

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

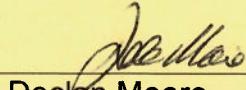
Direction
CD-021831-26
ACP-323482-25

The submissions on this file and the Inspector's report were considered at a meeting held on 27/01/2026.

The Commission decided by majority (2:1) to refuse permission for the following reasons and considerations.

Planning Commissioner:

Date: 05/02/2026


Declan Moore

DRAFT WORDING FOR ORDER

Reasons and Considerations

In considering its decision, the Commission had regard to Strategic Outcome 10 of the National Planning Framework First Revision (2025), relating to access to quality childcare, education, and health services, and the need for the health system to respond to projected population change/requirements, to the National Maternity Strategy 2016-2026 that supports the co-location of maternity hospitals with acute hospitals, in the case of the Rotunda with Connolly Hospital in Blanchardstown, to the detailed application, responses, reports and letters of support for the proposed development and the underlying clinical imperative, to the submissions made by the appellants and observers, to the Dublin City Development Plan 2022, particularly the zoning objective for the site (Z8 Georgian Conservation Area), Policy BHA2 (Protected Structures), Policy BHA9 (Conservation Areas) the Architectural Heritage Protection

Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011), and the specific characteristics of the building and works proposed for the specific site and its location.

The Commission agreed with the appellants that the current proposal to demolish the single storey Outpatients building and replace it with a 4 storey Critical Care Wing, would be contrary to the zoning objective which allows for limited expansion within Georgian Conservation areas and would not serve to 'protect' the existing architectural and civic design character of the site or Parnell Square generally, given that the site of the proposed demolition and proposed development is zoned Z8 (Georgian Conservation Area) in the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028, where the stated objective is 'to protect the existing architectural and civic design character, and to allow only for limited expansion consistent with the conservation objective'. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The Commission was satisfied that the scale, form and location of the development as currently proposed would encroach upon and further compromise the architectural and historical integrity of Parnell Square, one of the five Georgian Squares in Dublin recognised for their spatial relationships between the buildings and open space, and fundamentally alter its character by creating a street frontage along the majority of the west side of the square, thus changing its composition and its relationship with the adjacent protected 18th century houses opposite and failing to respect the historic urban character and built heritage of the surrounding area. In this respect, the Commission found itself in agreement with the appellants.

In its submission the Dublin Civic Trust (an appellant) notes the transparency of the Georgian square from outside the houses at Nos. 36-40 Parnell Square West looking east towards the subject site, the public views of the granite-faced garden front of the 1750s main Rotunda building and its rustic domed spire, one of the few rear views of the building anywhere from the public domain, and a vital link with the

surrounding Georgian square that it was designed to grace, the impact will be the most extreme from the upper floors of the Georgian houses which were specifically designed to capture this view.

The Commission is satisfied that the proposed development in its current form would significantly impact the views into, out of and across many protected structures within the Architectural Conservation Area and the Z8 Conservation Zone, in particular views outwards from the rear of the Rotunda/former pleasure gardens to the surrounding Georgian townhouses as well as views across and into the square, including from the surrounding Protected Structures and most noticeably from Parnell Square West and Granby Road, counter to Policy BHA9 that new development in conservation areas: "must contribute positively to its character and distinctiveness and take opportunities to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area and its setting, wherever possible", contrary to the objectives of those areas and therefore contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

In deciding not to accept the Inspector's recommendation to grant permission, the Commission agreed with the Inspector and the appellants that Parnell Square and its surroundings are clearly a heritage setting of the highest order, as evident from the number of Protected Structures that line the square and the Georgian Conservation Area designation, and that the increased scale, massing, and footprint of the Critical Care Wing, in addition to its location on the interior edge of the square is such that there will be clear heritage impacts.

However, the Commission did not agree with the Inspector that the development represented limited expansion (Z8 zone objective) as currently proposed, relying on the increase in floor area across the wider hospital campus, rather than the replacement and expansion of the building that is proposed for demolition within the development site's redline (approx. 1,000m² to approx. 10,000m² - a tenfold increase).

Similarly, the Commission agreed with the Inspector (and the appellants) that architectural heritage protection is a key objective of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028, the significance of the heritage setting and the impacts that the development of the Critical Care Wing would have on views and the character and setting of both Protected Structures and the Conservation Area, in addition to the interior of Parnell Square itself and views across this space from the enclosing streets, and that the degree of harm to heritage assets and the historic setting would not be negligible.

However, the Commission did not agree with the Inspector's conclusion that the proposal represents an overwhelming public benefit sufficient to justify the degree of heritage harm identified, when Government Policy is to co-locate the Rotunda in the medium to longer term with Connolly Hospital in Blanchardstown, by which time the adverse impact caused by the development as proposed to the character and setting of Protected Structures and the Georgian Conservation Area, could not be undone.