

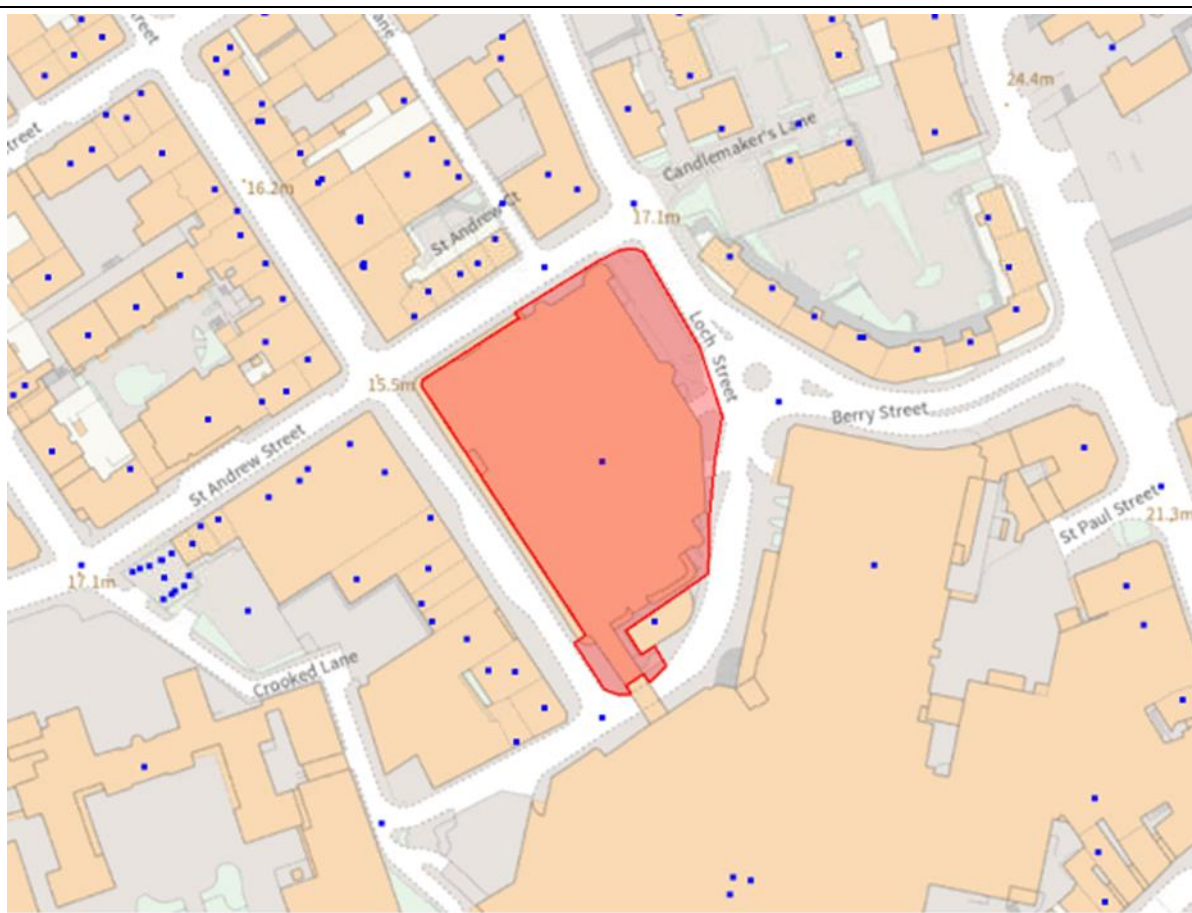


Planning Development Management Committee

Report by Development Management Manager

Committee Date: 19th June 2025

Site Address:	Former John Lewis Building, George Street, Aberdeen AB25 1BW
Application Description:	Change of Use from Class 1A (Shops, Financial, Professional and Other Services) to Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure) and use for electric vehicle recreation (floors two and three) with associated retail (Class 1A), cafes and restaurants (Class 3) and public house use and extension to George Street elevation
Application Ref:	250030/DPP
Application Type	Detailed Planning Permission
Application Date:	14 February 2025
Applicant:	Atree Retail Management Ltd
Ward:	George Street/Harbour
Community Council:	George Street



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RECOMMENDATION

Approve Conditionally

APPLICATION BACKGROUND

Site Description

The application site is located to the north of Aberdeen City Centre and is bound by George Street to the west, St Andrew Street to the north and Loch Street to the south and east. The area is mixed use in nature with George Street and St Andrew Street including a number of uses such as retail and food establishments with residential properties generally located above and the Bon Accord Centre located on the southern side. George Street and Loch Street are pedestrianised for the majority of the length of the application site.

The building itself, originally designed by Covell Matthews Architects, is set over four storeys and was built between 1966 and 1970 as a department store for the Northern Co-operative (Norco) Society. The building has Brutalist ribbed concrete and glazed exterior elevations to the north, south and east. The western elevation has a modern granite block extension which was added in the late 1980s when the Bon Accord Centre was constructed, and the building was acquired by the most recent retail occupier (John Lewis). The southern elevation also includes a 1st floor pedestrian link to the Bon Accord Centre and car parking is provided on the roof of the building. The immediate surrounds include a small area of parking to the rear on Loch Street with associated areas of landscaping.

The consented use of the premises can be defined as Class 1A (Shops and Financial, Professional and Other Services) with John Lewis having closed in 2021. The building was utilised temporarily as a COVID vaccination centre between September 2021 and June 2023 but has been vacant since this time.

Relevant Planning History

None relevant to the determination of this application.

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Description of Proposal

The proposals seek detailed planning permission to regenerate and utilise the former John Lewis building for use as a multi-purpose leisure facility for Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure) and use as electric vehicle recreation (floors two and three) with associated and ancillary retail (Class 1A), cafes and restaurants (Class 3) and public house use and a single storey extension to the western elevation to provide an entrance to the building.

The proposed plans show the following works for each floor:

Ground Floor: the provision of a bowling alley with 25 lanes, there would also be areas for food and drink, pool tables an arcade area and party area. The ground floor would also include offices, kitchens, stores, toilets and a plant room. Pedestrian access would be provided from a new single storey extension onto George Street at the south-western end of the building, where a new lift would also be installed. The existing ground floor entrance on the western elevation would be replaced with curtain wall glazing and utilised as an emergency exit.

First Floor: no defined end user at the time of the application. The use of this floor would fall within Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure) with other ancillary uses.

Second and Third Floor: would be utilised as an electric vehicle karting facility with two links between the second and third floors providing a ramped vehicular access. The third floor would also include a laser arena with associated facilities whereas the second floor would include a mini golf area with kart preparation and back of house facilities. The existing escalators would be removed to facilitate the ramps for the proposed karting facility.

Fourth Floor: this area would be utilised for plant and would replace existing services. Odour outlets for the kitchen facilities would also be provided and the existing rooftop parking areas would be stopped up to prevent vehicular access to the roof.

Service Area: the existing service area on the western side of the building would be retained.

The applicant also proposes to provide cycle parking area within the existing parking area to the rear of the building.

Amendments

The proposals have been amended since the original submission along with additional information being submitted in support of the application:

- Clarification on the proposed extension to the building has been provided, with this also being reduced in projection;
- A Design and Access Statement has been submitted;
- A Noise and Odour Impact Assessment has been submitted
- Further transportation information/ parking surveys/ justifications provided at the request of colleagues in Roads Development Management.

Neighbour re-notification was carried out on the 30th April 2025 following the submission of the updated documentation.

Supporting Documents

All drawings and supporting documents listed below can be viewed on the Council's website at:

<https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=SQ539PBZMXQ00>

- Planning Supporting Statement;
- Noise and Odour Impact Assessment;
- Supporting Statement – Parking Arrangements/ Bon Accord Parking Allocation and Occupancy Rates.

Reason for Referral to Committee

The application has been referred to the Planning Development Management Committee because:

- it is being recommended for approval and has been the subject of six or more timeous letters of representation containing material planning considerations that express objection or concern about the proposal.

Determination of the application therefore falls out with the scheme of delegation.

CONSULTATIONS

ACC - Roads Development Management Team – the applicant has provided data highlighting that the adjacent shopping centre has a sufficient amount of available parking to cater for this proposed use – both general and accessible parking. Also note that the small section of parking to the rear of the building which necessitated a slip road of its own is to be removed, with this area being repurposed as additional footway / shared space for all users. This is acceptable as there is a presumption against city centre parking, and it will improve pedestrian flow around the building, and may open up the opportunity to further enhance this space. Also note that the specifics of the layout of this additional area should be conditioned – at current it is shown as remaining as a road which is separated by bollards, however a more robust solution would be to reinstate a full height footway here to match the surroundings.

The site is well serviced by bus stops, is ~800m from the bus station / rail station / ferry terminal.

Note that the applicant is proposing to provide cycle lockers for public and staff use, in addition 2 banks of 5 cycle racks are to be provided adjacent to the accessible parking. Note that if these are for staff only, this is an acceptable location, however the bank of parking for visitors should also be covered to be classed as long stay. Further clarification can be controlled via condition.

In terms of waste collection, the applicant is proposing to dispose of waste via the servicing area to the east of the building as is the current methodology. Refuse is noted as being stored within the building, with refuse uplift occurring during the day from the service yard. The bin store and service yard are shown on the ground floor plan and are acceptable. No swept path analysis has been provided, however it is assumed that if this was the existing collection methodology then it will remain acceptable, and the refuse team have not commented negatively in this regard.

Confirmed no objection to the application in principle. Their response will be discussed in greater detail in the below evaluation.

ACC - Environmental Health – note that the Odour Impact Assessment indicates a “high” level of odour control, with a suitable system required. They are satisfied that a detailed specification for the Local Extract Ventilation (LEV) system could be secured via planning condition. Also recommend the insertion of an advisory note requiring the submission of an Odour Management Plan.

In terms of noise control, they consider the NIA to be appropriate and the development to be acceptable provided the implementation measures (discussed further in the below evaluation) are installed.

ACC - Waste and Recycling – have advised of the general waste arrangements for the proposed development.

ACC - City Growth – no response received.

ACC - Developer Obligations – an assessment was undertaken, where it was concluded that no contributions were required to the core path network and open space, due to the site's location within the city centre.

Disability Equity Partnership – provided some general guidance and advice on the proposals from a disability access perspective. Their response will be discussed in greater detail in the below evaluation.

George Street Community Council – no response received.

REPRESENTATIONS

62 representations have been received (52 objections, eight in support and two neutral comments). The two neutral comments raised matters in support and also objection and have been summarised in the two sections below. The matters raised can be summarised as follows –

Material Considerations Raised

Support

1. The proposals would be a positive for Aberdeen and would increase vibrancy in the city centre (and George Street in particular), with the proposed uses not found within a city centre location;
2. The proposals would bring a vacant building back into use and would help to enhance the attraction of the Bon Accord Centre;
3. The proposal already has sufficient parking, waste and other facilities;
4. The proposal would create a number of jobs.

Objection

5. The negative impacts that the proposals would have on the city centre and that the proposed development would not regenerate the city centre;
6. Lack of parking for the proposed facility and the knock on impact that the development would have on existing parking facilities in the surrounding area;
7. The site will be difficult to access given its location in the city centre, the bus gates and low emissions zone along with potential traffic congestion issues; in addition concerns about the proposed hours of operation;
8. The proposals are not a suitable use for the building, and other uses should be considered such as continued retail use/ a mixture of uses similar to the under construction “Flint” building;
9. Noise impacts as a result of the proposed development, and the impact that this would have on surrounding properties and uses in the area. Concerns were also raised in relation to an increase in air pollution;
10. Impacts on the surrounding environment and pedestrian experiences and safety impacts given the potential for accidents;
11. That a lack of information, such as transport considerations and noise and odour have not been submitted in support of the application.

Non-Material Considerations Raised

12. The detrimental impact on existing karting business in Aberdeen (at Codona’s and Bridge of Don), whether there is a need for a karting facility in the city centre and the business not being local to Aberdeen, whereas the existing facilities are operated by local businesses;
13. The proposal will result in an increase in anti-social behaviour and the location of the facility on George Street not being a pleasant environment for proposed users/ families;

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative Requirements

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan; and, that any determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan

National Planning Framework 4

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the long-term spatial strategy for Scotland and contains a comprehensive set of national planning policies that form part of the statutory development plan.

- Policy 1: Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises
- Policy 2: Climate Mitigation and Adaptation
- Policy 3: Biodiversity
- Policy 9: Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings
- Policy 12: Zero Waste
- Policy 13: Sustainable Transport
- Policy 14: Design, Quality and Place
- Policy 15: Local Living and 20-minute Neighbourhoods
- Policy 21: Play, Recreation and Sport
- Policy 27: City, Town, Local and Commercial Centres
- Policy 30: Tourism

Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023

- Policy WB1: Healthy Developments
- Policy WB2: Air Quality
- Policy WB3: Noise
- Policy D1: Quality Placemaking
- Policy R5: Waste Management Requirements for New Development
- Policy VC1: Vibrant City
- Policy VC2: Tourism and Culture
- Policy VC4: City Centre and Retail Core
- Policy T2: Sustainable Transport
- Policy T3: Parking

Aberdeen Planning Guidance

- Noise
- Hierarchy of Centres
- Harmony of Uses
- Transport & Accessibility
- Waste Management Requirements for New Developments

Other Material Considerations

- George Street Mini-Masterplan
- City Centre Masterplan

EVALUATION

Principle of Development

Policy VC1 (Vibrant City) of the ALDP states that: *“proposals for new development, or expansion of existing activities, in the city centre, which support its vibrancy and vitality throughout the day and/or into the evening will be supported in principle. Proposals will contribute towards the wider aims of the City Centre Masterplan and its vision for the city centre. The applicant/agent must demonstrate that any adverse impacts can be mitigated and, where applicable, that suitable residential amenity is achieved or maintained. Proposals will be considered in relation to their locality and context within the city centre.”* Similar guidance is provided by Policy 27 (City, town, local and commercial centres) of NPF4.

The Harmony of Uses Aberdeen Planning Guidance also notes that *“the protection of the living conditions of residents in close proximity to any proposed amusement centres, amusement arcades will form a major consideration in assessing applications of this nature. These uses can generate unacceptable levels of noise, vibration, odours, traffic disturbance and litter. It is therefore important that such uses are controlled or restricted to protect residential amenity.”*

In terms of the above, the proposal relates to the conversion of a vacant building to assembly and leisure use, with additional karting facilities and ancillary uses such as food and drink. The proposal would see visitors to the premises which in turn would enhance the attraction of the city centre and increase its vitality and vibrancy during the day and in the evening by a variety of ages and groups. The applicant has also demonstrated through the submission of a Noise and Odour Impact Assessment (as discussed further below) that though appropriate mitigation the proposed uses would have no adverse impact on surrounding amenity (*Issues 8-10*). The proposals are therefore fully compliant with the aims and aspirations of both Policy VC1 of the ALDP, the City Centre Masterplan, Policy 27 of NPF4 and with the Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Harmony of Uses and Hierarchy of Centres.

Policy VC2 (Tourism and Culture) states that: *“proposals for new, or expansion of existing, visitor attractions and facilities capable of strengthening the appeal and attraction of Aberdeen to a wide range of visitors will be supported. Proposals should complement existing visitor facilities and be sequentially located in the city centre, or on a site allocated for that use in this Plan, unless activity and locality specific issues demonstrate that this is impracticable.”* Whilst more generic in its wording, Policy 30 (Tourism) of NPF4 provides similar guidance and mentions issues such as contributions to the local economy, impacts on the surrounding area, transport impacts, accessibility for disabled people and measures to reduce carbon emissions.

In terms of the above, the proposals would provide a facility that would enhance the attraction of Aberdeen city centre and potentially encourage additional visitors to the area. The proposed facility would be located within the city centre, where such uses are encouraged and anticipated to enhance the local economy by bring a vacant building back into use, would not have an adverse impact on amenity (as discussed elsewhere), would have no adverse transport impacts (as discussed elsewhere), and would provide a degree of access for disabled users. The proposals would comply with Policy VC2 of the ALDP and Policy 30 of NPF4.

The site is zoned in the ALDP under Policy VC4 (City Centre and Retail Core) which states that: *“development within the city centre must contribute towards the vision for the city centre as a major regional centre as expressed in the City Centre Masterplan and that the city centre the*

preferred location for all retail, office, hotel, commercial leisure, community, cultural and other significant footfall generating development serving a city-wide or regional market.”

The above policy, amongst other things notes that the city centre is the preferred location for commercial leisure uses and footfall generating development. The proposed use would constitute both and is therefore appropriately located within the city centre. The use would therefore comply with Policy VC4 of the ALDP.

In addition to the above, the George Street Mini-Masterplan, whilst not formally adopted, seeks to retain the current building (Norco House) and support its conversion to a mixed use leisure and cultural destination for the area and wider city. Whilst this document explores a number of different uses for the building and looks at various aspects such as demolition and rebuilt, the re-use of the building and the variety of differing uses and facilities proposed are considered to comply with the aims and objectives of this document in principle.

Policy 9 (Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings) of NPF4 states that: *“development proposals that will result in the sustainable reuse of brownfield land including vacant and derelict land and buildings, whether permanent or temporary, will be supported.”*

The building has been vacant since June 2023 when it ceased its temporary use as a COVID vaccination centre, whilst the consented retail operations ceased on site in 2021. The proposals, which are for a mixed use development primarily for assembly and leisure and karting purposes would see a large city centre building brought back into use and would therefore comply with the aims and aspirations of Policy 9 of NPF4.

Policy 21 (Play, Recreation and Sport) of NPF4 is of relevance and advises that *“development proposals likely to be occupied or used by children and young people will be supported where they incorporate well designed, good quality provision for play, recreation, and relaxation that is proportionate to the scale and nature of the development and existing provision in the area.”* In addition, Policy WB1 (Healthy Developments) of the ALDP advises that *“developments are required to provide healthy environments, reduce environmental stresses, facilitate physical activity and promote physical and mental wellbeing”*.

The provision of such a facility would likely improve the health and wellbeing of the proposed users to some extent by encouraging a new recreational activity (although noted not specifically for exercise) and promote physical and mental wellbeing. The proposals would therefore comply with the provisions of Policy 21 of NPF4 and Policy WB1 of the ALDP.

Layout, Siting and Design

Policy 14 (Design, quality and place) of NPF4) and Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking) of the ALDP both seek to ensure that all development is of a high quality design and appropriate for its context.

The majority of the alterations to the building are to be internal, but the proposals do involve the addition of a single storey extension on the western elevation of the building to provide a new, clearly identifiable access to the building. The extension has been altered since the original submission to reduce its overall projection to around 4.1m and its design amended to provide a light touch, but “statement” entrance to the building. The proposal involves a glazed box area surrounded by rainscreen metal cladding and a standing seam metal roof, sited in front of the 1980s extension part of the building. This would provide an additional 43.5m² of floor area and a clearly identifiable entrance for the new facility. A condition is to be added to the consent seeking finalised details of the colour of the metal cladding. The works are considered to be acceptable for their context and would have no significant adverse impact on the character or amenity of the

surrounding area. There would be no conflict with either Policy 14 of NPF4 or with Policy D1 of the ALDP.

Noise

Policy WB3 (Noise) of the ALDP 2023 advises *“in cases where significant exposure to noise is likely to arise from development, a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) will be required as part of a planning application.”* The Harmony of Uses Aberdeen Planning Guidance also notes that *“noise and vibrations generated from cooking and essential extraction equipment in hot food shops and noise generated from music in liquor licensed premises and in amusement centres, amusement arcades or casinos, along with increased levels of customer movement, can cause disturbance to residents Applications within close proximity to residential units will be refused where it is considered that there may be significant adverse impacts on residential amenity in terms of noise, vibration, odours, traffic disturbance, litter or hours of operation as a result of the proposed premises”.*

A number of objections to the application raised concerns in relation to noise and air quality and as a result a Noise and Odour Impact Assessment was submitted in support of the application (Issue 9). In terms of noise impacts this suggested a number of mitigatory measures for the proposed uses including the electric vehicle karting facilities:

- The external walls and roof shall achieve an overall sound reduction index of at least 54 decibels with the following:
 1. The existing wall and roof constructions should be confirmed during the fit-out phase to verify that they achieve this standard.
 2. Windows requiring additional sound insulation as detailed in Section 4.11 of the Noise and Odour Impact Assessment: *“windows backed with metal stud partition of nominal width 300 mm, two frames of minimum 60 mm metal “I” studs at 600 mm centres, minimum cavity width 240 mm, 100 mm mineral wool insulation, double layer of 15 mm plasterboard each side, minimum plasterboard density 25 kg/m2 each side” (or equivalent).*”
 3. Any gaps or holes in the facade must be sealed with materials having a sound reduction index of at least 54 decibels;
 4. Sound insulation (with a sound reduction index of at least 54 decibels) will require to be installed within the two central risers.
- The front entrance shall retain a double door entry system to minimise noise break-out;
- The ground level shall have an installed floor design that reduces noise and vibration from the bowling alleys;
- The air conditioning plant and kitchen extraction systems (end termination points and air intake) shall be located as detailed in Section 3.3, with nominal maximum sound power levels not exceeding those detailed in Section 6.2.1 of the report; and
- The kitchen extraction system installer shall ensure that all necessary measures are taken to reduce the effects of vibration on the internal and external building structure using various anti-vibration methods (e.g. pads/mats/mounts and flexible hose connections).

The report was accepted by colleagues in Environmental Health and a condition can be added to the consent ensuring that the development is undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the assessment, and evidence of this provided. This would help ensure that any noise from the development is kept to a minimum and in turn ensure that the proposed development would have no adverse impacts on residential amenity. Provided the Noise and

Odour Impact Assessment is complied with, the proposed development would comply with Policy WB3 of the ALDP and with the Harmony of Uses Aberdeen Planning Guidance.

Air Quality

Policy WB2 (Air Quality) of the ALDP 2023 advises that *“development proposals which may have a detrimental impact on air quality will not be permitted unless measures to mitigate the impact of air pollutants are proposed and agreed with the Planning Authority”*

In terms of the above, an odour impact assessment (*Issue 9*) was submitted and reviewed by colleagues in Environmental Health, which noted that a high level of odour control would be required including carbon filtration. The applicant has proposed the insertion of a planning condition for the kitchen extraction systems similar to this condition, *“Class 3 (food and drink) use hereby approved shall not occur unless a detailed specification in line with the Noise and Odour Impact Assessment report for the local extract ventilation (LEV) systems has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The LEV systems shall be installed according to the approved specification, and evidence of its installation has been submitted to, and confirmed in writing by the planning authority. The specifications of the LEV system shall meet the requirements for a 'high-level of odour control' as detailed in the EMAQ guide on 'The Control of Odour and Noise from Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems.’”*

This Service considers the odour assessment to be reasonable and we are satisfied that a detailed specification for the Local Extract Ventilation (LEV) system could be secured by planning condition. This would help to ensure that the proposed use (primarily the ancillary food and drink elements) would be appropriately vented and to ensure that the proposals would have no adverse impact on residential amenity.

They have also requested the submission of an Odour Management Plan (as an advisory) to reduce risk of malodour and statutory nuisance going forward.

The above is considered reasonable and acceptable to colleagues in Environmental Health and it has been adequately demonstrated that the proposals would have no adverse impact on amenity (subject to appropriate information being submitted via condition). The proposals would therefore comply with Policy WB2 in principle.

Transport and Accessibility

Policy T2 (Sustainable Transport) of the ALDP 2023 seeks to minimise traffic generation, increase accessibility, encourage public transport and provide relevant infrastructure within the application site. It also advises that existing routes, such as core paths should be enhanced and retained during development. Policy T3 (Parking) considers matters such as parking within development and electric vehicle infrastructure. Policy 13 (Sustainable transport) of NPF4 provides similar guidance and advises that development will be supported where it has been designed in association with sustainable travel, provides direct links to local facilities, be accessible by public transport, provide electric vehicle charge points, provide safe and convenient cycle parking and consider the needs of all users, as well as mitigate the impact of development on local transport routes.

The proposal has been subject to consultation with colleagues in Roads Development Management, who have reviewed the submitted information and note that in terms of waste collection, the applicant is proposing to dispose of waste via the servicing area to the east of the building as is the current arrangement. Refuse is noted as being stored within the building, with refuse uplift occurring during the day from the service yard. The bin store and service yard are

shown on the ground floor plan and are acceptable. No swept path analysis has been provided, however as the applicants are proposing to use the existing collection methodology then it will remain acceptable, and the refuse team have not commented negatively in this regard (as discussed further below).

In addition, and in terms of parking, the applicant has submitted further supporting data highlighting that the adjacent Bon Accord shopping centre (which is in the control of the applicant) has a sufficient amount of available parking with 366 spaces including 16 disabled bays and 24 parent and child parking spaces in the Harriet Street car park and 847 spaces including 42 disabled bays and 36 parent and child spaces in the Loch Street car park. An occupancy survey undertaken between the 17th April 2025 and 24th April 2025 showed that the car park was at between 16.7% and 28.3% capacity. These figures have been noted and demonstrate that the adjacent parking facilities, which are in the control of the applicant are sufficient to cater for this proposed use – both general and accessible parking and this will cater for the loss of parking on the roof of the building (*Issue 6*).

They also note that small section of parking to the rear of the building adjacent to Loch Street which necessitated a slip road of its own is to be removed, with this area being repurposed as additional footway / shared space for all users (to allow for biodiversity enhancements discussed below. RDM colleagues consider this to be acceptable as they note that there is a presumption against city centre parking, and the works would improve pedestrian flow around the building. They also noted that there is sufficient parking, including disabled parking, in the surrounding area to mitigate against the loss of provision. They have requested that the specifics of the layout of this additional area should be conditioned – at current it is shown as remaining as a road which is separated by bollards, however a more robust solution would be to reinstate a full height footway here to match the surroundings. The anticipation is that an element of landscaping would be provided within this area and it would be closed off for vehicles.

The site is within the city centre and is well serviced by bus stops (in close proximity to the site), and is easily accessible, being within ~800m from the bus station / rail station / ferry terminal. They have also provided comments in terms of cycle parking, with 10 cycle parking spaces indicated in the supporting statement and controlled via a planning condition.

The proposals are accepted by colleagues in Roads Development Management, with further detail to be controlled via appropriate planning conditions. The proposal would be in general compliance with Policies T2 and T3 of the ALDP and with Policy 13 of NPF4.

Waste Management

Policy 12 (Waste) of NPF4 advises that *“development proposals will seek to reduce, reuse, or recycle materials in line with the waste hierarchy.”* Policy R5 (Waste Management Requirements for New Developments) of the ALDP 2023 advises *“All new developments should have sufficient space for the storage of general waste, recyclable materials and compostable wastes where appropriate.”*

With regards to the above, the proposal sets out that the existing serving area to the rear of the premises and accessed from Loch Street would be utilised for waste storage and collection. Colleagues in Waste Management were consulted on the proposals and raised no objections to the development, confirming general waste management requirements for the development. The waste arrangements are also expected to be to a lesser extent / pick up rate than the previous retail use of the site. The proposals would be in accordance with Policy 12 of NPF4 and Policy R5 of the ALDP.

Natural Heritage/ Biodiversity Enhancements

Policy NE3 (Natural Heritage) of the ALDP advises that, among other things “*development should not have a detrimental effect (directly or indirectly) on its own or in combination with other proposals on sites, habitats, ecosystems or species of regional or local nature conservation value.*” Policy 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises) of NPF4 requires significant weight to be given to the global climate and nature crises in the consideration of all development proposals. Policy 2 (Climate mitigation and adaptation) of NPF4 requires development proposals to be designed and sited to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible, and to adapt to current and future risks from climate change. Policy 3 (Biodiversity) of NPF4 requires proposals for local development to include measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, proportionate to the nature and scale of development.

In terms of the above, the proposals for a change of use of an existing building with some minor external alterations to the building is sufficiently small scale that it would not make any material difference to the global climate and nature crises nor to climate mitigation or adaptation. The proposal does include the removal of two semi-mature non-native trees on the western boundary of the site and a number of planters have been proposed as a mitigation measure on the eastern boundary of the site (in place of the existing car park). These small scale alterations are considered to be appropriate and finalised details are to be agreed via planning condition. The proposals are therefore considered compliant with Policies 1 and 2 of NPF4. Similarly, the proposed development would be small-scale and does not offer significant opportunity for any biodiversity gain (other than that discussed above) and the proposals are thus considered to be acceptable, despite some minor tension with Policy 3 of NPF4.

Disability Equity Partnership

The Disability Equity Partnership, as a consultee on the application, made a number of comments on the content of the application. Concerns were expressed over the use of dark cladding inside the building and the impacts this would have on those with limited vision and have suggested contrasting colours to indicate walls, doors and columns etc. Whilst this is not a matter that can be controlled by the Planning Service, the comments have been passed on to the agent.

DEP also made comment on accessibility for wheelchair users in that the door, and lifts should allow access to all floors. The comments raised have also been passed on to the developer. Accessible toilets will also be required. Comments were also made in relation to petrol fumes, but this is not relevant given the use of electric karts (and consent would be required if it were ever to be karting for petrol vehicles). They were generally supportive of the scheme and willing to work with the developer on these aspects.

Matters Raised in Representation

Support

1. The proposals would be a positive for Aberdeen and would increase vibrancy in the city centre (and George Street in particular), with the proposed uses not found within a city centre location. *Response: issue discussed above – principle of development.*
2. The proposals would bring a vacant building back into use and would help to enhance the attraction of the Bon Accord Centre. *Response: issue discussed above – principle of development.*
3. The proposal already has sufficient parking, waste and other facilities. *Response: issue discussed above – transportation.*

4. The proposal would create a number of jobs. *Response: comment noted.*

Objection

5. The impacts that the proposals would have on the city centre and that the proposed development would not regenerate the city centre. *Response: issue discussed above – principle of development. The proposals will in some way help to re-generate the city centre by bringing a vacant building back into use.*
6. Lack of parking for the proposed facility and the knock on impact that the development would have on existing parking facilities in the surrounding area. *Response: issue discussed above – transportation.*
7. The site will be difficult to access given its location in the city centre, the bus gates and low emissions zone along with potential traffic congestion issues in addition concerns about the proposed hours of operation. *Response: issue discussed above – transportation. No concerns have been received from consultees in relation to the hours of operation and these would be controlled via separate licensing legislation. If members were concerned in respect of this issue then a further condition could be added.*
8. The proposals are not a suitable use for the building, and other uses should be considered such as continued retail use/ a mixture of uses similar to the under construction “Flint” building. *Response: issue discussed above – principle of development. Whilst alternative suggestions were included in the George Street mini masterplan, the Planning Authority has to consider the development proposed through the current application and the proposals are considered to be acceptable.*
9. Noise impacts as a result of the proposed development, and the impact that this would have on surrounding properties and uses in the area. Concerns were also raised in relation to an increase in air pollution. *Response: issue discussed above – noise and air quality.*
10. Impacts on the surrounding environment and pedestrian experiences and safety impacts given the potential for accidents. *Response: issue discussed above – transportation. The proposed uses will not impact on pedestrian safety or experience to an unacceptable degree.*
11. That a lack of information, such as transport considerations and noise and odour have not been submitted in support of the application. *Response: the required additional information was submitted and considered acceptable to allow for determination of the application.*

Non-Material Matters

12. The impact on existing karting business in Aberdeen (at Codona’s and Bridge of Don), the need for a karting facility in the city centre and the business not being local to Aberdeen, whereas the existing facilities are operated by local businesses. *Response: issue discussed above – principle of development. In addition, it is noted that competition between businesses is not a material planning consideration.*
13. The proposal will result in an increase in anti-social behaviour and the location of the facility on George Street not being a pleasant environment for proposed users/ families. *Reason: there is no reason to suggest that the above will occur. The provision of such a facility will enhance the surrounding area and if anti-social behaviour were to occur then this would be dealt with by the appropriate body, such as Police Scotland.*

RECOMMENDATION

Approve Conditionally

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

The proposal would support the vibrancy and vitality of the city centre, support the aims of the City Centre Masterplan and subject to appropriate conditions would have no adverse impact on surrounding amenity and would provide a footfall generating commercial leisure development in the city centre, in accordance with Policy 27 (City, town, local and commercial centres) of National Planning Framework 4 and Policies VC1 (Vibrant City) and VC4 (City Centre and Retail Core) of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

The proposal would provide a new visitor attraction, enhancing the attractiveness of Aberdeen and is appropriately sited within the City Centre. The proposals would enhance the local economy, would have no adverse impact on amenity and would have acceptable transport impacts, in accordance with Policy 30 (Tourism) of NPF4 and with Policy VC2 (Tourism and Culture) of the ALDP.

The proposals would see the re-use of a vacant building, in accordance with Policy 9 (Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings) of NPF4 and would support health and wellbeing, providing physical activities in accordance with Policy 21 (Play, Recreation and Sport) of NPF4 and Policy WB1 (Healthy Developments) of the ALDP.

The proposed external alterations have been designed with due consideration for their context and would have no adverse impact on the character or amenity of the surrounding area, in accordance with Policy 14 (Design, quality and place) of NPF4 and Policy D1 (Quality Placemaking) of the ALDP.

A Noise and Odour Impact Assessment has also confirmed that, subject to the implementation of mitigation measures, the proposals would have no adverse impact on the character or amenity of properties in the surrounding area in accordance with Policies WB2 (Air Quality) and WB3 (Noise) of the ALDP.

The site is accessible nature of the site and the information submitted in support of the application demonstrates that there would be sufficient parking available in car parks in close proximity to the site and under the applicant's control. Appropriate levels of cycle parking and waste facilities would also be provided, in accordance with Policies 12 (Zero Waste) and 13 (Sustainable Transport) of NPF4 and with Policies T2: Sustainable Transport, T3: Parking and R5: Waste Management Requirements for New Development of the ALDP.

The proposal does include the removal of two semi-mature non-native trees on the western boundary of the site and a number of planters are proposed as a mitigation measure on the eastern boundary of the site (in place of the existing car park). These small scale alterations are considered to be appropriate. The proposals are therefore considered compliant with Policies 1 (Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises) and 2 (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation) of NPF4. Similarly, the proposed development would be small-scale and does not offer significant opportunity for any biodiversity gain (other than that discussed above) and the proposals are thus considered to be acceptable, despite some minor tension with Policy 3 (Biodiversity) of NPF4.

CONDITIONS

(01) DURATION OF PERMISSION

The development to which this notice relates must be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years beginning with the date of this notice. If development has not begun at the expiration of the 3-year period, the planning permission lapses.

Reason - in accordance with section 58 (duration of planning permission) of the 1997 act.

(02) RESTRICTION ON USE CLASSES

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 or the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997 or any order amending, revoking or re-enacting these Orders, the premises hereby granted for Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure) shall not be used for any of the following uses that fall within Class 11:

- Cinemas
- Concert halls
- Bingo halls
- Casinos
- Dance halls
- Discotheques
- Skating rinks
- Swimming baths
- Gymnasiums

without the express grant of planning permission from the planning authority.

Reason: To enable the planning authority to consider the impact of any other uses within Class 11 on the site and surrounding area.

(03) NOISE IMPACT ASSESSMENT COMPLIANCE

The development hereby approved shall not be occupied unless the noise mitigation measures and recommendations set out in the approved Noise Impact Assessment (Ref: TTG 160225 REVISION 3 – Grosle Environmental Services – 29th April 2025) or other measures achieving at least an equivalent effect as may be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, have been implemented in full and suitable evidence provided to the Planning Authority that these works have been installed and implemented. For avoidance of doubt, the mitigation measures shall include, but are not limited to:

- The external walls and roof shall achieve an overall sound reduction index of at least 54 decibels
 - With the existing wall and roof constructions should be confirmed during the fit-out phase to verify that they achieve this standard.
 - The windows requiring additional sound insulation as detailed in Section 4.11 of the Noise and Odour Impact Assessment: *“windows backed with metal stud partition of nominal width 300 mm, two frames of minimum 60 mm metal “I” studs at 600 mm centres, minimum cavity width 240 mm, 100 mm mineral wool insulation, double layer of 15 mm plasterboard each side, minimum plasterboard density 25 kg/m² each side” (or equivalent).”*
 - Any gaps or holes in the facade must be sealed with materials having a sound reduction index of at least 54 decibels.
 - Sound insulation (with a sound reduction index of at least 54 decibels) will require to be installed within the two central risers.
- The front entrance shall retain a double door entry system to minimise noise break-out.

- The ground level shall have an installed floor design that reduces noise and vibration from the bowling alleys.
- The air condition plant and kitchen extraction systems (end termination points and air intake) shall be located as detailed in Section 3.3, with nominal maximum sound power levels not exceeding those detailed in Section 6.2.1 of the report; and
- The kitchen extraction system installer shall ensure that all necessary measures are taken to reduce the effects of vibration on the internal and external building structure using various anti-vibration methods (e.g. pads/mats/mounts and flexible hose connections).

Reason: To protect residents from external sources of noise and in the interests of amenity.

(04) ODOUR CONTROLS

That no Class 3 (food and drink) elements hereby approved shall occur unless a detailed specification in line with the Noise and Odour Impact Assessment report for the local extract ventilation (LEV) systems has been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority in consultation with Environmental Health. The LEV systems shall be installed according to the approved specification, and evidence of its installation shall be submitted to, and confirmed in writing by the planning authority. The specifications of the LEV system shall meet the requirements for a 'high-level of odour control' as detailed in the EMAQ guide on 'The Control of Odour and Noise from Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems.

Reason: To protect residents from external sources of odour and in the interests of amenity.

(05) LANDSCAPING

That no works in connection with the development hereby approved shall take place unless a scheme of landscaping works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Details of the scheme shall include the location of new trees and planters and a programme for the completion and subsequent maintenance of the proposed landscaping and a scheme for the closing off of the existing vehicular parking area.

All landscaping proposals shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and shall be completed during the planting season immediately following the commencement of the development or such other date as may be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. Any planting which, within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, in the opinion of the Planning Authority is dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased, shall be replaced by plants of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure the implementation of a satisfactory scheme of landscaping which will help to integrate the proposed development into the local landscape in the interests of the visual amenity of the area and to ensure that the landscaping is managed and maintained in perpetuity.

(06) MATERIALS

That no development shall take place unless a scheme detailing all external finishing materials to the extension of the building hereby approved has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the planning authority and thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the details so agreed.

Reason - in the interests of visual amenity.

(07) CYCLE PARKING

That the uses hereby granted planning permission shall be occupied unless a scheme detailing finalised provision of the proposed cycle storage facilities has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the planning authority, and thereafter implemented in full accordance with said scheme.

Reason - in the interests of encouraging more sustainable modes of travel.

ADVISORY NOTES FOR APPLICANT

The operator should establish a written Odour Management Plan, including cleaning and maintenance procedures for the plant (based on extent of use) in accordance with manufacturers guidelines and Noise and Odour Impact report recommendations (Appendix I) to reduce risk of malodour and statutory nuisance going forward.