Plan, which replaces the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 as the statutory plan for the city. The Belfast LDP comprises two parts: Part 1 is the Plan Strategy, which was adopted on 02 May 2023. Part 2 is the Local Policies Plan, which will provide the zonings and proposals map for Belfast, is not yet published. 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 proposals map in draft BMAP 2015 (v2014) given its advanced stage in the development process, save for retail policies that relate to Sprucefield which remain contentious.
7.4	Operational policies – the Plan Strategy contains a range of operational policies relevant to consideration of the application, which are set out in the following section of this report. The Plan Strategy replaces the operational policies currently provided by the Departmental Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). Those policies will no longer have effect, irrespective of whether planning applications have been received before or after the adoption date (par. 1.11 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement).
7.5	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 proposals map in draft BMAP 2015 (v2014) given its advanced stage in the development process, save for retail policies that relate to Sprucefield which remain contentious. Relevant Planning Policies
7.6	Policies in the Plan Strategy relevant to the application include the following: Policy BH1 – Listed Buildings Policy BH2 – Conservation Areas Policy DES1 – Principles of Urban Design

	Key Issues
7.7	<p>The key issues are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principle of the development at this location • Impact on the Listed Building • Impact on the Belfast City Centre Conservation Area
7.8	<p>The Principle of the Development at this Location The site is located within the Belfast City Centre Conservation Area.</p>
7.9	<p>This application for alteration to shopfront is to improve the aesthetics of the subject building and address the wider dereliction of Royal Avenue. The current temporary shopfront is to be removed and replaced with a temporary timber shopfront more sympathetic to the conservation area and listed building. The historic shopfront is to remain as existing, i.e. the new shopfront will be constructed above the historic shopfront, which will remain in situ. The application also includes the installation of 3 no. downlighters and 8 no. uplighters to the front elevation.</p>
7.10	<p>Impact on the architectural and historic qualities of the Listed Building Section 91 (2) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 applies which states ‘the Department must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.’</p>
7.11	<p>Policy BH1 of the Plan Strategy provides policy for the extension or alteration of a listed building and four criteria are to be met which are:</p> <p><i>f. The works preserve, restore and complement the building’s features of special architectural or historical importance to ensure the existing building remains intact and unimpaired;</i> <i>g. The design respects the essential character of the existing building and/or setting;</i> <i>h. The proposal makes use of quality materials and appropriate detailing sympathetic with the existing building and/or setting; and</i> <i>i. In the case of extensions, they shall be subservient to the existing building with regard to height, scale, massing, form and alignment.</i></p>
7.12	<p>Policy BH1 states that there will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings. Partial demolition of parts of listed buildings will be wholly exceptional and only acceptable where an alteration or extension proposal has been agreed and that demolition is required to facilitate it. The SPPS essentially repeats this policy approach.</p>
7.13	<p>The proposal is deemed to comply with the SPPS and Policy BH1 of the Plan Strategy. The proposed is timber fascia, used to surround the original shopfront. There will be minimal impact on the existing listed building. The essential character of the building and area will be retained.</p>
7.14	<p>DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) offered no objection to the proposal, stating that the “<i>temporary shopfront is acceptable as a betterment to the existing shopfront and also appropriate in the setting of the adjacent listed building</i>”.</p>
7.15	<p>Impact on the City Centre Conservation Area Section 104(11) of the Act states: ‘Where any area is for the time being designated as a conservation area, special regard must be had, in the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in that area, of any powers under this Act, to the desirability of– (a) preserving the character or appearance of that area in cases where an opportunity for enhancing its character or appearance does not arise;</p>

	<i>(b) enhancing the character or appearance of that area in cases where an opportunity to do so does arise.</i>
7.16	Policy BH2 relates to development proposals within a Conservation Area.
7.17	The Conservation Area Officer (CAO) offered no objection to the proposal as the proposal is temporary and <i>“the proposed shopfront would represent an enhancement over the existing,”</i> but adds that <i>“a restoration based in accurate historic record would represent optimum enhancement – restoring an architecturally unified composition to the ground floor / building.”</i>
	Other issues
7.18	Any advertisement(s) proposed for the site is subject to an independent planning application.
7.19	Submitted plans state that the result of site investigations may alter the depth and width of the timber fascia and pilasters. This case officer report relates to the submitted drawings and the width and depth as shown on the scale drawings.
7.20	With regard to the proposed uplighting and downlighting, a lighting schedule condition has been recommended due to the agent not being able to provide the final location of the lighting fixtures. Upon submission of these details, the Council will consult with HED and CAO prior to discharge of the condition.
	Recommendation
7.21	The proposal is acceptable having regard to Policies BH1 (Listed Buildings), BH2 (Conservation Areas) and DES1 (Principles of Urban Design) of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035; paragraph 6.12 and 6.13 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2015; and taking account of all relevant material considerations.
8.0	<p>Summary of Recommendation:</p> <p>Having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal is considered acceptable. It is recommended that Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent is granted.</p> <p>Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions.</p>
9.0	<p>Conditions</p> <p>FULL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development hereby permitted shall be permanently removed and the site restored to its original condition within 2 years of the date of this permission. <p>Reason: The development has only been granted temporary permission in the interest of the listed building and conservation area.</p>

	<p>2. No development shall commence unless details of the proposed lighting equipment have been submitted to and approved by the Council. The development shall not be carried out unless in accordance with the approved details.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and Listed Building</p> <p>LBC</p> <p>1. The works hereby permitted shall be permanently removed and the site restored to its original condition within 2 years of the date of this consent</p> <p>Reason: Temporary consent has been granted in the interest of the listed building and conservation area.</p> <p>2. No works shall commence unless details of the proposed lighting equipment have been submitted to and approved by the Council. No works shall be carried out unless in accordance with the approved details.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and Listed Building</p>
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ANNEX	
Date Valid	10/7/2025
Date First Advertised	18/7/2025
Date Last Advertised	1/8/2025
Date of Last Neighbour Notification	10/7/2025
Date of EIA Determination	N/A
ES Requested	No
Drawing Numbers and Title 01 – Location Plan - 35-39 RA 05 – Proposed Elevation - 35-39 RA 06 – Proposed Shopfront Elevation - 35-39 RA	