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GENERAL NEWS

# City hotel plans are in doubt over heritage body's appeal

By GORDON DEEGAN

PLANS to carry out a major redevelopment of one of the city's best known hotels have been put into doubt by the Irish Georgian Society.

Last month, Limerick City Council granted planning permission to the Royal George Hotel for a major expansion of the hotel that involves the demolition of 1, 2 and 3, Shannon Street.

The Council made its decision despite an objection from the Limerick chapter of the Irish Georgian Society.

In their submission, the Limerick Chapter stated that the proposal would seriously damage the remaining Georgian character of this part of Limerick city where the buildings date from 1815.

The Limerick Chapter stated: "The need to conserve and preserve what remains is of vital importance as demolition if allowed will create a precedent, which could lead to the complete loss of the surviving character of the city."

Despite the plea, the Council gave the go-ahead for the redevelopment.

However this has now been put on hold by the Irish Georgian Society, which has urged An Bord Pleanala to rejection the application.

The appeal states that

the three houses proposed for demolition form an integral part of Shannon Street's historic streetscape.

It goes on: "Most historic buildings can be rescued and restored, so poor condition is not a justifiable reason for demolition. Their contribution to the historic streetscape is drawn from their architectural character, not the specifics of their age, whether Georgian, as we believe, or Victorian."

The appeal argues: "Limerick's historic architecture has, in general, been neglected and its stock of older buildings is dwindling rapidly. The Society feels strongly that any surviving historic buildings should, if at all possible, be retained. These structures define the historic character of each street and the city as a whole."

"Permitting the demolition of 1, 2 and 3, Shannon Street would irretrievably alter this streetscape and would prevent any well considered conservation of these structures in the future once demolished they can never be replaced."

"The loss of these buildings, and thereby an historic streetscape, would leave Shannon Street bereft of any Georgian-type houses and would diminish the potential for future regeneration."

"To sacrifice these buildings, for what is

clearly a question of financial gain, would not be in keeping with the purpose of Section IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000."

However, the views of the Irish Georgian Society receive a stern rebuke in a submission by Limerick City Council to the appeals board.

It states that the City

Council "does not consider that this major and significant development should be held up an unsupported claim that the demolition of 1, 2 and 3, Shannon Street, should not be approved on the basis of the architectural merit or uniqueness of the existing building."

A decision is due by An Bord Pleanala in August.

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