

Development Management Officer Report

Committee Application

Summary	
Committee Meeting Date: 16 th June 2026	
Application Ref: LA04/2026/0340/F	
Proposal: Proposed change of use of 144 no. PBMSA units to short term let accommodation outside of term time (July and August only).	Location: The Edge, 1 Frederick Street, Belfast, BT1 2LW (formally 48-52 York Street, Belfast, BT15 1AS)
Referral Route: Paragraph 3.8.2 (d) of the scheme of delegation – change of use application involving student accommodation	
Recommendation: Approval subject to condition	
Applicant Name and Address: 48-52 York Street Operating LLP 38 Seymour Street London W1H 7BP	Agent Name and Address: TSA Planning 20 May Street Belfast BT1 4NL
Date Valid: 30.03.2026	
Target Date: 13.07.2026	
Contact Officer: Lisa Walshe, Principal Planner	
Executive Summary: <p>The application site is situated at 1 Frederick Street, Belfast, BT1 2LW (formally 48-52 York Street, Belfast, BT15 1AS). Permission was granted under Z/2014/0479/O and LA04/2016/1213/RM for an 11-storey building comprising of 3 no. ground floor retail units, 307 studios for use as purpose built managed student accommodation (PBSA). The building is complete and operational and is known as 'The Edge'.</p> <p>The Edge Student Accommodation was previously subject to a planning application for a similar scheme as that proposed, for a temporary period only due to the delayed completion of the building which resulted in a high vacancy rate. This application was approved by planning committee on the 18th March 2025, however due to delays associated with the agreement of the associated Section 76, the processing of the application to a decision had surpassed the temporary restricted period and was subsequently withdrawn.</p> <p>This application seeks full planning permission for a Change of Use of 144 No. Student Bedrooms (less than 50% of the total rooms) to provide Short Term Let Accommodation outside of term time (July and August) only.</p> <p>The key issues for consideration of the application are set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principle of the proposal• Access, movement and parking	

One representation was received which is detailed in the report below.

DfI Roads were consulted and had no objections.

A Section 77 to vary the Section 76 of the host approval is necessary and is agreed in principle with Legal Services.

Recommendation

Having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal is considered acceptable. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions. Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, resolve the relevant Section 77, and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive.

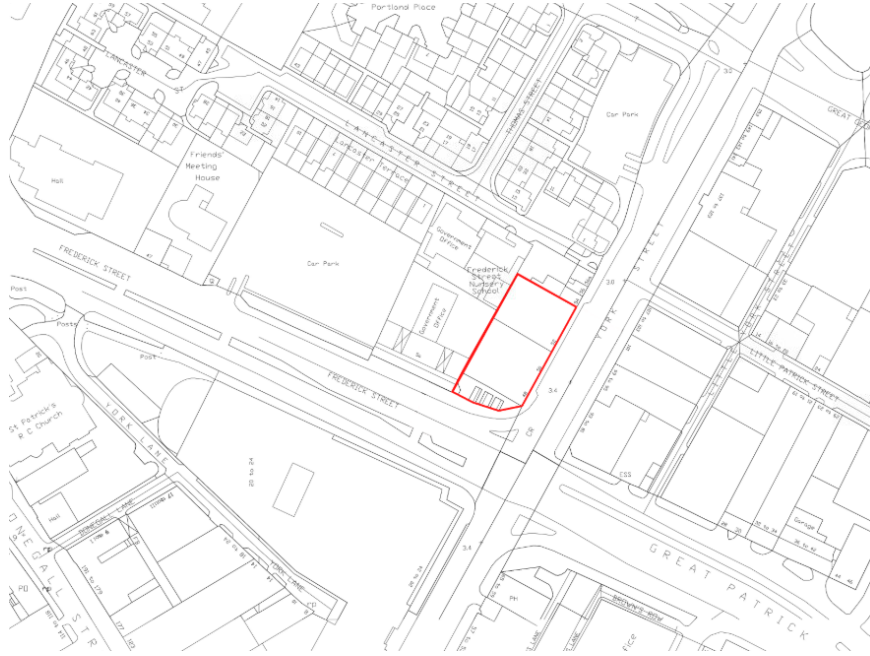
Officer Report

1.0

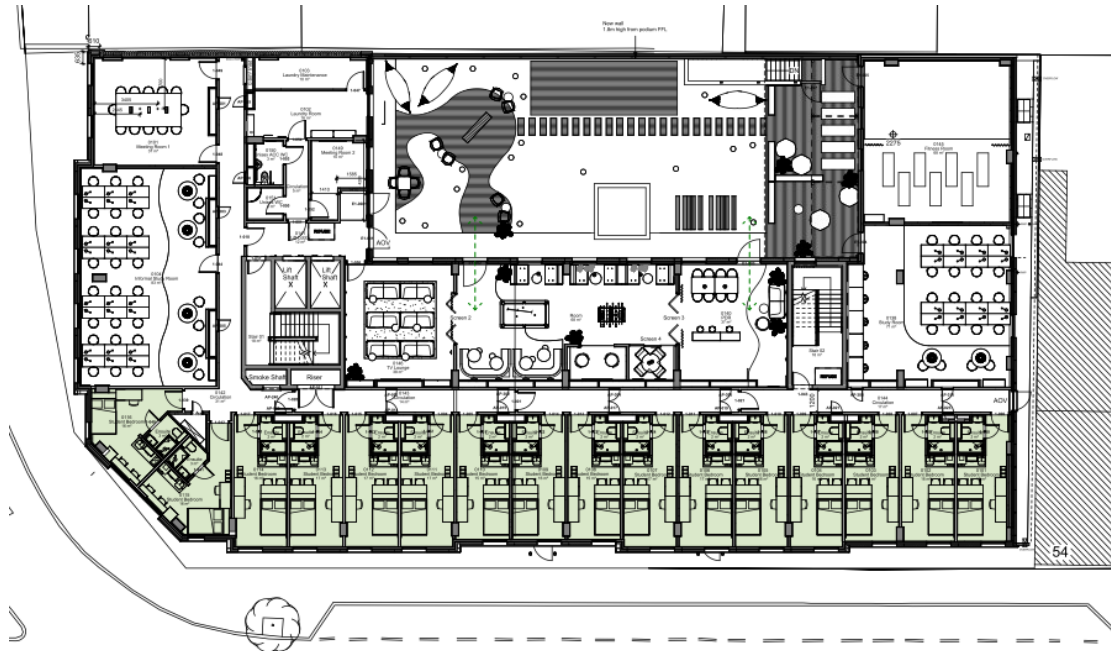
Drawings

1.1

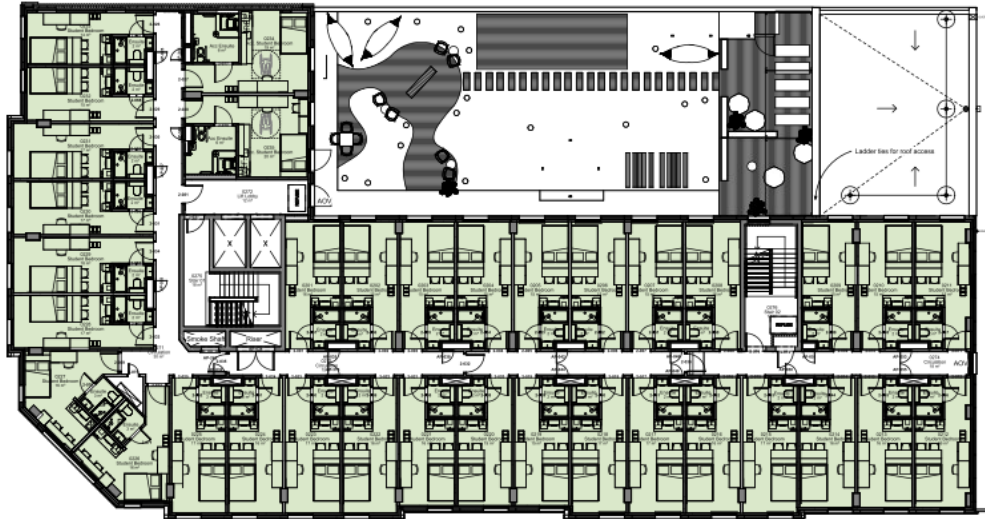
Site Location



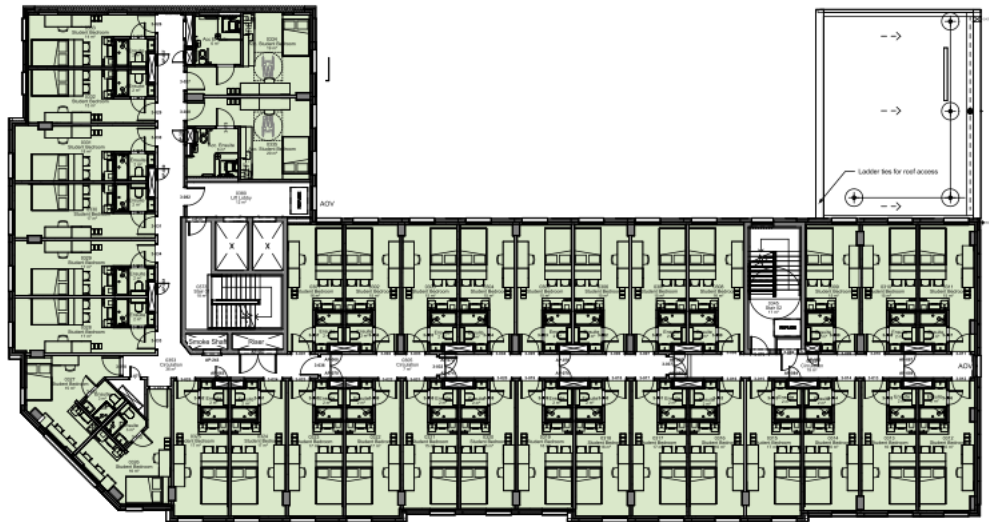
First Floor Plan



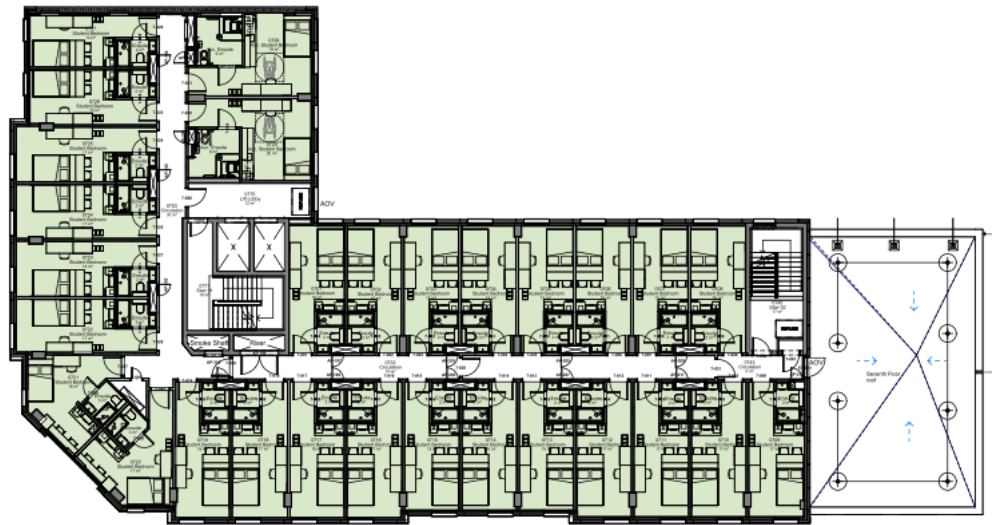
Second Floor Plan



Third Floor Plan



Seventh Floor Plan



Eighth Floor Plan



2.0	Characteristics of the Site and Area
2.1	The application site comprises a Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) which received planning permission under reference Z/2014/0479/O & LA04/2016/1213/RM in October 2017. It contains 307 self-contained units spread across 11 floors with associated communal and amenity facilities.

2.2	The building is located in the northern part of Belfast city in close proximity to Ulster University building, and other PBMSA buildings located on Great Patrick Street, Little Patrick Street and York Street.
3.0	Description of Proposal
3.1	The application is seeking full planning permission for the proposed change of use of 144 no. PBMSA units to short term let accommodation outside of term time only.
3.2	The proposal for short-term let use would be for July and August only, to reduce vacancy rates during these months, and would apply to less than 50% of the overall bedspaces.
4.0	Planning Policy and Other Material Considerations
4.1	Development Plan – Plan Strategy Belfast Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy 2035
4.2	<i>Strategic Policies:</i> Policy SP2 – sustainable development
4.3	<i>Operational Policies:</i> HOU13 – Short-term let accommodation TLC1 - Supporting tourism leisure and cultural development TLC3 - Overnight visitor accommodation TRAN 2 - Creating an accessible environment TRAN 4 – Travel Plan TRAN 8 - Car parking and servicing arrangements TRAN 9 – Parking Standards within Area of Parking Restraint Policy ENV1 – Environmental quality
4.4	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)
4.5	Regional Planning Policy Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)
4.6	Relevant Planning History Z/2014/0479/O - 48-52 York Street - Demolition of existing building and construction of new multi storey building with retail units at ground floor and purpose-built student accommodation over. Approved 25 th March 2015.

	<p>LA04/2016/1213/RM – 48-52 York Street - Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 11 storey building comprising of 3 no. ground floor retail units, 307 studios for use as purpose built managed student accommodation with associated communal and amenity facilities, including gym and all associated site and access works. Approved 2nd October 2017.</p> <p>LA04/2024/1869/F – 48-52 York Street - Temporary Change of Use of 92 No. Student Bedrooms to Short Term Let Accommodation. Withdrawn September 2025.</p>
5.0	Consultations and Representations
5.1	<p>Statutory Consultations Dfl Roads – no objections subject to conditions.</p>
5.2	<p>Non-Statutory Consultations None required.</p>
5.3	Representations
5.3.1	<p>The application has been advertised and neighbours notified.</p> <p>One representations was received and is detailed below:</p> <p>Definition of “term time” and clarity of use. The objection states that the absence of a publicly available schedule or period for the short-term letting operation means stakeholders (neighbours, local residents, the city council) cannot scrutinise or monitor the use. <i>Officers can confirm that the Section 77 negotiations pertain to the use of the rooms as Short Term Let during July and August only.</i></p> <p>Impact on the hotel and regulated accommodation sector: The objection states that allowing PBSA stock to convert to short-term lets adds quasi-hotel capacity into an already competitive city-centre visitor market without equivalent regulatory burden, standards, or tax treatment. Hotels operate under strict regulation, incur higher operating costs, and contribute substantially to employment and tourism infrastructure. Introducing additional short-term let supply erodes this regulated framework and risks financial displacement during peak trading months. This accommodation will compete with other certified products including, hotels, hostels, guest accommodation and self-catering accommodation.</p> <p><i>The tourism policies within the Plan Strategy 2035 seek to extend the offer for day and nighttime tourism facilities within the city centre boundary. The proposal complies with relevant policy. Financial impacts on existing tourism provision is not a determining factor in assessment.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on local housing market and student accommodation stock. Allowing a major development to pivot its use into short-term lets sets a precedent which may undermine the supply of dedicated student housing and may misalign with the intended purpose of the original approval. <p><i>The proposal is solely for the use as short term lets during the months of July and August. This will be secured via the planning agreement.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viability and threat to tourist development.

As stated above the tourism policies within the Plan Strategy 2035 seeks to extend the offer for day and nighttime tourism facilities within the city centre boundary. The proposal complies with policy, financial impacts on existing tourism provision is not a determining factor in assessment.

- **Precedent and policy alignment.** Granting this application may create a precedent for other large student housing developments to seek flexible change to tourism use, thereby eroding the supply of student accommodation and undermining local housing policy. The application appears to conflict with the original planning intention (student use) and may not align with strategic objectives for housing mix, neighbourhood.

Any future applications would be assessed on their own merits. The current proposal does not undermine or erode the supply of student housing as the proposed change of use relates solely outside of term time which is defined as July and August.

- **Neighbourhood amenity and local infrastructure.** The objection stated the conversion of significant numbers of student rooms into short-term lets has the potential to change the character of the local neighbourhood.

The proposal relates solely to the Months of July and August, therefore is not anticipated to have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the area.

- **Monitoring and enforcement issues.**

An updated short term let Management Plan has been submitted which details the monitoring and enforcement of those using the short term let. This will be secured via a S77 variation to the host S76 Planning Agreement. In relation to the enforcement and monitoring of the planning approval, any potential breaches of either the original planning approval or that approved under this application would be a matter for the Belfast City Council Planning Enforcement Team.

- **Amenity, management and neighbourhood impact**

Short-term-lets operate with higher turnover, differing visitor behaviour, and reduced stability. This can lead to noise, disturbance and increased comings and goings, which are not consistent with the controlled management protocols typically required for PBSA. The applicant has not demonstrated how they will maintain equivalent standards of oversight during short-term visitor use.

An updated Short Term Let Management Plan has been submitted with the proposal that details how matter such as these may be dealt with and enforced if they arise. This will be secured via the S77 variation to the S76 Planning Agreement.

- **Monitoring and Enforcement**

1) Who will have responsibility for monitoring and verifying that this property operates solely during July and August?

It is the responsibility of the developer/operator to operate in accordance with planning permission, any reported breaches of planning are the responsibility of Planning Enforcement to investigate in line with its Enforcement Charter.

	<p>2) Does the Council have the required resources and statutory powers to effectively monitor and enforce compliance with the two-month change-of-use restriction?</p> <p><i>Yes, a planning enforcement team is in place.</i></p> <p>3) Which agency will be designated as the enforcement authority, and how will breaches of this planning condition be investigated and addressed?</p> <p><i>The planning enforcement team are responsible for investigating any complaints relating to breaches of planning control.</i></p>
6.0	PLANNING ASSESSMENT
6.1	Development Plan Context
6.1.1	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.
6.1.2	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.
6.1.3	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 (“Departmental Development Plan”) until the Local Policies Plan is adopted.
6.1.4	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.).
6.1.5	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 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.
6.1.6	Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 - The site is located within the settlement development limit in the BUAP and is not zoned for any use.
6.1.7	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (2004 and 2014) – The site is located within an area of ‘white land’ within Belfast City Centre Development Limits. The site is also located within Belfast City Centre Belfast City Core Area of Parking Restraint.
	Key Issues

6.1.8	The key issues to be considered in this application are:
6.1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle • Access, movement and parking
<p>Principle of the proposal</p>	
6.2	Policy HOU13 relating to short term lets set out a number of key criteria which must be satisfied.
6.2.1	Criterion a. requires that the proposal <i>strengthens and diversifies the range of short-stay visitor accommodation in the city</i> . As of December 2025, short-term lets comprise 23% of Belfast City Council’s tourist accommodation. The proposal is for 144 rooms outside of
6.2.2	term time and therefore would strengthen and diversify the range of short-term visitor accommodation in the city. The provision of short term let accommodation allows visitors to reside for a period of no longer than a consecutive 90-day period.
6.2.3	Criterion b. requires that the proposal <i>is accessible by public transport</i> . The site is located in the city centre and is highly accessible by public transport.
6.2.4	Criterion c. requires that the proposal <i>is sited within an existing tourism cluster or in close proximity to a visitor attraction</i> . The site is within the city centre with several visitor attractions in close proximity, for example Belfast City Hall is 0.8 miles away and a 20 min walk.
6.2.5	Criterion d. requires that the proposal <i>has appropriate management arrangements in place to ensure a positive and safe living environment whilst minimising any potential negative impacts</i> . The applicant has provided a Service Management Plan which details the specific management company; Little Feather Management who will be responsible for the associated management of the short term let of the relevant units and the safety and wellbeing of all residents, including both visitors and students.
6.2.6	Criterion e. requires that <i>the site is not located within a designated HMA (see policy HOU10), unless it can be demonstrated that the development is needed to meet a specific demand in that location</i> . As the site is not located within a designated HMA, this criterion is not applicable.
6.2.7	Criterion f. requires that <i>in the case of a change from permanent residential use, part of the property must be retained as permanent residential housing</i> . The existing building is a PBSA therefore this criterion is not applicable.
6.2.8	Policy TLC1 states that the Council will seek to support tourism, leisure and cultural development that contributes to extending the offer of these forms of development across daytime and nighttime for the visitor. It is also expected that the proposal will lead to improving the quality and accessibility of tourism, leisure and cultural assets to support the city’s reputation as an attractive tourism destination.
6.2.9	Policy TLC3 states that planning permission will be granted for tourism development for new overnight accommodation within the city centre boundary. Although the policy advises that short-term lets are considered under policy HOU13, nonetheless it demonstrates that there is a thrust for tourism development to be located within the city centre.
<p>Car Parking</p>	
6.3	

6.3.1	Policy TRAN 2 highlights the importance of providing suitable access for all and that the Council will seek to ensure that access to existing buildings and their surroundings is improved as opportunities arise through alterations, extensions and changes of use.
6.3.2	As outlined above the proposal does not include any external or internal alterations, however the existing building incorporates all necessary design features to ensure that the building remains accessible to those with impaired mobility through ground level access at the main entrance and lift access to all floors within the building. Additionally, a number of the rooms which have been identified for short term use include wheelchair accessible rooms.
6.3.3	Under Policy TRAN 4, the application is supported by a Travel Plan which DfI Roads have been consulted on and have no objection with.
6.3.4	Policy TRAN8 seeks to ensure that there is sufficient car parking and servicing arrangement for all developments. The current student accommodation provides 3 no. disabled parking spaces. The development is car free with cycle parking available for short-term guests. There will be a drop off and loading bay within the site for limited use for delivery and loading/unloading. Short-term guests will therefore be encouraged to use more sustainable means of transport, such as cycling, walking or take advantage of regular local transport facilities.
6.3.5	Policy TRAN 9 applies a parking standard of 1 space per 300m2 of operational floorspace in the city centre core area of parking restraint. As outlined previously, the application site is located within an area of parking restraint and the justification and amplification text under Policy TRAN 9 states there is a presumption against additional car parking in areas of parking restraint. There is no parking proposed as part of the proposal with the exception of 3no. disabled spaces, the proposal therefore complies.
6.4	Section 76 Planning Agreement
6.4.1	Application LA04/2016/1213/RM was subject to a Section 76 agreement which restricted the use to student accommodation or associated use by educational institutions only. As such a Section 77 is required to modify the original S76 to ensure that the student use is compliant with its legal obligations.
6.4.2	A Section 77 to vary the Section 76 of the host approval has been agreed in principle with Legal Services and delegated authority is sought to resolve the finalisation of same.
6.5	Conclusion
6.5.1	The proposal is considered to be an appropriate form of development within the city centre, it will provide additional visitor accommodation within the city centre on a short- term basis, adding to the diversity of visitor accommodation on offer. Approval is recommended.
7.0	Recommendation
8.1	Having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal is considered acceptable. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

8.2	Delegated authority is sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, resolve the Section 77 variation to the host Section 76 planning agreement and deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they are not substantive.
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DRAFT CONDITIONS:

1. The development hereby permitted must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

2. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied or operated unless in accordance with the approved Travel Plan uploaded to the Planning Portal on 3rd April 2026.

Reason: To promote sustainable travel patterns and off-set the demand for vehicular movements and/or parking.

3. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied or operated unless in accordance with the Service Management Plan uploaded to the Planning Portal on 3rd April 2026.

Reason: In the interests of road safety and convenience of road users.