

Imperial Homes's neo-Georgian redevelopment

Demolition of piece of city's Victorian social history

By Andrew Napier

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TWO Victorian buildings have been demolished for a new housing scheme near the Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester.

Imperial Homes is building nine four-storey neo-Georgian townhouses on Romsey Road after Southern Health NHS Trust sold the site to the Curdridge-based developer.

Imperial director Ben Olds said groundworks started this week and the expected completion is next summer.

Planning permission for the demolition and rebuilding were granted in 2018.

The demolition has been regretted by Winchester Heritage Open Days. On social media it said that one of the buildings had played an important historical role: "We are shocked to see no63 Romsey Road has gone. As many of you might know, for years it belonged to the NHS, but originally it was a home for female convicts in the last six months of their sentence.

"Known as The Carlisle Memorial Refuge, it was the initiative of Sir Walter Crofton, who lived nearby. The four redbrick houses opened in 1865 and could accommodate up to 65 women at any time. The aim was to break the cycle of re-offending by providing support and training in a caring environment before the women were discharged into employment. The day to day running of the 'home' was overseen by Miss Eliza Pumphrey, and it was she that insisted on calling it a home and creating the caring environment.

"Her experiences in running the home led her to giving evidence to the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Working of the Penal Servitude Act in 1878. By then 1,016 women had passed through the establishment, only two of whom had ever absconded despite there being no locks on the doors. The establishment caught the attention of the great and the good; Ruskin was a visitor.

"Her work may not seem very groundbreaking these days but at the time it was quite an extraordinary thing for a woman to be al-



CGI of Imperial Homes scheme for Connaught House and Spencer House, Romsey Road, Winchester

lowed to give evidence to a Royal Commission."

A spokeswoman for Southern Health said: "The services that we used to run from Connaught and Spencer House have relocated to Avalon House on Chesil Street. Ava-

lon House provides a better patient environment as well as a more suitable accommodation. The relocation was fully supported by the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group).

The community services include: Winchester City Community Care

Team (district nurses and therapists); Older People's Mental Health Community Services; Children's Community Services (school nursing, special school nursing and health visiting); and Podiatry Service.

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Connaught and Spencer House on Romsey Road. Photo: Winchester Heritage Open Days



The cleared site on Romsey Road at the junction of St James Lane. Photo: Andrew Napier