



Letters to the Editor

PROJECT 2020

Sir,

On 17 January 2017 Westminster Council approved, with minor caveats, the planning application for Project 2020 despite some serious objections on architectural grounds from The Victorian Society, the Twentieth Century Society and the Georgian Group. However, before Council and the Board of Trustees make a final decision to proceed with the extensive and costly rebuild that Project 2020 entails, we would urge them to compare it with a more modest staged renovation of the Barry building – to be accomplished as funds are available and without requiring the disposal of the Nuffield accommodation, which was built with a major benefaction from Lord Nuffield.

This would preserve those parts on the Ground Floor that have architectural merit and remain functional – such as the entrance hall, stair case, Council room, Lumley Hall and lecture theatres, as well as the Library and fourth-floor Education Centre – while leaving the recently upgraded Hunterian Museum where it is. However, the plans would also be commissioned to propose better use of space in other parts of the building and the modernisation of services and facilities where necessary.

Such a scheme has been referred to previously but never properly commissioned and costed. It would, however, inevitably be much cheaper than Project 2020, the latest estimate for which is £89 million. This leaves a funding gap of £34 million to be serviced by fundraising and loans after the lease of the Nuffield for £55 million. Retaining the latter would also have the important

advantage of preserving accommodation for RCS fellows, the Faculty of Dental Surgery, the Clinical Effectiveness Unit and the specialist associations. In addition, better use of the Nuffield could be developed so that it became more of an income generator, as the Edinburgh College has done so successfully with its hotel facilities.

We believe Council and the Board of Trustees would be more likely to arrive at a wise decision if they had two such different plans to compare for cost-effectiveness and the future needs of the RCS before finally embarking on improving our site at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Sir Terence English

Past-President of the RCS (1989–1992)

Sir Peter Morris

Past-President of the RCS (2001–2004)

John Black

Past-President of the RCS (2008–2011)

REDEVELOPMENT OF ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Sir,

As the committee representing The Senior Fellows Society (SFS), we wish to express our views relating to the development plans for the RCS. There is growing concern not only among the membership of the SFS but also, we understand, from the membership at large, the Faculty of Dental Surgery (FDS) and the specialty associations as the details, risks and cost of the project are becoming more widely known.

Although Westminster Council gave planning permission for the development

of the Barry building, there was significant opposition to this from conservation groups and from members of the RCS.

We do not consider it justified to sacrifice most of our iconic headquarters for an alternative building that provides much less amenity space. For generations, the RCS buildings in Lincoln's Inn Fields have demonstrated that the integrated Nuffield and Barry buildings are essential in adapting to the huge changes in surgical practice, both nationally and internationally, as well as providing a major source of income. There is no evidence that we could manage future change in the rebuilt Barry building.

Westminster Council are not concerned that the project will cost around £90 million and will require the sale of the Nuffield on a very long-term lease, as well as major borrowing and further charitable donations. In uncertain economic and political times this scenario must surely expose the RCS to serious medium- and long-term risk, which might threaten its existence as the voice of surgery in England and Wales.

It is our unanimous and considered opinion that the Board and Council should be presented with an alternative and costed business case for a programme of staged refurbishment whereby we would retain the ground floor (entrance hall, Lumley and Webb-Johnson, Council and Committee rooms, lecture theatres and members' lounge), Hunterian Museum, the FDS, specialty associations, hotel accommodation, fourth-floor educational facilities and President's lodge. Development should be concentrated on parts of the RCS that need upgrading and might be exploited as

sources of additional income. An example is the Edinburgh College's success with their hotel facility. A similar plan in the Nuffield would be particularly welcomed by provincial members who otherwise might feel further distanced from the RCS by lack of on-site accommodation.

David Jones (Chair)
Roger Watson
Irving Taylor
David Webster
Andrew Brown
Richard Welfare
Senior Fellows Society Committee

Transforming our Lincoln's Inn Fields buildings – RCS response

In mid-January 2017 we received planning permission for our landmark redevelopment of the main RCS building. Plans included the sympathetic restoration of the Grade II-listed front façade and the reclamation and integration into the new building of a number of historically significant items and features. The permission is an important step on our journey to transform the way we support our membership and advance surgical care.

Plans to redevelop the building go back more than a decade, when it became clear that the buildings were rapidly becoming uneconomical, inflexible, expensive to run and refurbish, and an obstacle to future progress. Council's decision to proceed with redevelopment was based on initial comparisons of a redevelopment programme or a staged refurbishment programme. The latter was considered to be prohibitively expensive in terms of time, cost and disruption to staff and RCS professional and trading activities.

Great consideration has gone into the concepts and plans for the new building. With close consultation with national heritage bodies – and use of anecdotal (and RCS archive) material – the design of the exterior and interior of the new building will exemplify and showcase our heritage, while creating a modern and flexible facility to meet the changing demands of the RCS and wider profession for many years to come. The redevelopment presents opportunities to make the building – and, by extension, the profession – more open and welcoming to the general public.

Specifically, the Hunterian Museum will be expanded and relocated to the ground floor, which was its original location when it was created in the 19th century, to allow greater interpretation of the collection based on extensive audience research. This relocation will also increase accessibility to wider audiences. Education and examination spaces will be state-of-the-art, and will be flexible enough to adapt to the fast-moving pace of surgical education and training, and harness the latest innovations in teaching and technology.

The cost of the redevelopment in total will be £90 million: £77 million to complete the work for the main building and £13 million for the cost of the 3-year temporary accommodation, including the loss of financial contribution from activities such as conferences and events. We are embarking on a £10 million fundraising campaign but the majority of the funding will come from the sale of the leasehold of the Nuffield building. The Nuffield building, as a hotel, is significantly underused by the fellows and members and, though it provides a convenient location for visiting professionals, it would need major investment if it were to compete in the highly competitive London hotel market – thereby diverting the RCS away from our educational and charitable works.

We are also undertaking an efficiency programme across the RCS that will reduce any requirement to borrow money for the rebuild in the short term, and enable us to further invest in our charitable aims in the long term. There is no expectation that fees for fellows and members will be affected by the development.

We have regularly updated the membership on the project through our digital and print channels; and have encouraged debate, discussion and comment from all involved with the RCS. We have also been working closely with other interested parties – including the Surgical Speciality Associations, who will all have space in the new building – to ensure that the new building meets the needs of everyone.

We value the comments and commitments of all fellows, members, volunteers and staff, and their contribution to the successes of the RCS. Council has twice considered the redevelopment proposals in detail in the past year (most recently in February), on the back of concerns raised by the Senior Fellows Society and some Past-Presidents. Its considered view on each occasion was that the RCS must look to the future.

Allied with our programme to increase our range of events out in the regions, the redeveloped building represents a new era for the RCS in which we will consolidate and grow our presence as the major driving force in advancing surgical care.

Andrew Reed **Stephen Cannon**
Chief Executive Vice-President of the RCS and Chair of the Project 2020 Steering Group