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28<sup>th</sup> January 2025

To the Chairperson and Members of the Central Area Committee

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**Initiation of the Statutory Process for the Proposed Addition of Liberty House, Railway Street/James Joyce Street, Dublin 1, to the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).**

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### **PHOTOGRAPH OF STRUCTURE**



### **Introduction**

It is proposed to initiate procedures under Section 54 and Section 55 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) to add Liberty House, Railway Street, James Joyce Street, Dublin 1 to Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures.

### Request for Addition

- Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (now Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage) on the 04/06/2014.

### Summary of Reasons for Seeking Addition

- *Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (now Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage):* List of recommendations for inclusion on the RPS of structures deemed as being of Regional significance or higher identified during Stage 1 of the Dublin Survey carried out by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Liberty House, Railway Street, James Joyce Street, Dublin 1 has been assigned a Regional rating. The Stage 1 Ministerial recommendations were issued to Dublin City Council on the 04/06/2014.

### Methodology for Assessing 20<sup>th</sup> Century Structures

In November 2019, the Planning & Property Development SPC agreed a methodology to expedite the proposed additions/deletions to the RPS in a systematic manner, based on the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines 2011 and NIAH/Ministerial Recommendations under Section 53(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). The methodology agreed to prioritise industrial, twentieth century, early buildings and underrepresented typologies.

Objective BHA06 of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 provides as follows: *To identify and protect exemplar buildings of the twentieth century; to categorise, prioritise, and, where appropriate, add to the Record of Protected Structures (RPS); to produce guidelines and offer advice for protection and appropriate refurbishment of such structures.*

Liberty House is considered to be an exemplar of twentieth-century architecture.

### Site Location & Zoning Map

The structure in question is zoned Z1: *To protect, provide and improve residential amenities,* in the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028.



Fig. 1: Site location and zoning map for Liberty House

### Recent Planning History

Plan Ref. No.	Description
1167/98	1. Construct 4 storey extensions to: The gable of Block A (Corporation Street), The gable of Block F (Railway Street and to The rear at the junctions of blocks A/B, B/C and E/F. The extensions generally to contain bedroom extensions to adjoining flats with the extension to Block A also containing ground floor community facilities, and 3 additional 2 bedroom flats. 2. Carry out Environmental Improvements Works, refurbishment works and various works necessary for reasons of fire safety.
4305/06	Part 8 - Demolition of nos 1 - 40 Block D Liberty House, Railway Street, Dublin 1. Local Government (Planning & Development) Acts 1963 - 1993, Regulations 2001 part viii. Pursuant to the requirements of the above, notice is hereby given of the demolition by Dublin City Council of Block D, Liberty House, Railway Street, Dublin 1. The proposal provides for: The demolition of one 5 storey residential block - units numbers 1D to 40D Block D, Liberty House, Railway Street, Dublin 1, comprising 8 number bed sit apartments and 2 number 1 bed flats at ground floor, 8 number 2 bed duplexes and 2 number 3 bed duplexes at first floor and 6 number 2 bed, 2 number 3 bed and 2 number 4 bed duplexes at third floor. The erection of a 2.4 metre high security fence/hoarding and gate around the site until the completion of the proposed redevelopment of the site. It is proposed there will be a minimum of 35 social housing units and possibly some affordable units. There will be a mix of 2 and 3 bed duplexes and 1 and 2 bed apartments. Additionally, there will be a community room, a landscaped garden and underground car parking. It is proposed that the height throughout the new development will be four storeys. Access will be maintained to all surrounding premises. The plans and particulars of the proposed demolition are available for inspection from 28th July to 28th August 2006, at: Dublin City Council, Planning Department, Civic Offices, Wood Quay, Dublin 8, Mon to Fri 9.00am to 4.30pm A submission or observation in relation to the proposed demolition, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area may be made in writing before 4.30pm on 12th September 2006 to: The Executive Manager, Planning Department, Civic Offices, Wood Quay, Dublin 8.
3773/10	Notice is hereby given of the demolition by Dublin City Council of the existing Flat Blocks E and F at Liberty House, Railway Street, Dublin 1 and the construction of a new apartment building with 56no. residential units, a community facility and ancillary works. The site is bounded to the North by Railway Street, to the South by Liberty Park and in part by the Steelworks Apartments, to the West by Block C Liberty House and to the East by The Kiln and The Forge apartment buildings. The proposal provides for: the demolition of the existing 4 storey Blocks E & F at Liberty House, and for the construction of a hoarding/fencing around the area they currently occupy. Also proposed is the removal of most of the northern railings to Liberty Park and the removal of 9 mature trees in the northern section of the park following on from Variation 50 to the 2005-2011 Dublin City Development Plan. The construction of a landscaped pedestrian route linking Liberty Park to Railway Street. The construction of 16no. one bedroom residential units, 34no. 2 bedroom units, 6no. 3 bedroom units, a semi-basement car park for 27 cars and a community facility. The proposed building is generally 5 stories high with the South Eastern corner at 6 stories high. Ground floor duplex housing units are entered directly from the street or from the enclosed landscaped courtyard, upper floor apartments are accessed via staircase/lift lobbies and some via shared access decks.

### **Recent Planning Enforcement History**

There is no recorded planning enforcement history for the subject site.

### **Site Access**

A site inspection was carried out by Mary-Liz McCarthy of Dublin City Council's Conservation Section on 10/01/2025. Full access to the exterior of structure together with its surroundings was possible. The interior was not accessed. A location map are included in this report and images of the structure are contained in Appendix 1.

### **Summary Description**

*Exterior:* Two four-storey multiple-bay blocks of social housing, built 1936-9, comprising L-plan range to east, U-plan range to west set around open square to centre fronting onto Railway Street and also addressing James Joyce Street. Part of a wider complex, with three blocks previously demolished (Block D c.2002-4, Blocks E & F in 2014-16). Extensions to remaining blocks c.2000 with extensive refurbishment carried out. Symmetrical front elevations with curved end bays having built-in balconies and central recessed bays to both ranges. Circulation balconies providing access to flats at all levels to internal courtyard side. Flat concrete roofs with overhang. Machine-made red brick walls laid in English bond to curved end bays and entire ground floor with soldier brick course to plinth, roughcast rendered to remainder with channel rusticated cement rendered walls to entire third floor. Square-headed window openings with concrete sills, soldier brick courses to window heads and replacement uPVC windows (c.2000). Recessed bays designed as pair of red brick piers above ground floor surmounted by concrete plinths in turn supporting flat concrete canopy; these bays have been altered to the courtyard side c.2000. Tripartite windows to recessed bays with central window flanked by brick piers forming mullion to side windows, having soldier courses at window head level and forming corbelled brick sill to first floor windows. Gauged brick parabolic arched window opening to ground level with stepped brick reveals and flush bullnose brick sill, timber casement window and flanked by slender windows to base of giant piers. Curved corner bays with recessed balconies above ground floor having curved concrete lintel spanning opening, brick cheeks, flush concrete coping and original steel guard-rails to all balconies. Square-headed door openings off circulation balconies with replacement panelled doors (c.2000).

### **Historical Background**

The Liberty House flat scheme was completed in 1939, having commenced construction c.1936. It is one of twenty-one flat schemes constructed in the city by Dublin Corporation between 1932 and 1950, under the Housing Architecture Unit established in 1932 and headed by Herbert Simms until his untimely death in 1948. In the early decades of the twentieth-century there was a national crisis around urban housing and slum clearance. By the onset of the 1930s, there was a greater pragmatism in the approach to the housing problem, with a shift away from the previous approach of constructing single-family dwellings. It was recognised that the suburban housing schemes of the 1920s had not sufficiently tackled the working class housing problem. A new approach to the housing problem was encouraged through new government legislation, leading to a return to flat building together with largescale suburban housing schemes for the rental market. The Corporation sought to purchase slum areas of the city, such as this site on Railway Street (previously Lower Tyrone Street) and James Joyce Street (previously known as Mabbot Street and later Corporation Street), which was approved for CPO in 1933. Town planning was also garnering greater acceptance at this time. In the 1930s controls over development were tightened with the introduction of the 1934 Planning Act. In addition to the recognition of the need for greater control on development by private owners, the Corporation's own housing schemes also required more careful planning.

Herbert Simms (1898-1948) was housing architect to Dublin Corporation from c.1932 until 1948, having originally joined the Corporation in 1925. In 1926 he was authorized to visit London, Liverpool and Manchester to investigate the latest trends in flat buildings. In 1929-1930 he is said to have worked for about a year in India as a town planner in the Punjab, before returning to Dublin. By the time he took up the role in 1932, he had therefore built up his experience in terms of a strong ethical approach to town planning and public housing. During the sixteen years he was in office, Simms was responsible for the design and erection of some 17,000 new homes, ranging from striking blocks of flats in the central city to extensive suburban housing schemes such as those at Crumlin and Cabra.

Simms had developed a general style for his flat blocks. The influence of Amsterdam architects was evident in the design of the blocks including buildings aligned along and

forming the street façades, a strong horizontal quality, rounded ends, reinforced concrete cantilevers to roofs and canopies. Most of Simms blocks were four- or five-storey lining an existing street perimeter style. Despite their modern design, they echoed the classic style of the Georgian terraces for which the city was renowned and respected their location within low-rise Dublin. All schemes were built slightly off the street line behind iron railings and a grass strip. Each flat had its own door, accessed off open balconies facing an internal courtyard. By the late 1930s, flats had to be a minimum of three-rooms; while some one- or two-roomed flats formed part of the block designs, most flats were either three or four rooms.

Liberty House follows the style outlined above. The use of varied finishes to floors on the street-facing elevations emphasise the horizontality of the blocks, with recessed central bays and rounded corners addressing junctions and terminating blocks featuring. The quality of the finishes to the elevations are still evident today, contributing to the significance of the surviving blocks.

Liberty House originally comprised six blocks, of which only three now survive. Block D was demolished c.2002-4, with Blocks E and F demolished 2014-16. A new complex was constructed on the site of Block D c.2014, with a further development constructed on the site of Blocks E and F in 2023-4. The flats in Blocks A, B and C were extensively refurbished c.2000, following a grant of permission in 1998 (Ref. 1167/98), and the blocks were also extended. Windows throughout the complex were replaced c.2000 as part of a wider programme of window upgrading across all flat complexes in the city.

#### References:

- Data from the Ordnance Survey of Ireland accessed through the Historic Environment Viewer at <https://heritagedata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0c9eb9575b544081b0d296436d8f60f8> on 08/01/2025
- Digital records accessed 02/07/2024
  - Morgan Aerial Photographic Collection - Busáras, Store Street, Co. Dublin May 1954 (<https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000731364>)
- McManus, R. *Dublin, 1910-1940: Shaping the City & Suburbs*, Dublin, 2002
- Naughton, L. *Herbert Simms, An Architect for the People*, Dublin, 2023
- Rowley, E., 'Marrowbone Lane Flats, Dublin 8, 1940', in Rowley, E. *More than Concrete Blocks Vol. 1 1900-40*, pp. 314-25, Dublin 2016
- The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Survey of Dublin City, Stage 1 Ministerial Recommendations issued on the 04/06/2014

#### NIAH Significance/Rating

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) survey has been carried out for the area under Stage 1 of the Dublin City programme (see Appendix 2).

The NIAH uses eight categories of special interest (architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical & social) and identifies five categories of rating in seeking to rank buildings. The NIAH rating values are International, National, Regional, Local and Record Only (I, N, R, L, O). Structures which are considered of International, National, and Regional significance are deemed worthy of inclusion on the RPS.

The NIAH record provided in Appendix 2 of this report has assigned Liberty House a 'Regional' rating. These are structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their region or area.

Liberty House is subject to a Ministerial recommendation as well.

#### Assessment of Special Interest under the Planning & Development Act 2000

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage assigned this structure Architectural, Historical, Social, Technical interest.

The Conservation Section, following an external inspection of the site on 10/01/2025 has considered the opinion of the NIAH and is in agreement with the categories of special interest assigned.

**Conclusion**

Dublin City Council Conservation Section has carried out an assessment of Liberty House and has also considered the NIAH record for the site (see Appendix 2). The Conservation Section concludes that Liberty House merits inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures. The protection has not been extended to the interior due to alterations that have been carried out over the structure’s lifetime which have reduced the significance of the interior.

The extent of the proposed Protected Structure status and curtilage is outlined in Fig.2 of this document (below).

The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Central Area Committee of Dublin City Council for the initiation of the statutory process for the proposed addition of this structure to the Record of Protected Structures. This includes undertaking a statutory public consultation process in accordance with Section 55 of the Act. Following the statutory consultation process, a further report will be prepared taking any submissions and observations received into consideration, with a recommendation to the City Council to proceed or not with the proposed addition, or with a recommendation including amendments to the proposed addition.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the statutory process is initiated for the proposed addition of **Liberty House**, to the Record of Protected Structures, in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

Recommendation	
Address	Description (to appear on RPS)
Railway Street, Dublin 1	Liberty House: dwellings (exterior only and excluding later extensions)



Rhona M. Naughton MRUP MIPI  
Senior Planner  
Conservation & Heritage

29/01/2025

Date

### **Extent of Protected Structure Status**

The extent of protected structure status & curtilage is shown on the map below in red.



Fig. 2: Liberty House: extent of Protected Structure status and curtilage outlined in red.

Appendix 1: Short Photographic Record & Historical Maps



Fig. 3: Aerial Photograph showing location of building



Fig. 4: View from northwest



Fig. 5: Curved bays to northwest





Fig. 6: Central recessed bays to north elevation



Fig. 7: Curved bays to northeast



Fig. 8: Central recessed bays to west elevation



Fig. 9: View from southwest

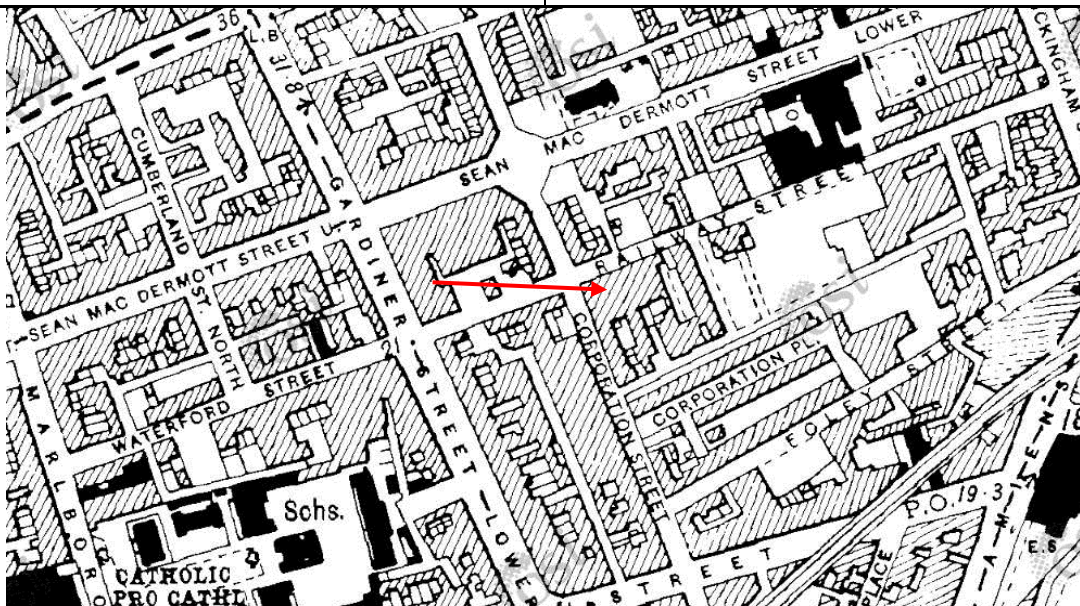



Fig. 10: Extract from c.1935 Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping; location of Liberty House arrowed red



Fig. 11: Extract from aerial photograph from Morgan Aerial Photographic Collection dated May 1954 showing full extent of original flat complex (<https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000731364>)

## Appendix 2: NIAH Ministerial Recommendation

### NIAH Assessment for Liberty House, Railway Street, James Joyce Street, Dublin 1

	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Reg.</b></td> <td>50011147</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Date</b></td> <td>1936-39</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Previous Name</b></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Townland</b></td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>County</b></td> <td>Dublin City</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Coordinates</b></td> <td>316347, 235006</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Categories of Special Interest</b></td> <td>Architectural, Historical, Social, Technical</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Rating</b></td> <td>Regional</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Original Use</b></td> <td>apartment/flat (purpose-built)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>In Use As</b></td> <td>apartment/flat (purpose-built)</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Reg.</b>	50011147	<b>Date</b>	1936-39	<b>Previous Name</b>		<b>Townland</b>	N/A	<b>County</b>	Dublin City	<b>Coordinates</b>	316347, 235006	<b>Categories of Special Interest</b>	Architectural, Historical, Social, Technical	<b>Rating</b>	Regional	<b>Original Use</b>	apartment/flat (purpose-built)	<b>In Use As</b>	apartment/flat (purpose-built)
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<p><b>Description:</b> Two four-storey multiple-bay blocks of social housing, built c.1936, L-plan range to east, U-plan range to west set around open square to centre fronting onto Railway Street. Symmetrical front elevations with curved end bays having built-in verandahs and central recessed entrance bays to both ranges. Flat concrete roofs with overhang. Machine-made red brick walls laid in English bond to curved end bays and entire ground floor with soldier brick course to plinth, roughcast rendered to remainder with channel rusticated cement rendered walls to entire third floor. Square-headed window openings with concrete sills and replacement uPVC windows. Recessed entrance bays designed as pair of red brick piers above ground floor surmounted by concrete plinths in turn supporting flat concrete canopy. Tripartite windows to entrance bay with central window flanked by brick piers forming mullion to side windows, having soldier courses at window head level and forming corbelled brick sill to first floor windows. Gauged brick parabolic arched window opening to ground level with stepped brick reveals and flush bullnose brick sill, timber casement window and flanked by slender windows to base of giant piers. Curved corner bays with recessed balconies above ground floor having curved concrete lintel spanning opening, brick cheeks, flush concrete coping and original steel guard-rails to all verandas.</p>																					
<p><b>Appraisal:</b> These blocks of flats, tendered in 1936, are an early example of the work of Herbert Simms, who filled the newly created post of Dublin Corporation housing architect in 1932. Believed to have been influenced by the work on new apartment blocks, of de Klerk in Amsterdam and J.P. Oud in Rotterdam, they are an important example of the Modern Movement in the newly established Irish Free State. The varying planes, rounded corners and the verandas add visual interest and the flat over-sailing eaves are typical of the era.</p>																					