Development Management Officer Report Committee Application

Summary		
Committee Meeting Date: 15 March 2016		
Application ID: LA04/2015/0716/F		
Proposal:	Location:	
Erection of a 11 storey building for managed	26-44 Little Patrick Street Belfast BT15	

380 student accommodation studios with shared communal areas; external courtyard; other ancillary accommodation including a reception/management suite and communal areas; plants and storage areas; cycle provision.

Referral Route: Major Application

Refusal	
Agent Name and Address:	
Turley	
Hamilton House	
3 Joy Street	
Belfast	
BT2 8LE	
	Agent Name and Address: Turley Hamilton House 3 Joy Street Belfast

Executive Summary:

The site is located within Belfast City Centre as defined within the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and is not subject to any zoning.

The main issues to be considered in this proposal are:

- The principle of the development at this location;
- Impact of the Scale, Massing and Design upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- The impact on Traffic Movement and Parking; and
- Other matters including the impact on amenity.

The site is located on unzoned (white) land close to the new University of Ulster campus and is not located in or adjacent to a primarily residential area. There are therefore no restrictions on the land use providing it does not conflict with relevant policy and other material considerations.

The principle of purpose built student accommodation has not been demonstrated to be acceptable given the lack of an approvable management plan and other amenity concerns. The proposed 11 Storey Building is adjacent to extant approvals for similar sized buildings, in this context the scale and massing is considered appropriate.

In terms of impact on amenity, there are no existing residential uses immediately adjacent to the application site however there are extant approvals for residential apartments immediately adjacent. In terms of prospective residents, outlook is limited on some studio apartments and amenity space is not considered sufficient. The accommodation proposed is in accordance / generally exceeds standards set out in NI Housing Executive HMO standards.

NIEA Waste Management and BCC EPU have no objection regarding land contamination. EPU have no concerns with noise and air quality subject to conditions. NIEA Monuments, NI Water and Rivers Agency have no objections to the proposal. No representations have been received.

Outstanding Matters

Environmental Health and Transport NI requested additional information on the 2nd and 3rd of September and on the 27th October 2015 a 14 day letter issued to the applicants agent requesting this information and further specific information on how this proposal complied with recently published PBMSA guidance. Some information in relation to the public footway and waste management was provided on the 11th of January but inaccuracies were found and this was relayed to the applicant's agent on the 12th January 2016; to date the information still remains to be responded to and the remaining information outstanding.

As the Planning Service has not been provided with sufficient information to demonstrate that the scheme can operate without harm to the amenity of neighbouring land uses or prospective residents – refusal is recommended.

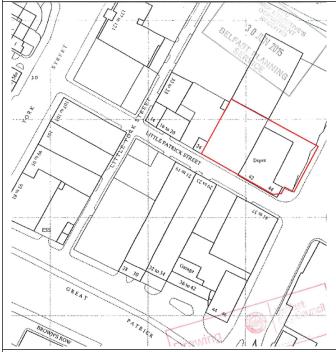
Recommendation

That the proposal should be refused as insufficient amenity space and outlook has been provided within the scheme to ensure a quality residential environment for future residents, and insufficient information has been submitted.

Delegation of final refusal reasons to the Director of Planning & Place is requested but a draft list of reasons is listed at paragraph 11.0.

Case Officer Report

Site Location Plan





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Letters of Support	None Received
Letters of Objection	None Received
Number of Support Petitions and signatures	No Petitions Received
Number of Petitions of Objection and signatures	No Petitions Received

Characteristics of the Site and Area

1.0 Description of Proposed Development

Re-development of a vacant site with the erection of a 11 Storey building (37-38m) for managed student accommodation, comprising 380 No. studio rooms with shared communal areas at ground floor only, a landscaped courtyard; other ancillary accommodation including a reception/management suite; plant and storage areas, and cycle provision.

2.0 Description of Site

The site is vacant land, run down in nature and surrounded by hoarding. It is located at the corner of Little Patrick Street and Nelson Street. The area generally is in a state of decline and is of poor environmental quality with many buildings unused. However a furniture store occupies the corner site opposite the application site and is also subject to a current planning application for 11 Storey development.

Planning Assessment of Policy and other Material Considerations

3.0 Planning History

On-site - There is no similar planning history on the site.

Surrounding Area - There are previous planning approvals on the adjacent site at 4 Nelson Street, references Z/2012/0352/O and Z/2008/0824/F for an 11 storey apartment building. The site opposite which is subject to planning application Z/2015/0118F is for an 11 Storey (37m) mixed use development of 2 retails units and 50 apartments and has history of a similar approval.

	There are a number of approved and current applications for student accommodation in the area under Z/2015/0138/F; Z/2014/1657/F and Z/2015/0177/F. In addition to this there is an outline approval under Z/2014/0479/O for Demolition of existing building and construction of new multi storey building with retail units at ground floor and purpose built student accommodation over at 48 - 52 York Street, which was decided on 23rd March 2015.
4.0	Policy Framework
4.1	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 Policy UE 1 - Urban design House in Multiple Occupancy Subject Plan 2015 HMO 7- Large Scale Purpose Built Student Accommodation
4.2	Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland Planning Policy Statement 3: Access Movement and Parking Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments Planning Policy Statement 13:Transportation and Land Use Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning and Flood Risk
5.0	Statutory Consultee Responses
	Transport NI- Further Information request 2.9.15. NIWater- No objections; NIEA- Waste Management- No Objection subject to conditions; NIEA- Natural Environment Division- No Objections NIEA- Protecting Historic Buildings- No Objections
	Rivers Agency- No Objections
6.0	Non Statutory Consultee Responses Belfast City Council EPU- FIR Additional information required on Student Management Plan.
7.0	Representations The application has been neighbour notified and advertised in the local press. No letters of objection have been received.
8.0	Other Material Considerations
8.1	DoE Living Spaces Document.
8.2	Planning and Place Advice Note: Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation
8.3	BELFAST: A LEARNING CITY A framework for student housing and purpose built student accommodation
9.0	Assessment
9.1	The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (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. Paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12 require the safeguarding of residential and work environs and the protection of amenity. Paragraphs 4.13-8 highlight the importance of creating shared space, whilst paragraphs 4.23-7 stress the importance of good design. Paragraphs 4.18-22 details that sustainable economic growth will be supported. The SPPS states PPS3 and PPS7 remain applicable under 'transitional arrangements'.
9.2	Article 6 (4) of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Act states that in making any determination under the said act regard is to be had to the local development plan, and that the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material consideration indicate otherwise.
	The site is located within the development limits of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan,

within the city centre area of archaeological potential and within the Laganside North and Docks Character Area (CC015).

Due to the nature of the proposal regard must also be had to the BMAP HMO Subject Plan and this is considered in greater detail at paragraph 9.3.1 below.

The key issues in the assessment of the proposed development include:

- The principle of the development at this location;
- Impact of the Scale, Massing and Design upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- The impact on Traffic Movement and Parking; and
- · Other matters; including impact on amenity.

9.3 The Principle of the proposed development at this location

The site is located within the development limits of Belfast in BMAP and within the city centre. It is within walking distance of both the Primary Retail Core and abuts an HMO node in the HMO Subject Plan ref: 04/18. The site is located on unzoned (white) land in the vicinity new University of Ulster campus and is not located in or adjacent to a primarily residential area.

9.3.1 HMO Subject Plan 2015

The proposal has been assessed against Policy HMO 7 of the HMO Subject Plan. This policy sets out 5 criteria which must be met in order to be acceptable. All criteria are met. The scheme is in excess of 50 units. All units are self contained, the proposal is not located in a primarily residential area; however provision has not been made for the management and there is insufficient landscaping and amenity space provided. The proposal therefore does not comply with HMO 7.

9.3.2 Assessment against Planning & Place Guidance Document on PBMSA

Planning and Place's advice note document titled 'Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation' is Belfast City Council's first step as a planning authority to respond to the SPSS stated objective that the planning system should secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being. Whilst guidance and not planning policy it is a material consideration. The document sets out six criteria which all applications for PBMSA proposals should adhere to.

9.3.3 Criteria (a)

In regards to the first criterion the development is within 100 metres of the new University of Ulster campus, 800 metres of the Belfast Metropolitan College and 1,200 metres of Queens University. Bus stops are located around 100 metres away from the development with buses operating every 10 metres during peak times and every 20 minutes off peak. As the proposal is likely to be for students that will attend the Ulster University it is suitably located and therefore complies with criterion (a).

9.3.4 Criteria (b)

This criterion requires the proposal to be assessed in relation to policy designations specific to the City Centre. The proposal is located 100 metres away across Little Patrick Street and York Street from a Protect Housing Area known as Lancaster Street/ Terrace. Whilst PBSMA could be considered a form of residential accommodation the scale and impact of PBSMA is likely to be incompatible with existing residential communities. The proposed development is considered sufficiently removed from this area, York Street is a busy 4 lane road which in itself will act as a barrier between the two areas. Given the location of the proposed entrance way it is likely that Great Patrick Street would be used

to approach any colleges.

In regards to other policy designations in the city centre the site is not located with a conservation area or the Primary Retail Core. The nearest listed building is located in across Great Patrick Street on the corner of Academy Street. The development is adequately removed so as not to have an impact on its setting. The proposal complies with criterion (b).

9.3.5 Criteria (c)

In regards to criterion (c) it is considered that the layout, design and facilities provided within the development are insufficient. There are insufficient break out spaces for the number of studios in the building and all of the communal areas are located at ground floor. The entrance to the PBSMA is located on the corner of Little Patrick Street and Nelson Street. This leads into a reception and common area with a control zone beyond. One landscaped courtyard is provided at ground floor level. Some of the bedrooms will have reduced outlook over the cycle area and overall this and the provision of common areas at ground floor only is to the detriment of the entire scheme.

- 9.3.6 In terms of open space provision, it is acknowledged that 'Creating Places- Achieving Quality in New Residential Developments' suggests that adequate provision would range from 10-30 sq metres, with inner urban areas tending towards the lower end figure. The outdoor landscape courtyard provides around 247 sq metres which is not sufficient for the needs of 380 students. While it is considered that a flexible approach should be applied when considering planning applications for PBMSA in the City Centre given the inadequate common room / break out areas the level of provision (landscaped area and commons room) is considered unacceptable.
- 9.3.7 The development proposes no car parking spaces which is considerably below the 1 to 1 amount required according to the DOE Parking Standards which accompany PPS3. However the applicant has provided a detailed Transport Assessment seeking to justify a relaxation of the standard based on alternative transport arrangements and the proximity of the development to the new Ulster University Campus. Factoring this with the lack of objection from Transport NI on this issue it is considered that the applicant has adequately addressed the shortfall in parking provision.
- 9.3.8 The accommodation proposed is in accordance / generally exceeds the standards set out in NI Housing Executive HMO standards –there 380 studio apartments proposed in the building (38 per floor) which range in size from 16-19sqmetres per room (9sqm NIHE standard). Whilst provision is therefore compliant with space standards the lack of amenity space as set at paragraph 9.3.6 means that the proposal is not compliant with Criteria C.

9.3.9 Criteria (d)

Criterion (d) states that development should be designed in a way that does not conflict with adjacent properties or the general amenity of the surrounding area. The development is bounded by an extant approval for apartments to the north, granted on 22nd May 2013. If built as approved the apartment proposed landscape courtyards would line up with the landscaped courtyard proposed here. Given the potential conflicting landuses a management plan could potentially address any amenity concerns from any future apartments. The same is the issue opposite the site where there is an extant and current application for an 11 Storey apartment development with a separation distance across Little Patrick Street of just 10 metres.

9.3.10 Belfast City Council EPU were consulted on the application and requested further information on the student management plan for the proposal but this has not been submitted. This issue is dealt with in greater detail at paragraph 9.62 below.

9.3.11 The guidance document makes reference to the cumulative impact and how an overconcentration relative to the wider community can lead to an imbalance ultimately resulting in harm to residential amenity. However, the site is almost adjacent to a HMO Node which has specifically been identified in the HMO Subject Plan as an area that can accommodate higher density residential developments with a lower impact on traditional areas. Given this it is accepted that the proposal will not cause unacceptable damage to the residential amenity of nearby dwellings. However the close proximity of approvals for apartments is of concern and this issue has not be adequately addressed in any evidence received from the applicant.

9.3.12 Criteria (e)

Requires that the development has appropriate management in place to create a positive and safe living environment or students whilst minimising any potential negative impact from occupants. As stated above no agreed management plan has been received. This is dealt with further at paragraph 9.6.2 below.

9.3.13 Criteria (f)

Planning applications should be accompanied by evidence supporting the need for the type and quantum of PBSMA proposed. No evidence has been submitted to support this criteria.

- 9.4 Impact of the Scale, Massing and Design upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- 9.4.1 As previously stated the site is located within Character Area CC 015 Laganside and Docks. The general urban design criteria under Designation CC 015 states that 'the density of development in the area shall be maintained and increased where appropriate, including around the transport node, through high site coverage and high plot ratio and that development proposal shall take account of the height of adjoining buildings.'
- 9.4.2 In regards to the more specific street frontages heights criteria the Urban Design Criteria does not specifically refer to development which fronts onto Little Patrick Street or Nelson Street; however the PAC in their report into the Nelson Street appeal recognised the greater scale set in the area, in the context of planning permissions, in 2008 and 2009 for 11-storey buildings.
- 9.4.3 The development should also be considered in its immediate and local context which includes extant planning permissions, some of which are under construction. The University of Ulster campus when complete will change the character of the location along Frederick Street and Great Patrick Street and will have completed a ridge height of 55 metres (17 storeys). Furthermore an 11 storey apartment development has been approved on the site adjacent and to the rear of this proposal at Nelson Street under planning appeal Z/2012/0352/O and approval Z/2008/0824/F. The development compliments the built form of the area, including the University of Ulster Campus, creating a strong sense of place. The underutilised site does have the potential to act as a driver for further regeneration of an area which has historically suffered from decline and dereliction.
- 9.4.4 The proposed height of the building compliments extant approvals adjacent to and surrounding the site and it is considered that the proposed height, scale and mass would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.
- 9.4.5 PPS7 Design, character and appearance of area and amenity

 The proposal has been further assessed against QD 1 of PPS 7. The preamble to PPS7 advises that it applies to all residential applications with the exception of single houses in

the countryside. Policy QD1 states that planning permission will be granted for new residential development only where it is demonstrated that it will create a quality and sustainable residential environment. It indicates that housing will not be permitted in established residential areas where it would result in unacceptable damage to local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of these areas. The policy sets out nine criteria which all residential development proposals are expected to meet. Please see paragraph 9.4 for assessment is relation to height, scale and massing.

- 9.4.6 The proposed design is consistent with the area, incorporating a similar, fenestration, and solid to void ratios. A palette of materials has been specified and includes mahogany red terracotta cladding with gazed curtain walling and grey panel cladding. No samples have been provided to ensure acceptable materials, however a condition could be attached to any approval requesting details of the external finishes to be submitted to Belfast City Council for agreement. The proposed design is principle therefore compliant with criteria [g] of PPS7.
- 9.4.7 Accordingly it is not considered that the proposal would adversely impact on the character of the area, which is a wide mix of non residential uses, building designs and finishes.

9.5 Impact on Traffic and Parking

The proposal has been assessed against Policy AMP 7 of PPS 3: Access, Movement and parking. Transport NI were consulted and further information requested was submitted on the 11th January; however inconsistencies in the drawings were relayed to the agent for the application on the 12th January 2016 and to date no further contact has been made. As such the proposal is considered not to compliy to PPS 3 and in particular AMP 1 in that insufficient information has been provided to address the concerns of Transport NI.

9.6 Other matters

Paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12 of the SPPS states there are wide range of environmental and amenity considerations including noise and air quality, which should be taken into account by planning authorities when proposing policies or managing development.

9.6.1 **Archaeology**

As the site is located within the Belfast Area of Archaeological Potential (AAP) as defined in BMAP, NIEA Historic Monuments Unit provided comment on the proposal; stating they are satisfied subject to conditions to allow for the identification and recording of archaeological remains.

9.6.2 **Amenity**

BCC Environmental Protection Unit has offered no objections in relation to noise, air quality and contaminated land subject to the relevant conditions and informatives being added to any approval. However EPU did raise concerns with the Management Plan submitted and requested the applicant to submit further details as to how it intended to successfully deliver a robustly managed facility. This was requested from the agent on the 27th October and to date no information has been recieved by Planning Service.

9.6.3 **Bin Storage**

In regards to bin storage, the applicant has shown two defined areas within the ground floor layout. However these areas also provide access to the cycle storage and clarification was sought from the applicant as to sufficient ingress and egress but no further information on this issue has been provided. A waste management strategy was also submitted but given the inacurracies on the drawings consultation could not be carried out.

9.6.4 **Contaminated Land**

A Environmental Site Assessment and Generic Quantitative Risk Assessment (GQRA) was submitted in support of the application and both NIEA Land, Soil and Air Team as well as BCC EPU had no objection to the findings of the report subject to conditions being attached to any approval.

9.6.5 Flood Risk

FLD 1 of Planning Policy 15: Planning and Flood Risk states that 'Development will not be permitted within the 1 in 100 year fluvial flood plain (AEP7 of 1%) or the 1 in 200 year coastal flood plain (AEP of 0.5%) unless the applicant can demonstrate that the proposal constitutes an exception to the policy. Where the principle of development is accepted by the planning authority through meeting the 'Exceptions Test', as set out below under the Exceptions heading, the applicant is required to submit a Flood Risk Assessment for all proposals.

The principle of development is considered acceptable as it meets the exceptions test in that a building previously existed on the site. As the proposal falls under the exceptions test a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) was requested and received. Rivers Agency was consulted in regards to the FRA and have no objections given that the building will be made flood resilient to 4.2m OD.

9.6.6 **Site Drainage**

The existing building is already connected to the public water and sewerage networks. NIEA Drainage and Water and NIW have both been consulted and given that NIW are satisfied with the proposal NIEA's Drainage and Water team have no objection subject to conditions outlined below.

9.7 **Developer Contributions**

In this case it is considered appropriate that any planning approval should be subject to the developer entering a legal agreement with Belfast City Council both to provide certainty around the management of the accommodation and to provide contributions to local environmental improvements.

In this case it is considered that this could primarily take the form of public realm improvements to the streetscape around the building and in particular to create a new safe pedestrian friendly crossing point to the university from the new student accommodation. The area currently does not provide a quality environment and is poor in respect of pedestrian linkages to the heart of the city. It is considered that collectively the new university complex and new accommodation with environmental improvements and safe crossing points will regenerate the area.

The sum of monies / works to be undertaken are to be agreed with the developer / landowner and the applicant's agent has expressed a willingness and commitment to provide satisfactory contributions. This willingness was expressed in a letter on another planning application on the 7th January 2016; no further documentation has been received to date on this matter.

10.0 Summary of Recommendation

The proposal has been assessed against the development plan as well as Policy HMO 7 of HMO Subject Plan 2015, Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland, Planning Policy Statement 7: Residential Development, Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement and Parking, Planning Policy Statement 12 Housing in Settlements, Planning Policy Statement 13 Transportation and Land Use, Policy Statement 15: Planning and Flood Risk and supplementary planning guidance. Local Government Waste Storage Guide for Northern Ireland, BCC Purpose Built Student Accommodation

supplementary guidance, and BCC Belfast A learning City A Framework on student housing and purpose built student accommodation publications have also been taken into account.

Having regard to the policy context and other material considerations above, the proposal is considered unacceptable and insufficient information has been provided.

Accordingly refusal of planning permission is recommended.

11.0 Reasons for Refusal:

Delegation of the final refusal reasons to the Director of Planning & Place is requested. However, draft reasons are listed below:

- The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland, Belfast HMO Subject Plan and Policy QD1 of Planning Policy Statement 7 "Quality Residential Environments", and the Belfast HMO Subject Plan in that insufficient amenity space and outlook has been provided to ensure a quality environment for future residents.
- 2. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland, Article 3 of the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, policy QD1 of Planning Policy Statement 7 "Quality Residential Environments", and Belfast HMO Subject Plan in that it has not been demonstrated that appropriate management arrangements are in place to protect the amenity of adjacent properties and that the amenity of prospective residents will not be prejudiced in terms of noise or other disturbance, servicing, and waste management arrangements.
- 3. The proposal is contrary to Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement and Parking; Policy AMP 7, and Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments; Policy QD1, in that the applicant has failed to demonstrate that the public footway around the site is adequate and appropriate provision for cycle parking can be made in accordance with the Department's parking standards, in order to promote the use of alternative modes of transport in accordance with sustainable transportation principles.

12.0 Notification to Department (if relevant)

13.0 Representations from Elected members:

N/A

	ANNEX	
Date Valid	30th June 2015	
Date First Advertised	14th August 2015	
Date Last Advertised	14 th August 2015	

Details of Neighbour Notification (all addresses)

The Owner/Occupier,

19-21, Little Patrick Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BA,

The Owner/Occupier.

23-29, Little Patrick Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BA,

The Owner/Occupier,

24 Little Patrick Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BA,

The Owner/Occupier.

2A Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier,

37-41, Little Patrick Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BA,

The Owner/Occupier,

42-44, Little Patrick Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BA,

The Owner/Occupier.

60-82, Great Patrick Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 2LU,

The Owner/Occupier.

Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier,

Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier,

UNIT 2.Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier.

UNIT 8, Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier.

Unit 1, Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier,

Unit 3, Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier.

Unit 4, Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier,

Unit 5, Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier.

Unit 6, Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier.

Unit 7a, Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

The Owner/Occupier.

Unit 8, Nelson Trade Centre, Nelson Street, Town Parks, Belfast, Antrim, BT15 1BH,

Date of Last Neighbour Notification	5th August 2015
Date of EIA Determination	N/A
ES Requested	No