

Sick Kids sold to developer in midst of community right to buy

Earlier today NHS Lothian announced that they have sold the building to a developer, Downing Group, and that the sale will finalise when the new building at Little France is ready.



The 4.01 acre site owned by NHS Lothian and Edinburgh and the Lothians Health Foundation charity lies just beside the Meadows is iconic and the buildings are listed.

[A community right to buy bid](#) now appears to have been thwarted.

Marchmont and Sciennes Development Trust (MSDT) had previously asked Scottish Ministers to use this new law to give them first refusal to buy the site.

MSDT's formal bid was held up after complex land ownership issues around the 122-year-old hospital revealed that although the four-acre facility is being marketed as one site, the ownership was split between the two bodies.

The group has spent the last few months addressing this, and other issues raised, and submitted a revised application to the Scottish Government on 7 September 2017.

On September 14, The Scottish Government told MSDT it had issued a notice to NHS Lothian by recorded delivery to say that, under the terms of the legislation, the Sick Kids sale process should be paused.

But this morning NHS Lothian announced it had reached a deal with the Downing Group and that missives were concluded on 5 September 2017.

Affordable co-operative housing, healthcare and nursery facilities, space for social enterprises and a multi-purpose community hall were among the ideas for the Sick Kids suggested by MSDT – the community body representing local residents.

A MSDT spokesperson, said: “We are gutted that we have not even had the chance for our application to be judged by the Scottish Government, which appears to be in the dark about this sale.

“Only yesterday (Thursday) the Government’s community land team told us they had issued a prohibition notice to NHS Lothian which would have forced the sale process to be paused while our application was being considered by ministers.

“It turns out the sale had already been concluded by NHS Lothian ten days ago.

“This application was considered by many as an ‘acid test’ for the new urban right to buy laws and we feel very disappointed, as will many people in the community around the Sick Kids, that we did not get the chance to show how it would work.

“The reality of this decision is that only the bare legal minimum of the sorts of things local people suggested for this site – such as the affordable housing, more space for the local school and community facilities – is likely to happen now.

“You only have to look across The Meadows at the luxury QuarterMile development for an example of how this could now turn out for those hoping for more community facilities.

“The application process has been dogged by delays on The Scottish Government side, well beyond what the legislation states, and a string of technical challenges which the Government and Holyrood must look at again to help other communities which want to use this law.

“This is not the end of the road for MSDT and we will be in touch with our supporters in the coming weeks to gauge the appetite for engaging with the preferred bidder, and other ways we can transform our local area.”

Jacquie Campbell, Chief Officer for Acute Services, NHS Lothian said: “The decision to move the services from the current site and dispose of the site was not an easy one to make. The legacy of the Royal Hospital for Sick Kids dates back to 1863 and since 1895 the hospital at Sciennes Road has been home to thousands of children and their families in the building many have grown to call ‘the sick kids’.

“Although the site has a developer lined up to take ownership of the site, patients and their families can rest assured that no changes will be made to the current facilities until they are set to move to their new location in the £150m Royal Hospital for Children and Young People and Department of Clinical Neurosciences, Little France next year.”

David Fraser, partner with Ryden, adviser to NHS Lothian said: “The property was put up for sale in November 2016 and naturally generated a great deal of interest which resulted in 21 formal bids being received in early 2017.

“After carefully consideration, six bidders were invited to provide additional clarifications whereby the Downing Groups was selected as preferred bidder.”

Jane Ferguson, Director, Edinburgh and the Lothians Health Foundation added: "On behalf of the trustees of the Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation, I am delighted that the process to sell the buildings that make up the Royal Hospital for Sick Children at Sciennes has reached its conclusion.

"This step is an important one in the hospital's relocation to Little France, Edinburgh, together with the Department of Clinical Neuroscience and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

"The trustees have already committed over £2m to the development and realisation of the Art and Therapeutic Design programme for the new building, helping to creating a home for the hospital every bit as iconic as the old 'Sick Kids'.

"The proceeds of the sale of the trustee-owned buildings at Sciennes will be used to continue to support our vision of healthier, longer lives for the people of Lothian."

The terms of the legislation means that NHS Lothian would appear to have acted within the law, as the public body selling a building is not obliged to stop the sale until the Scottish Government issues a 'prohibition notice'.