

## Listed Building Consent Application

at

Royal Infirmary

1 Lauriston Place

Edinburgh

EH3 9EE

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### Development Quality Sub-Committee of the Planning Committee

**Proposal:** 29-33 Chalmers Street - Demolition of Former Queen Mary Nursing Home  
**Applicant:** Southside Capital Ltd.  
**Reference No:** 02/01671/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.

## **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.
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## **2 Main report**

### **Site description**

The application property is the three-storey, basement and attic former Queen Mary Nursing Home (QMNH), dating from 1850 with later alterations. The building is constructed in polished ashlar buff sandstone with regular one-over-one sash and case fenestration, a slate mansard roof and mullioned dormer windows.

The former nursing home, which is situated at the western extent of the RIE site on Chalmers Street, is category B listed (Tollcross Ward) and lies within the Marchmont and Meadows Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

### **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 relevant planning history on the former QMNH site.

### **Related Planning History**

May 2000 - consent granted to erect a four-storey school on the site of the existing terraced buildings on the west side of Chalmers Street (00/00135/CEC).

### **Development**

The application is for the demolition of the former Queen Mary Nursing Home to accommodate four new residential buildings.

New Meadows 1, 2 and 3 (the residential blocks) will be constructed on the site of the Simpsons Memorial Maternity Pavilion and the Reproductive Biology Building and former QMNH on Chalmers Street. The massing of the new blocks increases towards the north, stepping up in three elements from six to eight storeys. The contemporary style buildings are of steel frame construction with glazed and solid infill and south facing roof terraces.

New Central 4 (the residential block to the west) will be constructed on the site of the former Florence Nightingale Nurses Home and QMNH on Chalmers Street. The building, which is clad in brick, cedar and aluminium, comprises a courtyard block ranging from four storeys on the southern side to seven storeys at its highest point.

This application is one of nine separate applications for listed building consent for alterations to or demolition of listed structures on the RIE site. The associated application for planning permission is for the redevelopment of the site as a new urban quarter entitled "Quartermile" comprising residential uses in the south and east sections of the site with commercial and retail uses concentrated in the centre. Extensive landscaping is proposed to create green space around the retained historic buildings and contemporary style new structures.

### **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. Five letters of representation were received.

The AHSS states that the QMNH's facade has been altered through the loss of original door pieces and replacement with a neo-Georgian frontage. While the design is still of some distinction, the recent loss of the west side of Chalmers Street, together with the badly deteriorated condition of the stonework, make it difficult to make a case for retention.

The other contributors, including the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, object to the proposed demolition on the following grounds:

- the former QMNH building forms part of the historic pattern of Chalmers Street;
- the building is an important element of the conservation area;
- the structure could be converted to residential accommodation.

## **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 makes no specific reference to the former Queen Mary Nursing Home in terms of whether the building should be retained.

### 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 intrinsic architectural merit of the former Queen Mary Nursing Home is questionable. The current building is utilitarian in appearance with an asymmetrical principal elevation and configuration of dormers that does not line through with the original fenestration below. The gable and rear elevations are more comprehensively altered with rendered supporting buttresses on the side elevation and a rendered four storey extension and enclosed steel fire escape stair on the rear elevation. In its present condition the former QMNH is arguably neither more than of local significance nor a major example of a particular period, style or building type.

In 2001-2, a structural report by Waterman Rennick Consulting Engineers revealed that the building has poorly constructed foundations, which have resulted in structural slippage. Hence the erection of buttresses on the gable end to counteract any movement. There are signs of sheer cracking throughout the structure related to settlement problems associated with the limited capacity of the original foundations. Also, an extensive outbreak of dry rot occurred in 1986, with no evidence that sufficient remedial work has been carried out, and several rooms have been left in a stripped condition, devoid of any timber strappings and floor or ceiling joists. Further timber decay has set in due to extensive rising damp and water ingress through broken windows and gaps in the external fabric.

In terms of re-use, the loading capacity of the former QMNH restricts any proposed use to residential. Limited vertical access would prevent sub-division of the building into townhouses or flats without substantial internal reconfiguration and the formation of new openings onto Chalmers Street to the detriment of architectural integrity. The most viable alternative use would therefore be of an institutional nature, such as student accommodation, which would fail to generate the necessary income to enable restoration of the more important buildings on the RIE site.

The contribution of the former QMNH to the conservation area has been diminished by the recent demolition of a similarly scaled and detailed terrace on the opposite side of Chalmers Street. The original context of the building will be further distorted through the demolition of the unlisted former townhouses abutting the QMNH as part of the Quartermile development.

The proposed replacement buildings make a positive contribution to the RIE site in terms of their high quality, contemporary architecture. While uncompromisingly modern in design, New Meadows 1, 2 and 3 continue the architectural rhythm of the Medical Hospital and Jubilee pavilions overlooking the Meadows. Their basic geometric form and transparent external treatment neither visually compete with nor obscure the highly articulated forms of the adjacent historic buildings. New Central 4 establishes a new building line on Chalmers Street and the structure's solidity of form demarcates part of the western boundary of the Quartermile development.

## **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 and historic significance of which is limited. The overall strategy is to retain and restore the most significant and structurally sound listed buildings on the site. The demolition of the former QMNH will facilitate the construction of residential accommodation that will generate the necessary income to enable restoration of the most important structures on the site.

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.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Henderson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid black horizontal line.

**Alan Henderson**  
Head of Planning and Strategy

**Contact/Tel** Claire Leith on 0131 529 3510 (FAX 529 3717)

**Ward affected** 32 -Tollcross

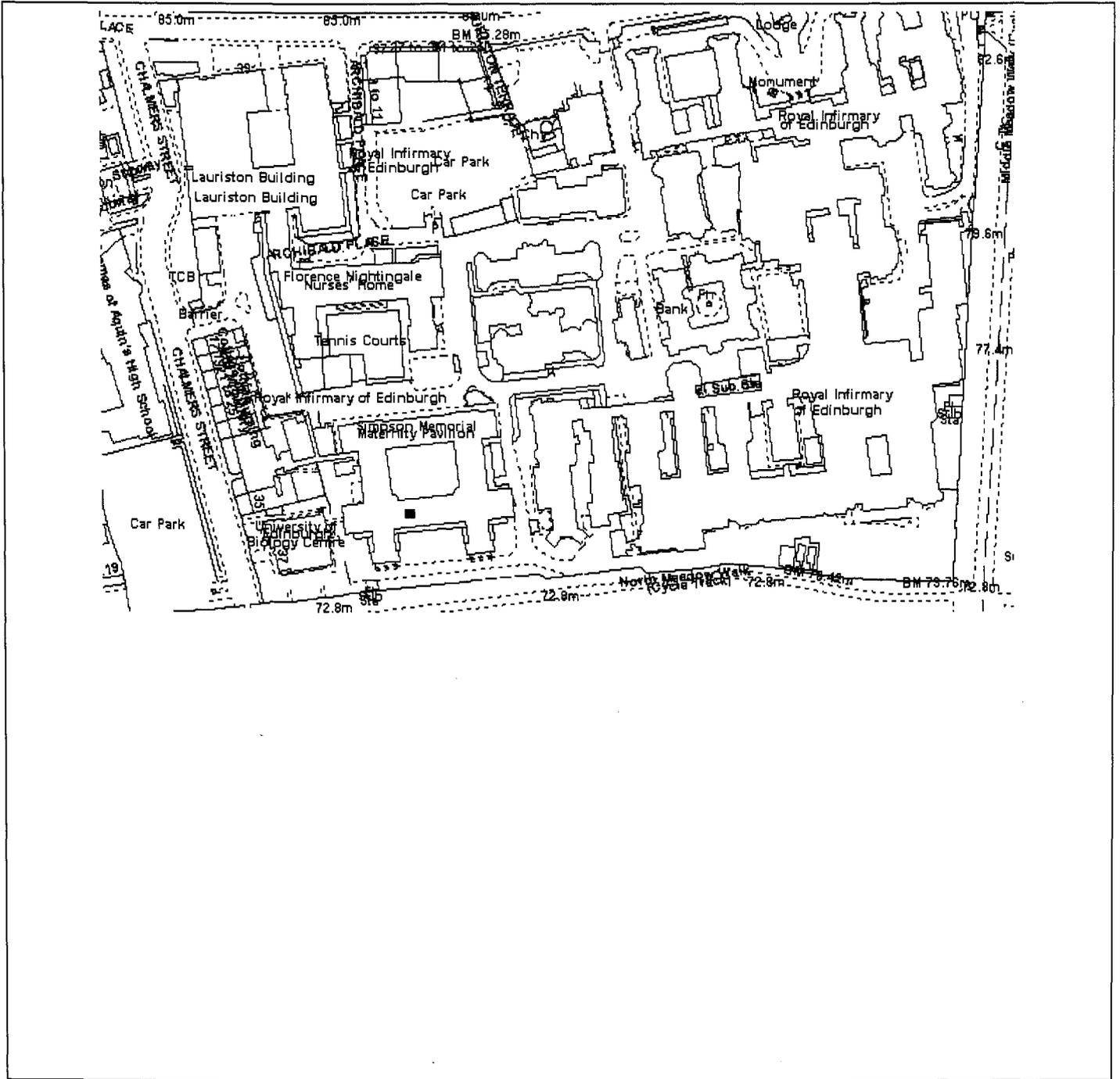
**Local Plan** Central Edinburgh Local Plan

**Statutory Development  
Plan Provision** Mixed Activities Zone

**File** AF

**Date registered** 10 May 2002

**Drawing numbers/  
Scheme** 10, 25, 135-45, 149-50, 182-190 + 226-7



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# **PLANNING APPLICATION**

<b>Address</b>	<b>Royal Infirmary</b>		
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>29-33 Chalmers Street - Demolition of Former Queen Mary Nursing Home</b>		
<b>Application number:</b>	<b>02/01671/LBC</b>	<b>WARD</b>	<b>32- Tollcross</b>
<b>THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL</b>			
<b>THE CITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT- PLANNING &amp; STRATEGY</b>			