

Listed Building Consent Application
at
Royal Infirmary
1 Lauriston Place
Edinburgh
EH3 9EE

Development Quality Sub-Committee
of the Planning Committee

Proposal: Demolition of the George Watsons Hospital and Chapel
Applicant: Southside Capital Ltd.
Reference No: 02/01665/LBC

1 Purpose of report

To recommend that the application be **GRANTED** subject to;

Conditions

1. The works hereby permitted shall be commenced no later than five years from the date of this consent.
2. The application shall be referred to the Scottish Ministers prior to determination.
3. No demolitions shall take place until a detailed phasing programme, including a rolling programme of site clearance and landscaping, is submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Planning and Strategy. Thereafter, the development of the site shall adhere to this programme, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Head of Planning and Strategy.
4. Details of the proposed site for the salvaged elements of the Chapel shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Head of Planning & Strategy before work is commenced on site.

Reasons

1. In order to accord with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts.
2. In order to accord with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts.
3. In order to safeguard the interests of architectural heritage.
4. In order to retain and/or protect important elements of the existing character and amenity of the site.

2 Main report

Site description

The application property is the category B listed (Tollcross Ward), three storey, former George Watson's Hospital by William Adam, dating from 1738-41, extended by John Lessels in 1857, with later alterations and additions. The building is situated to the south of the Surgical Hospital in the north-east sector of the RIE site within the Marchmont and Meadows Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

The original Palladian style building comprised a central block with a domed projecting bay and two bow-ended wings, finished in harling with polished ashlar dressings, a slate roof and six-over-six sash and case windows. In 1857, Lessels added two, three storey and attic, ashlar constructed wings, forming a southward facing open courtyard. Later that century, David Bryce demolished the central portion of Adam's structure as part of the Royal Infirmary development and replaced it with ancillary accommodation, including a single storey link structure connecting the rear of the Surgical Hospital with the new accommodation.

Part of the westernmost extension by Lessels includes the Chapel at first floor level, which has decorative timber panelling to its walls, doors, window soffits and altar. The ceiling is compartmented with ornamental plasterwork. The Chapel is expressed externally by four arched windows in the west elevation.

Site history

The RIE site has been in hospital use since the construction of George Watson's Hospital in 1740 and has been developed largely without statutory planning control. Health Boards and other specified health service bodies were removed from Crown Exemption in 1991.

There is no planning history relevant to the determination of this application.

Development

The application is for the demolition of the building to accommodate a new four storey extension to the rear of the former Surgical Hospital and four to six storey office block on the cleared site to the south of the main east-west axis of the Quartermile development.

The proposed hotel extension is contemporary in style, housing the large-scale functions of the hotel with retail units at street level.

New Central 2 (the office block) is split into two four storey and six storey sections with a glazed atrium in between. The north west corner is cut back to double height at ground floor level to connect the building with the new east-west pedestrian street. The building is of grid-frame construction infilled with glazed and solid sheeting.

Supporting Information

The application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement, Condition Survey and model.

The former provides comprehensive descriptions of the historic and architectural development of each listed building, accompanied by plans and photographs, and justifications for the proposed alterations to or demolition of the structures. The Statement concludes that the present buildings on the RIE site present an incongruous mix of differing qualities and styles as a result of over two hundred years of development.

The Condition Survey details the structural form, defects and loading capacity of each listed building in written and photographic form.

The architects have also produced a detailed 3-dimensional model depicting the entire development and immediate surroundings.

Consultations

No consultations undertaken.

Representations

The application was advertised on 24 May 2002. Eight letters of representation were received, including letters from the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, Cockburn Association and AHSS, objecting to the proposed demolition on the following grounds:

- the building is an important part of the historic development of the RIE site;
- the original structure is by William Adam, an eminent architect of his time;
- the chapel is of particular note, with an interesting interior;
- the building could be incorporated into the proposed hotel.

Policy

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

Section 25 - Status of Development Plans

"Where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

National Planning Guidance

NPPG 18: Planning and the Historic Environment (April 1999) promotes the protection, conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and reflects the existing statutory framework and existing guidance set out in the "Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Area, 1998".

The Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (1998)

Para. 2.10 "Government policy with regard to the demolition of listed buildings is that no worthwhile building should be lost to our environment unless it has been demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that every effort has been exerted by all concerned to find practical ways of keeping it".

Lothian Structure Plan (approved 4 July 1997)

Policy ENV3A states that the overall character and appearance of Lothian's high quality urban areas, particularly the form of Edinburgh's distinct Old and New Town of the World Heritage Site and the city's landscape and historical features, should be protected and where possible enhanced.

Policy ENV5 states that local plans shall contain policies to maintain and enhance the character of conservation areas and to protect all listed buildings and their settings.

Central Edinburgh Local Plan (adopted 29 May 1997)

The site is located within the Mixed Activities Zone and is identified as a Major Development Opportunity with preferred land uses being housing, academic or other institutions, hotel or commercial uses, small scale employment uses and public short stay parking.

Planning Brief (approved by the Planning Committee, May 1998)

The brief, which includes an addendum approved in August 2000, seeks to ensure the re-integration of the site with the wider city. The listed buildings on the site should be retained and re-used in balance with the best planning of the site, which should incorporate a mix of uses and housing tenures and promote high quality development with an identifiable urban form of individual character.

The brief requires the removal of modern accretions to the 18th and 19th century buildings, although it recognises that selective demolition may not be practical to the south of the Surgical Hospital where Adam's original hospital has been engulfed by Lessels' later additions and Bryce's subsequent redevelopment.

Relevant Policies:

Policy CD2 (LISTED BUILDINGS) sets out criteria for assessing proposals affecting listed buildings and seeks to safeguard their character and setting.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

DETERMINING ISSUES

The determining issues are:

- do the proposals preserve the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses? If they do not, there is a presumption against the granting of consent;
- do the proposals comply with the development plan?
- if the proposals do comply with the development plan, are there any compelling reasons for not approving them?
- if the proposals do not comply with the development plan, are there any compelling reasons for approving them?

ASSESSMENT

To address the determining issues, the Committee needs to consider whether the proposals have an adverse impact on the character of the listed building.

The historic and architectural integrity of the former George Watson's Hospital, which was the original structure on the RIE site, was significantly diminished when the building was partially demolished and engulfed within an ancillary area of the new Royal Infirmary. Only the bowed end of the original west wing and a small section of the east pavilion remain exposed. Any other surviving parts are obscured by Lessels' parallel wings and later additions. Subsequent additions and alterations in the 20th century, including refurbishment of the Chapel, have further obscured much of what remains of the original building. For example, the single storey extension to the western flank of the former George Watson's Hospital involved the removal of the entire external elevation below the arched windows and replacement with cast iron beams and columns to provide a large internal cafeteria. Also, the mansard roof of Lessels' west wing is poorly devised resulting in awkward interfaces between the roof ridges and dormer window projections.

The building's contribution to its surrounding environment also became limited from the mid 1870s onwards with the erection of the Surgical and Medical Hospitals, Ear, Nose and Throat and Ophthalmological Pavilions, which concealed the structure from north, south and east views.

In terms of condition, serious concerns have been raised over the structural integrity of Lessels' wings, which appear to have been poorly constructed. There is physical evidence of movement in the east wing, which bowed out in the past and was tied back using rods fitted at roof and floor level. Structural movement is also apparent in the west wing, which houses the Chapel and cafeteria. The cast iron columns that support the internal structure of the single storey extension had no foundations and were self-piling into the ground. Despite recent underpinning, this defect gives rise for concern for the foundations of all Lessels' structure. In order to retain the building in use, substantial structural refurbishment, including underpinning and tying back of the facades, would be required.

The layout and condition of the remaining elements of the former George Watson's Hospital mean that viable or coherent re-use is not possible. The demolition of the building is also an important factor in enabling the successful development of the new hotel and creation of the necessary infrastructure for viable reuse of the whole RIE site. The architectural significance of the Chapel derives mainly from its decorative plasterwork, which cannot be relocated in its entirety without severe damage. However, the developer will salvage the four painted corner panels of the plaster ceiling (The Four Seasons by Thomas Bonner) along with the timber wall panelling and door surrounds and preserve these for future use in a suitable room of the converted former Surgical Hospital. The chapel organ will be donated to a local craftsman for restoration and future installation in an appropriate building. As regards the religious function of the Chapel, a new multi-denominational place of worship has been established at the new Edinburgh Royal Infirmary at Little France.

The proposed replacement buildings make a positive contribution to the RIE site in terms of their high quality, contemporary architecture. The new hotel extension is contained behind the building line of the original south facing wings of the Surgical Hospital and lies significantly below the eaves height of these elements. Its tiered flat roof exhibits important views of the central pavilion and imposing clock tower. New Central 2, while uncompromisingly modern in design, acknowledges the north-south orientation of the Surgical and Medical Hospitals. Its basic geometric form and transparent external treatment neither visually compete with nor obscure the highly articulated forms of the surrounding historic buildings.

Conclusion

NPPG18 notes that the historic environment serves as a framework for the evolution and development of the built environment and that historic places are a product of a process of refinement and change over generation to meet the needs of existing populations. Pressure for change can present difficult issues and planning has a role to play in reconciling the need to protect the heritage with the need to accommodate and promote suitable opportunities for change.

Lothian Structure Plan policy ENV3A and Central Edinburgh Local Plan policy CD2 reflect the position in law, as set by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, which places a duty upon the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting (Section 59). In this case, the wider context of the proposed Quartermile development outweighs the specific loss of a single listed building, the architectural significance of which is limited and the historic significance amply recorded.

There are no other material planning considerations which outweigh this conclusion.

It is recommended that the Committee approves this application, subject to the conditions stated.

Alan Henderson

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Head of Planning and Strategy

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Ward affected Tollcross

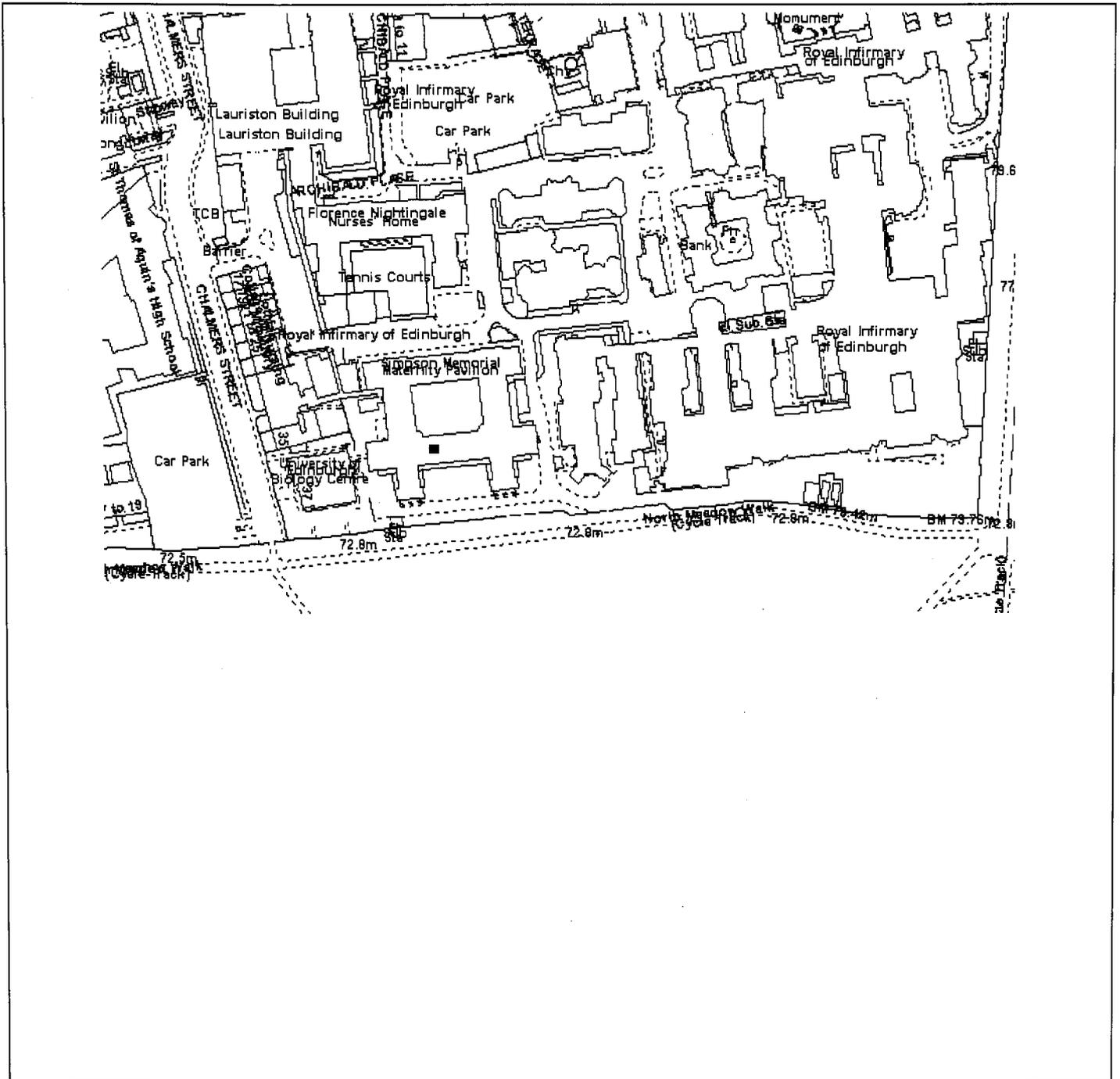
Local Plan Central Edinburgh Local Plan

**Statutory Development
Plan Provision** Mixed Activities Zone

File AF

Date registered 10 May 2002

**Drawing numbers/
Scheme** 4, 28, 121-129 + 131-2



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PLANNING APPLICATION

Address	Royal Infirmary		
Proposal	Demolition of the George Watsons Hospital and Chapel		
Application number:	02/01665/LBC	WARD	32- Tollcross
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL			
THE CITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT- PLANNING & STRATEGY			