

Deputations

Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 21st January, 2021

Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams

Deputations

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Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

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CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Item No 3

21 January 2021

DEPUTATION REQUESTS

| Subject | Deputation |
|--|---|
| 3.1 In relation to Item 11.1 on the agenda – Former Royal High School, Regent Road, Edinburgh – Options Paper | Urbanist Hotels |
| 3.2 In relation to Item 11.1 on the agenda – Former Royal High School, Regent Road, Edinburgh – Options Paper | Royal High School Preservation Trust |
| 3.3 In relation to Item 11.1 on the agenda – Former Royal High School, Regent Road, Edinburgh – Options Paper | Cockburn Association, New Town & Broughton Community Council and Edinburgh World Heritage |

Dear Councillor,

Very soon Edinburgh Council will make a critical decision about one of the city's most important buildings. We would appeal to City Councillors to take this decision fairly based on the facts and evidence. Urbanist Hotels has to accept that the opportunity to bring a new Rosewood Hotel to the site has now been lost, and judging from the Reporter's decision, was too ambitious in the scale of development on its west wing. However, that ambition was shared by the Council which sought at a minimum a 120-bedroom hotel.

We have reviewed the Reporters findings and conclusion that, *'In terms of the listed building itself, the appeal proposal would better preserve the building'* – as opposed to the RHSPT proposals. We have also revisited interest from investors, and we believe that a Five Star Boutique Arts Hotel can be delivered in a way that is consistent with the Council's planning brief for the site.

We wanted to make it clear to Elected Members that from the start we have sought to faithfully implement the legal agreement that saw the potential for restoring a building that has had no proper use in more than fifty years.

The Old Royal High School is unquestionably a much-loved building, not least by us. The Music School proposals, with no confirmed funding in place involve far more radical intervention by creating a major new entrance in the façade, remodelling the stairs and extensive excavation underneath the building, all whilst not delivering daily public access.

Any decision will not be easy, but we do believe that it should be shaped with the preservation of the building to the fore. We will circulate further information shortly, but all we ask is for fair consideration of proposals that can restore another of Edinburgh's great buildings.

Yours faithfully,

David Orr

Urbanist Hotels



ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL PRESERVATION TRUST

Submission by the Royal High School Preservation Trust to
The City of Edinburgh Council Finance and Resources
Committee

January, 2021



1. RHSPT Submission to Finance and Resources Committee

- 1.1 The Royal High School Preservation Trust (“RHSPT” or “the Trust”) is pleased to provide a written submission to the City of Edinburgh Council’s Finance and Resources Committee in relation to the future of the former Royal High School on Calton Hill.
- 1.2 The Trust particularly values this opportunity, as much of the nuance of its proposal has been lost in the public debate over the two now refused hotel schemes. As consideration turns to agreeing a new way forward for the former Royal High School building, we wish to provide a clear statement of what the Trust can offer in relation to a number of key matters of public interest.
- 1.3 The questions which this written submission seeks to address are:
- What are the characteristics of the former Royal High School building which have made it so difficult to repurpose?
 - What are the origins, nature and purpose of the RHSPT?
 - What is the nature of the relationship of the RHSPT with the proposed National Music School?
 - How will the National Music School benefit the wider community?
 - What does the RHSPT propose for the building and how does it meet the challenges of the building?
 - What are the public benefits of the RHSPT’s proposal?
 - What is the public attitude to the RHSPT’s proposal?
 - What financing is available to the RHSPT?
 - What would be the next steps to advancing the RHSPT’s proposals?
- 1.4 This submission is brief, but a very substantial body of work underlies the answers. The Trust would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of that which is set out below in detail with committee members either individually or as a whole.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The recent history of the building has shown how difficult it is to repurpose. Many suggestions have been made about how the building could be reused, however, since the abandonment of plans for the building to become home for a devolved assembly, the Trust’s proposal is the first to combine a sustainable public use with funding and with the necessary consents.
- 2.2 The Trust is formed as a Building Preservation Trust, which will deliver a sustainable redevelopment of the building on behalf of a broad range of community stakeholders. Once the development is complete, the Trust will encompass significant public representation amongst its trustees, and its role will turn to ensuring that the building is maintained and continues to deliver the public benefits required.
- 2.3 The National Music School will be a sub-tenant of the Trust, and as a condition of its occupation will be required to deliver a range of benefits to the public.
- 2.4 The new National Music School will provide an exceptional educational environment for gifted young musicians, regardless of their means or circumstances, and will reach out across Scotland to build up demand for a full time music education programme, while expanding opportunities for young musicians to study to a high level, outside school time.
- 2.5 Whilst the new National Music School is the anchor occupier, the scheme encompasses a broad range of other public benefits. These include:
- A significant new public concert hall
 - A multi-function garden, (including the currently inaccessible southern terraces of the building) proposed, in combination with the western pavilion as a venue for outdoor cultural events during the Edinburgh International Festival
 - A dramatic enhancement of the pedestrian frontage on Regent Road, envisaged to include a large area suitable for outdoor events during the festival
- 2.6 The Trust is in the unique position of having planning permission, an experienced board of trustees, a formalised relationship with St Mary’s Music School through the Perfect Harmony

Development Board, and crucially the extraordinary philanthropic gift of £35 million from Dunard Fund, to develop the former Royal High School into a national cultural asset.

3. What are the characteristics of the former Royal High School building which have made it so difficult to repurpose?

3.1 The existing building has a number of key constraints which, in combination, have hindered efforts to find a sustainable new role that protects and enhances both the building and its setting, including:

- The building is much smaller than it appears from the Southern frontage. Much of its architectural presence is a result of retaining walls and screen walls, with no useable space behind.



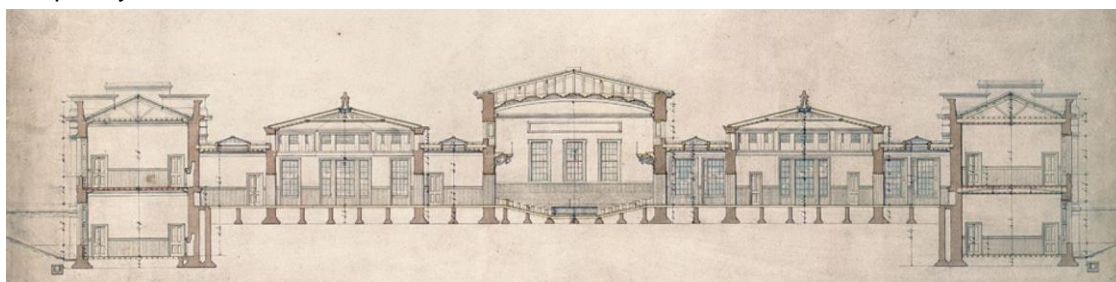
- The building is laid out on multiple levels, making fire strategy and DDA compliance highly challenging.
- The three most significant public rooms occupy the full depth of the plan, making it difficult for the large rooms flanking the main hall to serve as anything other than corridors to the central space.
- All four elevations have significant architectural merit, severely limiting the ability to extend the main building.
- The building provides just four windows to the South and no prospect of introducing any new windows.
- The sunk seating tiers of the central hall, which is architecturally the most important space in the building, are integral to its historic and visual significance. The tiers make it exceptionally difficult to satisfy the needs of any proposed use which requires a flat floor.



3.2 Further constraints include:

- It has been generally agreed that the base cost of any restoration is in excess of £20m, even before the needs of a new occupier are catered for. Such sums are exceptionally difficult to raise in current economic circumstances.
- The reporters at the recent Public Inquiry definitively supported the view that no significant new building is possible on the western side of the main building, and only relatively low new building possible to the east. This drastically limits the flexibility of the site.
- Professional consultants employed by the hotel developer concluded that no commercial use could sustainably operate from the site, other than a large hotel scheme. Such a scheme has proved incompatible with the conservation constraints of the building.
- The site includes a steep rise from South to North through the building. The main public frontage is to Regent Road, but the useable space is at least a storey above that level. Options to access the building from the Regent Road level are impractical and convoluted as currently laid out.

3.3 The constraints on expanding the limited useable space led to the departure of the High School in 1968. The repurposing of the building for the anticipated Scottish Assembly in 1977 would now be incapable of containing the functions required of a modern parliament, and did not adequately resolve the access issues.



3.4 The Hill Adamson Trust worked for nearly nine years on the feasibility of the former Royal High School building becoming Scotland's National Photography Centre, but it eventually proved to be undeliverable.

3.5 From 1993 until 2010, the CEC used the buildings for a variety of Council affiliated companies or charities. These were largely stopgap uses which had no prospect of drawing the investment the building required to protect it and make it publicly accessible.

3.6 With the failure of the hotel proposals to gain planning consent, it has once again been demonstrated that the repurposing of the building is exceptionally challenging. This makes the consented and funded proposal from the RHSPT even more compelling than it would otherwise be.

4. What are the origins, nature and purpose of the RHSPT?

4.1 The Trust was founded as a Building Preservation Trust ("BPT") in 2015 with three clear objectives: to conserve the building and protect its setting in the heart of Edinburgh's World Heritage site; to find an economically sustainable and culturally suitable use for the whole site; and to establish a public use, accessible to the City of Edinburgh, its residents and visitors.

4.2 BPTs are the most commonly used vehicle for saving the Country's endangered buildings and have an outstanding record of engaging communities to recognise, support and become involved in the preservation of key parts of the Country's heritage. All that is unusual in this case is the preliminary stage during which the Trust was actively engaged in demonstrating that there was a viable alternative to the hotel proposals. This has been demonstrated through identifying a suitable mix of occupation, attracting funding, and then gaining both listed building and planning consent for the alternative proposal.

4.3 The Trust's Chairman William Gray Muir leads a Board of highly experienced Trustees with expertise in relevant fields including education, charity law, conservation development, finance and the arts. The Board also facilitates permanent representative liaison between the Trust and both St Mary's Music School and Dunard Fund. Should the Trust be granted control of the former Royal High School, the RHSPT Trustees have agreed a proposal that it would, over time, seek to add strong public representation to the Board, with the addition of local community and political representation.

4.4 The Trust's current Trustees are:

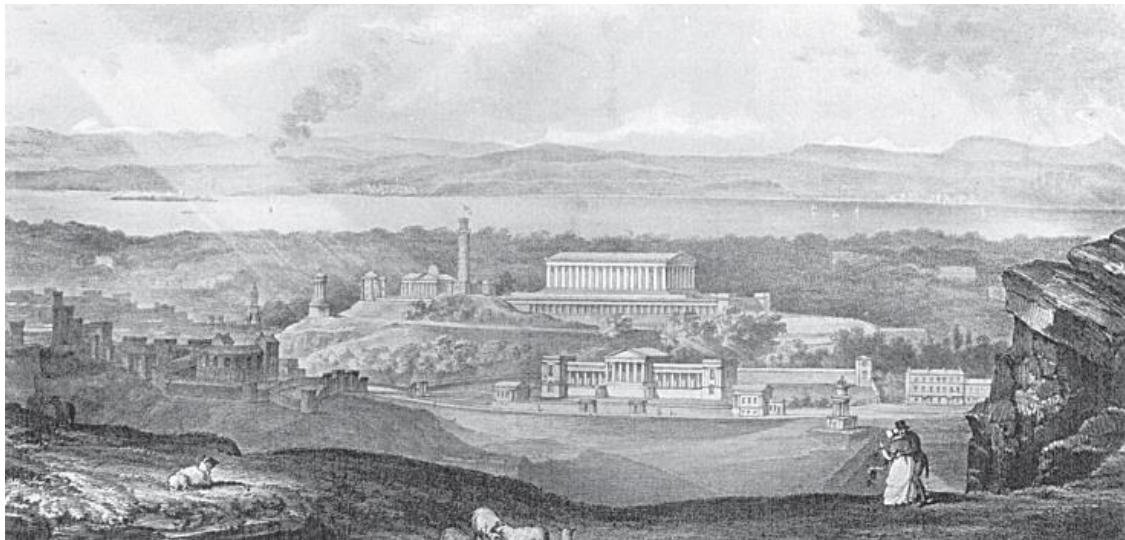
- William Gray Muir (Chairman) -- a qualified Chartered Accountant. He owns and runs Sundial Properties, which has developed and restored over 80 listed buildings within the Edinburgh area; he is a former Trustee of Edinburgh World Heritage and a Trustee of the Penicuik House Preservation Trust.
- Ray Entwistle OBE – a Chartered Banker with over 50 years' experience, having established the first branch of Lloyds Bank in Scotland, been Chief Executive and then Chair of Adam & Company and now Chair of Hampden & Co; he has been a Trustee and latterly Chair of the Scottish Civic Trust and a non-executive Director of I&H Brown, amongst other directorships and charity trusteeships.
- Richard Austin – an alumnus of the RHS at Regent Road with a deep love and knowledge of the Thomas Hamilton buildings, he is a retired solicitor, former Secretary of the RS Macdonald Charitable Trust, served on the Committee of the Scottish Georgian Society and now on Council of the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland and has been a Trustee on a number of other charities including a major registered social landlord in Edinburgh.
- Michael Thorne CBE – retired in 2016 as a university Principal and Vice-Chancellor of some 15 years standing and a former member of the Scottish Further Education Funding Council and the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation. He has chaired a school governing body and been on the Board of three education colleges. A musician, he has served on the Boards of the Royal Northern Sinfonia Orchestra and two English theatres. He also chaired the UK Government's Advisory Committee in the Libraries and Parliamentary Skills Commission enquiry into information, advice and guidance for young people in full-time education.
- Dr. Carol Grigor CBE – one of Scotland's most significant philanthropists, with a great understanding of arts and culture internationally, throughout the UK and especially in Scotland, and with a deep knowledge of architecture, architects and technicians working throughout the UK, ensuring critical support for buildings and for culture, which otherwise would simply not exist.
- Colin Liddell WS – an accredited specialist in Charity Law (the first one accredited in Scotland), co-author of A Practical Guide to Charity Law in Scotland, author of local histories, Chair and/or Trustee of a number of charities, including Pitlochry Festival Theatre, Dunard Fund, IMPACT Scotland and Scottish Grantmakers, and currently involved with building projects for charities in Scotland with a total cost in excess of £150m.



5. **What is the nature of the relationship of the RHSPT with the proposed National Music School?**

- 5.1 Upon gaining a long lease for the site the initial task of the Trust would be the delivery of the proposal to restore the building and prepare it for use as a National Music School, public concert hall and broader cultural venue for the City. The Trust can readily demonstrate that it already has the expertise to fund and deliver such a complex conservation project.

- 5.2 On completion of the works, the National Music School would sub-lease the building from the Trust. The sub-lease would contain covenants requiring it to deliver measurable benefits to the local and national community, including conditions relating to continuing public access, use of the concert hall, outreach programmes and the maintenance of the building and grounds in good repair. In extremis, breach of these terms could lead to termination of the sub-lease and reversion of the building to the Trust.
- 5.3 Once operational, the role of the Trust becomes largely supervisory, ensuring that the sub-lease conditions are met, that the agreed benefits are delivered, and the condition of the building and grounds maintained. This is the point at which public representation on the Board would be significantly stepped up, fully representing the interests of Edinburgh.
- 5.4 In the unlikely event that the National Music School chooses to leave the building, or could no longer meet the demands placed on it, it would be the Trust's responsibility to find a new sub-tenant which could fulfil the objects of Trust, namely: to provide an economically sustainable and culturally suitable use for the whole site; and to maintain a public use, accessible to the city of Edinburgh, its residents and visitors.
- 5.5 Following the substantial works envisaged in the current planning consent, (which by definition make it fit for contemporary standards of access and safety) finding such an occupier would be very much easier than is the case with the building in its current condition.



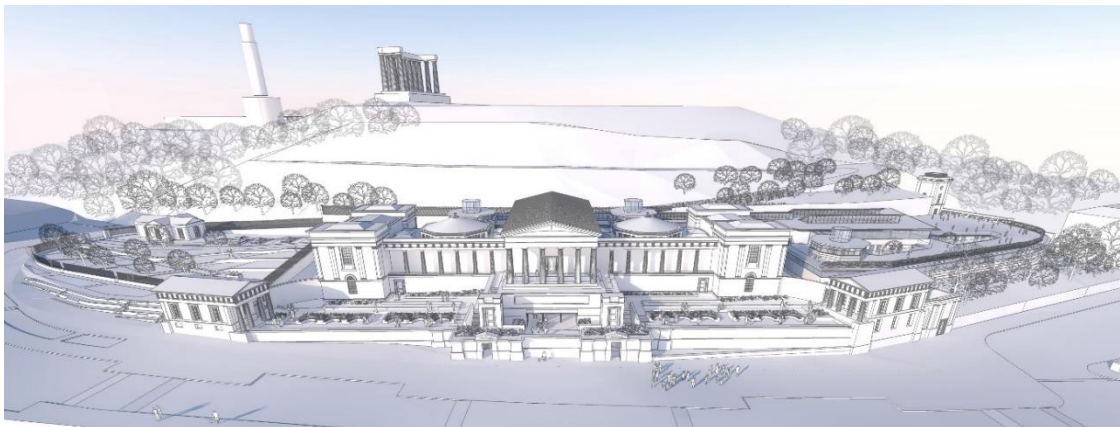
6. How does the National Music School benefit the wider community?

- 6.1 The new National Music School would build on the exceptional work of St Mary's Music School to provide the highest quality musical education to the nation's most talented pupils, irrespective of background, means or geographical location.
- 6.2 St Mary's Music School already makes an outstanding contribution to Scotland's cultural life. Pupils are admitted on the basis of audition and interview, with more than 4/5ths of pupils coming from state schools. 98% of pupils receive some assistance with fees. Government Aided Places are provided according to family circumstances, with families expected to make an affordable contribution to the specialist music education provided according to the published scales. Typically, around 15% of families receiving fee assistance will receive 100% assistance.
- 6.3 A key goal of the project is to substantially increase the availability of full scholarships still further.
- 6.4 Pupils come from across the country – with over 40% from outside the Lothians, (including 10% from overseas).
- 6.5 Pupils' destinations are to leading Conservatoires or to Universities where they normally, but not exclusively, study music. Pupil attainment in external examinations is consistently outstanding. Last session saw 100% pass rate across all exams sat with over 86% of all SQA exams sat being awarded an A Grade. Exceptionally, last session five of the fifteen leavers gained places at Oxbridge Colleges.

- 6.6 An exhaustive programme of outward facing activities, such as public performances, masterclasses and orchestral collaborations is undertaken and delivered free of charge to school age participants. Summer schools in Piano, Strings and Woodwind provide top level music tuition for participants from all over the UK and internationally.
- 6.7 These achievements can be greatly multiplied through the proposed move to the former Royal High School building. The increased space, substantially increased endowment, increased pupil numbers and (critically) hugely increased prominence will provide substantial leverage to the achievements of an organisation which already provides disproportionate benefit to Scotland's cultural life.

7. What does the RHSPT Propose for the Site?

- 7.1 The RHSPT was unanimously granted planning and listed building consent for its proposal for the site in 2016. The quality and ambition of the scheme was widely recognised. The application was welcomed by Historic Environment Scotland, Edinburgh World Heritage, the Cockburn Association, the New Town and Broughton Community Council and many other stake holding bodies. Detail, along with copious illustrations, of the proposals can be found at the Trust's website, <http://rhspt.org/>



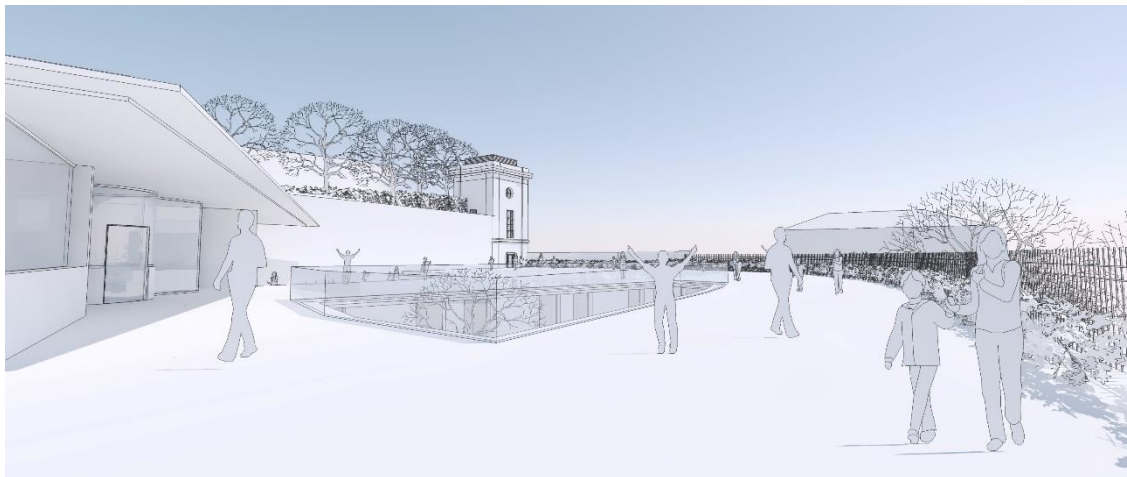
Proposed site overview

- 7.2 The central proposition within the planning application is that the Hamilton building and the wider site should form both new premises for an expanded St Mary's Music School as well as providing the public function of three performance spaces allied with a range of other flexible internal and external sites for public enjoyment.
- 7.3 The main Hamilton Building is principally used to provide performance spaces for the school and for public concerts, a new multi-function foyer accessed from Regent Road, and the administrative facilities for the school. The critical change to the building is the insertion of a new hall below the main concert hall, protecting the external integrity of the Hamilton building, whilst still providing the necessary "foyer" space a public performance space requires. Because of the slope of the site, the excavation required is limited. The cross section is illustrated in the image below.



Illustration of the relationship between Regent Road, new Foyer and restored Central Hall

- 7.4 The school's teaching and accommodation needs are served by a new low-lying block on the former eastern playground, replacing a series of ancillary buildings of lesser architectural or historic merit. The new blocks have a lower profile than the buildings which they replace, therefore reassert the primacy of the Hamilton Building on the site, as originally envisaged by the architect. The flat roofs of the single storey accommodation blocks provide recreation space which blends seamlessly with the natural topography of Calton Hill.



Proposed view of elevated recreation spaces on former Eastern Playground



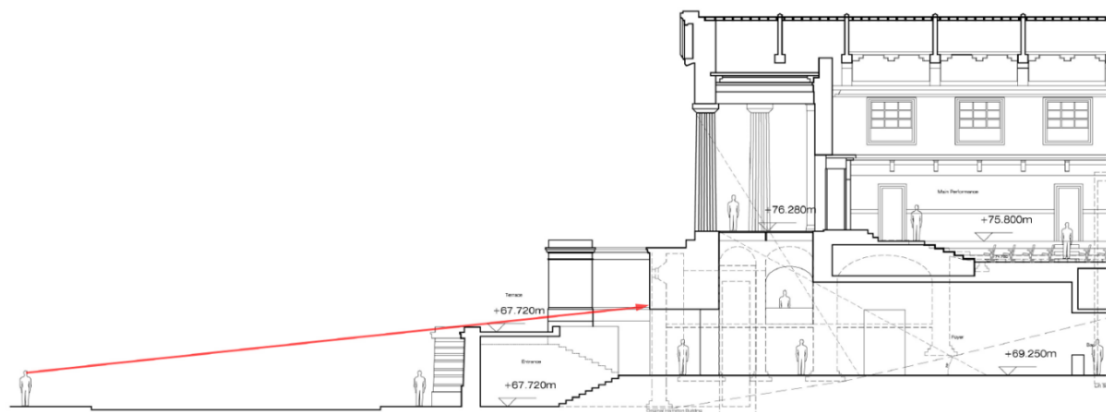
Section through new teaching and residential facilities in location of current dining hall and gym buildings

- 7.5 The western playground (currently a car park) remains unbuilt, and becomes a contemporary garden, offering flexible, multi-use space for public events. The Category A listed lodge building is retained as the main entrance point for the school.



Proposed view of multi-use publicly accessible garden and pavilion on former Western Playground (currently car park)

- 7.6 Public Access to the site will be directed through a new entrance arrangement to Regent Road, hugely increasing the accessibility of the most important parts of the Hamilton Building. The new entrance which uses the existing Regent Road gateways, is almost entirely invisible from outside the site, as illustrated in the cross section below:



Section through main hall, demonstrating that new entrance will not be visible from Regent Road

8. What are the public benefits of the RHSPT's proposal?

- 8.1 Whilst the shorthand description of the Trust's proposals for the site is a "national music school", the music school acts as the anchor for a far more complex restoration and redevelopment of the site which involves:

- A new National Music School, with residential accommodation, which can be used as a cultural hub during school holidays. The School will become the centre of Scotland's musical education, providing a place where exceptional young musicians can be brought together, and a hub from where outstanding musical education can be taken to the nation as a whole.
- A new public concert venue. The central hall is the most significant architectural space within the building, and the consented scheme allows it to operate quite independently of the school, with a new dedicated entrance from Regent Road, separate foyer, back office facilities and DDA compliant internal circulation.
- A multi-functional new garden in the former Western Playground. This has been designed by OPEN to act as a flexible outdoor space, with the intention of it becoming a specific festival venue (in combination with the pavilion, terraces and public realm, as set out below).

- The exquisite Western Pavilion is intended to become a flexible space for cultural use. This could be an exhibition space, or home to a charitable organisation. This flexibility will allow public views to contribute to the final matrix of uses.
- The Southern Terraces, which provide one of the most extraordinary views available over the City have never been accessible. Under the proposal they would form part of the complex of spaces and uses available during the festival for a wide variety of events.
- The public realm. Regent Road is woefully underused and suffers from deeply unsympathetic street furniture and road layout. It is easy to imagine it being substantially pedestrianised during the summer, and forming a vibrant apron to the cultural focus of the revived High School. The Trust would seek to ensure that plans for Regent Road were advanced with the City Council to allow them to fully integrate with the Trust's proposals for the main building



Section through main public spaces, showing access routes from new foyer to main concert hall and flanking rooms

9. What Funding is in Place?

- 9.1 Morham and Brotchie, a leading cost consultant for conservation projects, has estimated a budget of approximately £35m for the consented scheme. The Trust is in the fortunate position of having the full budgeted cost pledged by Dunard Fund. The required funds are being held on deposit by Dunard Fund, so are available immediately.
- 9.2 A second, and equally important element to the success of the project is ensuring that sufficient funding is in place to ensure that St Mary's Music School has the financial strength to provide the much wider range of responsibilities it would take on were it to become the national music school envisaged by the proposals. To this end, Dunard Fund has made a pledge of £10m to provide an endowment fund for the School. This fund would be substantially enhanced by the expected disposal of St Mary's Music School's current premises, giving the school the financial strength to take on a far more ambitious national role in the provision of musical education at the highest level.
- 9.3 Of course, other fund raising would take place to ensure the maximum benefit can be taken from the opportunity presented, but the important point is that the successful completion of the project is not reliant on the success of this supplementary fund raising, so decision takers can be wholly confident that the project can be completed as planned without any recourse to public funds.
- 9.4 It has been estimated that simply repairing the building to useable condition would cost £25m, so this provides a minimum amount any potential occupier would have to raise to be able to deliver a viable future for the building. We cannot envisage any other potential use which could offer the financial certainty of delivery offered by the Trust's scheme.



New entrance to new foyer. NB, per the section at 7.6 above this opening will not be visible from Regent Road.

10. Public Support for the Trust's Proposals

- 10.1 The Trust can demonstrate an exceptional level of public support for its proposal. The Trust commissioned Ipsos MORI, an acknowledged global leader in market research, to undertake a “gold standard” in-home survey, using government approved methodologies to assess public attitudes to the rival hotel and music school proposals. This involved over 500 residents, with a statistically balanced sample across every Edinburgh postcode.
- 10.2 The results were conclusive, showing that having a new music school at the site was a truly popular choice for Edinburgh’s city centre. An overwhelming 81 per cent preferred the option to establish St Mary’s Music School at the Calton Hill site, while only 10 per cent said they preferred the proposals for an international hotel.
- 10.3 Unprompted, 68 per cent of the people surveyed said they felt that the main benefit of the proposals for a national music school at the old Royal High School site was that it would nurture Scottish talent; 41 per cent felt that this would be in keeping with the building’s original use; and 36 per cent said that it would improve Edinburgh’s reputation.
- 10.4 By contrast, respondents were less sure about the benefits of the hotel proposals, with 42 per cent naming increased tourism, followed by employment opportunities at the hotel (28 per cent) and boosting the economy (27 per cent). Overall, 67 per cent had an unfavourable view of the hotel proposal, including 21 per cent who were ‘very unfavourable’; only 4 per cent were ‘very favourable’ towards the hotel.



The new buildings to the East (max 2 storeys) are discreet and exceptionally well screened by existing trees and green roofs

11. What are the Next Steps in Advancing the Trust's Proposals?

- 11.1 We believe the Trust's proposals provide a uniquely holistic solution to the long-standing questions presented by the former Royal High School. We believe that the proposal answers the objects of the Trust; to find an economically sustainable and culturally suitable use for the whole site; and to establish a public use, accessible to the city of Edinburgh, its residents and visitors.
- 11.2 Above all, however, we approach the challenge of finding a permanent use for such a significant building with caution, humility and a belief that any outcome must be backed by local and national support and consensus. In that spirit, before any decision as to future process is made, we would encourage the Committee to permit detailed discussions between the Trust and Council officials to allow members to understand and interrogate the Trust's proposal in detail. There is sufficient flexibility within the proposals to agree a preferred route which addresses all major concerns.

**Royal High School Preservation Trust
c/o 46 Charlotte Square
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for the Royal High School Preservation Trust
with Richard Murphy Architects

Former Royal High School,
Edinburgh
Hamilton Building

**Response to
Structural Engineering Commentary
prepared by ARUP
on the Music School Proposals**



August 2017

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RESPONSE TO STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING COMMENTARY PREPARED BY ARUP
ON THE MUSIC SCHOOL PROPOSALS

Introduction

David Narro Associates (DNA) have been asked by the Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT) to respond to the commentaries prepared by ARUP (Consulting Engineers) on the structural engineering aspects of the RHSPT's proposals to convert the former Royal High School in Edinburgh into a music school. This response relates to the following documents prepared by ARUP:

- *Music School Proposals – Structural Engineering Commentary re Hamilton Building* [also referenced as *A6. RHSPT Critique – Structural Engineering Report (ARUP)*] dated 9 February 2017
- *RHSPT – Further Commentary on Hamilton Building demolitions and temporary works* dated 27 June 2017

In preparing this response, we have referred to a number of other publicly available documents, including the following:

- ARUP Drawing no. RHS-SK-ST01 rev P1 - *Indicative Rock Levels* (drawing dated 22.12.2016).
- *Figures 1* - copies of original archive drawings overmarked with ARUP's interpretation of the structural impacts of the Music School proposals.
- *The Former Royal High School, Edinburgh – Structural Condition Report* (ARUP, 16 December 2014)
- Copies of original plans & section drawings held by Historic Environment Scotland, HES (formerly the RCAHMS).

Background to this response

We would note that prior to receipt of the two ARUP *Commentaries*, David Narro Associates were not contacted by ARUP either to inform us that they were undertaking a review of the structural engineering proposals for the RHSPT Music School scheme. Nor have we been asked for further information or clarification of the Music School proposals. We were not asked to comment on the conclusions ARUP have drawn, prior to the *Commentaries* being issued to outside parties.

As neither of the two commentary documents that ARUP have prepared identify an author and reviewer at ARUP, we have not been able at stage to speak to ARUP's Engineers regarding the information and comments they have made.

We have informed ARUP that we have been asked to prepare this response to their commentary.

This document has been prepared by:

Dominic Echlin

MEng CEng MStructE

Director, David Narro Associates

26 July 2017

This document has been reviewed by:

Ben W Adam

BEng(Hons) CEng FICE MStructE Conservation Accredited Engineer (CARE)

Managing Director, David Narro Associates

26 July 2017

David L Narro

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Chairman, David Narro Associates

10 August 2017

Summary Comments

ARUP prepared their *Commentaries* on the RHSPT Music School proposals without reference to the RHSPT's design team, specifically ourselves.

It is unclear why ARUP have issued this commentary now rather than when the RHSPT Music School planning and LBC applications were being considered by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC).

ARUP's *Commentaries* appears to mis-interpret the scope and extent of the structural engineering interventions proposed for the Music School scheme, and the approach & methodology that would be adopted.

There are aspects of the engineering proposals for the Music School that ARUP have fundamentally mis-understood.

They have suggested a 'heavy handed' engineering approach to how some work might be undertaken, approaches that we have not proposed. These include in particular their temporary works solutions and blasting of rock under the building. Therefore, ARUP appear to overstate the impact of the works on the historic building.

ARUP's interpretation of some aspects of the existing building and ground – e.g. foundation levels and rock levels - again appears to overstate the likely impact of the works on the historic fabric.

ARUP suggest the Music School proposals risk significant & unavoidable movement of the building during the works, ignoring the clear approach we have proposed to control, limit and monitor movement of the fabric during the works, an approach set out in the Structural Statement in section 10 of the Design Statement for RHSPT's proposals.

The Music School scheme proposals have been very carefully considered by RHSPT's design team, and all aspects of the engineering feasibility of the scheme have been understood and addressed. The proposals and engineering approach have been reviewed and commented upon by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

RHSPT's design team fully recognise the complexity of some aspects of the Music School scheme. The Team has significant experience of tackling similar and indeed more complex engineering exercises on historic buildings of this age and type. These other works have been successfully completed without need of significant change to the initial design, or abortive or expensive additional work. These schemes have also been completed without significant damage or movement of the historic fabric, and without risk to the construction team or general public.

David Narro Associates – Background to RHSPT proposals

David Narro Associates were appointed with Richard Murphy Architects by Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT) to prepare a scheme for conversion & extension of the former Royal High School in Edinburgh as a new permanent home for the St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh. This scheme retains the principal building on the site, designed by Architect Thomas Hamilton, and constructed 1825-9. The Music School scheme also includes a new build extension to the west and immediate north of the Hamilton Building.

Details of the Music School scheme were set out on the drawings and in the documents submitted to City of Edinburgh Council for planning and listed building consent in December 2015 [City of Edinburgh Council references 15/05662/FUL & 15/05665/LBC].

Included in the documents submitted for both planning and listed building consent was a detailed engineering assessment of the structural engineering aspects of the Music School scheme. Section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School proposals specifically addressed the potential impacts of the proposals on the listed building and the mitigation and design steps being taken to minimize damage and limit the risks to the historic fabric and structure of the Hamilton Building.

Following a review by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and others, the RHSPT's team provided responses to queries raised and comments received from CEC and Historic Environment Scotland (HES). After consideration, the RHSPT's Music School scheme was granted full planning and listed building consent, and decision notices in both cases were issued by City of Edinburgh Council on 27 February 2017.

David Narro Associates – Conservation Engineering Experience

A significant part of David Narro Associates' work involves historic buildings, ranging from careful conservation to sympathetic repair, adaptation and reuse. David Narro Associates are widely recognised as leaders in the field of conservation engineering in Scotland, and uniquely in Scotland we have three Conservation Accredited Engineers as part of our team (Ben Adam, David Narro and Steve Wood).

The Company has over three decades of experience working with historic buildings ranging from simple vernacular structures through to several of Scotland's most important Category A listed buildings. These listed building projects cover the full range of building types, ages and forms of construction, from ancient archaeological monuments through to 20th Century modern structures, from small domestic buildings to churches, public buildings and larger commercial and industrial structures, from careful conservation through to large-scale repair and alteration work, from buildings in an advanced state of decay to occupied buildings. Project have included large scale temporary works exercises to support & retain substantial historic masonry structures during other alteration works.

Recent and ongoing projects include work to many significant Category A listed historic buildings including the Royal Museum in Edinburgh, the National Gallery buildings in Edinburgh, the post-fire restoration of the Mackintosh Building at the Glasgow School of Art, and Dumfries House in Ayrshire.

We have undertaken commissions for a variety of clients including Historic Environment Scotland, The National Trust for Scotland, The National Trust, and various Building Preservation Trusts including the Scottish Building Preservation Trust. We have undertaken historic building work for a number of local authorities including City of Edinburgh and Glasgow City Council. Other work includes surveys and repair work for private owners, tenement owners and commercial & leisure operators. We have provided expert witness advice on historic building and conservation engineering and also temporary works matters.

General Response

Both of the ARUP commentaries appear to mis-interpret the scope and extent of the structural engineering interventions proposed at the Hamilton Building as part of the RHSPT Music School scheme, both in detail and the approach & methodology that would be adopted.

ARUP refer to the potential complexity and risk of the structural engineering aspects of the Music School proposals. However, they do not make reference to section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School proposals, where many of the structural engineering issues are discussed in detail and where matters such as temporary works, rock excavation methods, monitoring and risk mitigation are explored in detail. These issues have, therefore, been considered.

ARUP seek to compare the structural engineering work for Music School with the scheme for the Hotel. In a number of respects this is a false comparison as the two schemes are clearly different, both in terms of the proposed alterations the historic building and the redevelopment of the rest of the site. Each scheme should be judged on its own merits.

ARUP contend in their *Further commentary* (Jun 2017) that the required construction work for the Music School scheme cannot be interpreted from the drawings and information submitted by RHSPT to City of Edinburgh Council for planning and listed building consent. ARUP claim the “drawings” and “vital information” were “missing” from the Music School submission. It is on this basis that ARUP say that have been commissioned by Duddingston House Properties and Urbanist Hotels to prepare their “own version of the missing drawings”, and then from these “illustrate the extent of downtakings and rock removal required”.

We fundamentally disagree with this interpretation that the information and drawings submitted for planning & listed building consent for the RHSPT's scheme was in some way lacking or deficient in detail of the structural engineering aspects and impacts of the Music School proposals. Furthermore, neither City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) nor Historic Environment Scotland (HES) nor any other parties, who reviewed the information submitted for planning & listed building consent, raised such concerns.

We do not accept that ARUP's “version of missing drawings” accurately reflect the Music School proposals. Therefore, the illustrations and conclusions they then make risk being supposition. ARUP did not attempt to speak to David Narro Associates or the rest of RHSPT's design Team to ensure that their initial interpretation of the Music School Scheme proposals was correct, before embarking on their “extrapolation of the drawings”. Without such a dialogue and reference back to the RHSPT's Design team, it is clear that ARUP have mis-interpreted aspects structural engineering interventions proposed at the Hamilton Building e.g. the extent of underpinning required, use of blasting to remove rock and arch supports to the new hall floor.

Building Condition

ARUP's own structural condition survey states that “*the façade is in good condition*”, and in their *Commentary* (Feb 2017), they state that “*the finest Craigleith stone had been used in the construction of the building and that the stone and loadbearing wall condition was generally very good*”. They only highlight one area of movement in the masonry structure, “*on the front boundary walls*” to Regent Road. This points to the fact that the building was originally well built, using good quality materials. The building has not suffered significant movement. The indications are that masonry structure is robust and well founded, predominately onto rock. The principal load bearing masonry walls have not been significantly altered since the original construction.

ARUP's structural condition survey report is very limited in detail; photographs and bullet point summary only. Their view of the condition of the existing building appears to be contradicted by Andrew Wright who has refers in his critique of the building interventions to “a decay cycle which has continued for several decades”; Andrew Wright suggests there is work required which the RHSPT team may not have recognised. ARUP report that the condition of the existing building is generally good. They appear to suggest that any ‘decay’ has not had a significant impact on the structure of the building at this stage.

Past alterations & their impact

ARUP's state that "*the Hamilton Building has remained largely unaltered since its original construction*". While acknowledging that some internal refitting was carried out in the 1970's, they do not identify that key structural work carried out in the 1970's included the excavation of material and reduction of levels at the lower ground floor level to form the additional plant rooms and new stair. An understanding of this work indicates some of the excavation to create additional space at the lower ground floor level is evidently feasible without putting the rest the building at any risk, or requiring complex engineering work.

Structural & Conservation Approach going forward

The structural approach for an historic building of this type would indeed need to be very different if the original fabric was of poor quality and/or in a poor condition, if the building showed clear signs of movement in the structure and the ground, and if the structure had already been heavily and successively altered.

However as noted above, the building has not suffered significant movement; the masonry structure is robust and well founded; the masonry walls have not been significantly altered. All of these factors indicate capacity for the building to be altered, and mitigate in part the risks of undertaking structural alterations at this point in time.

As has been said in the design statement for the Hotel scheme for the Royal High School, "*It is clear that a number of interventions are required in order for the hotel to function and for it to be a successful, long-term solution for the building.*" (5.5 Approach to Building Conservation – Design & Access Statement Sept 2015). The same can be said for the Music School proposals; some alteration of the historic structure of building can be justified and is feasible, whilst conserving the building.

Practical conservation is a process of value judgement. A conservation engineering approach is no different from any other conservation approach. Any proposed intervention or alteration should be measured against the fundamental value of the original fabric and context. Where possible, interventions should be reversible and any impact on other fabric appropriately minimised. Original fabric should be preserved in situ, and repair materials and techniques adopted that are compatible with the existing fabric of the building. A 'helping hand' approach is preferable, preserving the possibility of future adaptation or change. Equally, bold interventions are sometimes justified as they can extend the useful and sustainable life of a building. This is the approach being adopted for the RHSPT Music School scheme.

Rock & footing levels – Extent & impact of excavations

ARUP have undertaken an exercise to identify the potential rock levels across the site, summarised on their drawing no. RHS-SK-ST01 rev P1 - *Indicative Rock Levels*. We note this drawing has only recently been prepared; it is not clear if this information informed the 2015 proposals for the Hotel. Other borehole and site investigation records for the Royal High School site are available.

The assessment of the rock level appears to verify information on original drawings for the building. These archive drawings show very clearly and in some detail the stepping of the main wall footings apparently to suit the level of the underlying rock. Using this record plus other borehole data, the diagrams presented in section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School Proposals were prepared, showing the anticipated extent of likely rock excavation and the footings affected by the reduction of levels under the building. Obviously for any scheme going forward to detailed design, further investigation and assessment of the footing and rock levels will be required.

However, the archive drawings do need to be carefully interpreted. For example, on Figure 1 in ARUP's *Commentary* (Feb 2017) on the Music School proposal the first diagram (an overmark of an original east west section drawing) superimposes the proposed levels toward the south side of the building onto an original section drawn through the north side of the building. The original drawing of a north-south section through the building shows there is a very significant difference in the level of the footings to the south compared to the north. That is why on SK-02 in section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School

Proposals the extent of excavation for the new plant space and rear of the new foyer at the lower ground floor is specifically shown as set back from the north wall by several metres, to reduce the risk of encroaching on the rock under the north wall footings and to limit the extent of underpinning required.

ARUP state that *“To mitigate the possible impact on the sensitive Hamilton Building, the hotel proposals have been developed to avoid significant rock removal very close to the original building foundations and instead to keep the primary rock removal locations away from the main building.”* The 2015 Scheme for the Hotel described on Hoskins Architects drawing no. RHS AL(PL)111 shows a near identical area of new accommodation created under the building at the lower ground floor level as included in the Music School proposals, taken to a near identical line relative to the north wall of the building. With the exception of the central foyer, the Music School proposals require no greater extent of excavation than was proposed for the 2015 hotel scheme. Both the 2015 hotel scheme and the 2017 revised hotel proposals involve a substantial excavation to form a new basement within a few metres of the east end of the Hamilton building, taking the levels down a full storey below the lower ground floor level of the Hamilton Building, to the level of the access to Regent Road.

We note ARUP's conclusion in their *Commentary* (Feb 2017) that *“These demolitions and rock excavations can place the existing building fabric at significant risk during construction if not properly managed.”* We would comment that by implication they accept that there is either no risk to the existing building fabric, or that the risks can be significantly reduced if the works are properly planned & managed. The RHSPT has employed a team of specialist consultants who have exemplary records of the proper management of such work to historic buildings.

Regards risk of rock excavation near the existing building foundation, Arup note in their *Further commentary* (Jun 2017) that the basalt rock is strong to very strong and would require treatment and specialist techniques to excavate. In such circumstances, controlled methods of excavation are used (which would exclude blasting), the material under the existing footings would appear much less likely to be disturbed compare to say an excavation in softer looser ground.

Extent of dountakings & excavations

Figure 1 in ARUP's *Commentary* (Feb 2017) shows copies of original archive drawings of the building overmarked with their interpretation of the extent of the structural work for the Music School proposals. These mark-ups overstate and mis-interpret the extent of excavation and dountakings required for the Music School proposals. In particular ARUP indicate a far greater extent of removal of the masonry structure under the portico compared to that actually being proposed for the Music School scheme. The slapping through the front wall below the portico is marked-up by ARUP as being much wider and higher than is proposed. On ARUP's mark ups there are areas shown to be excavated which in fact were excavated in the 1970's to form new plant rooms.

ARUP state that *“Additional building dountakings and subsequent reinstatement will be necessary to mobilise plant for demolition, temporary support and construction of proposed basements and permanent new supporting structure.”* This is a broad assumption at this stage. In their *Further commentary* (Jun 2017), ARUP illustrate use of very large pieces for piling plant within the building. This is wholly inappropriate in an historic building of this type, and would not be considered. There is wide range of plant available for where access is restricted, and a range of techniques of working that minimise the interventions and temporary support required. As the detailed structural design for the Music School is developed, ways of working that will limit the impact on the historic fabric can and will be identified.

In their *Further commentary* (Jun 2017), ARUP suggest substantial opening up of the north façade of the building to enable the large plant to access inside the building, which ARUP suggest would be needed to carry out the work within the building. ARUP appear to illustrate on their drawings large piling rigs being brought inside the building. There being no need to use large piling rigs or plant to excavate within the existing building footprint or to underpin existing footings. The use of such large plant is not appropriate in an historic building of this type and would not be considered by this team.

On Figure G included in ARUP's *Further commentary* (Jun 2017), they indicate removal of the large drain or culvert under the portico. The full removal of this culvert is not proposed as part of the Music School scheme. Subject to verifying the location and level of the top of the culvert under the portico, the aim will be to retain this element insitu.

Extent of underpinning

On ARUP's Figures C & G included in their *Further commentary* (Jun 2017), they incorrectly interpret the extent of underpinning of the existing foundations that will be required with the reduction of the levels below the main floor of the building. Specifically, they appear indicate underpinning of walls where the floor level has already been lowered on one side of the wall to the same level now proposed on the other side of the wall, a situation where further underpinning is clearly not needed.

An assessment of the extent of rock excavation and the consequent areas of potential underpinning was included in section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School proposals – sketch no 15.683-SK02.

On the sketches included in their *Further commentary* (Jun 2017), where ARUP interpret (incorrectly) that underpinning of existing wall footings is required, they appear to suggest that this is achieved by constructing substantial piled walls either side of the existing footing and rock below it. This is an overly complex and heavy engineering solution and not one that has been proposed for the scheme for the Music School. The underpinning of the existing wall footing can be achieved either by careful removal of rock in short sections in sequence and replacement in concrete.

New support structure

ARUP's interpretation of the new structure to support the walls of the portico is wrong.

The Music School proposals do not include re-support of the main load bearing masonry walls onto arches. The main walls will be supported onto beams and columns without lateral thrust on to the structure to either side. The reconstruction of the main hall floor is to be onto concrete beams with a curved form, not onto arches generating thrust.

Temporary support

Forming the new openings through the walls under the portico, proposed as part of the Music School scheme, will require temporary works to support the retained masonry above. These temporary works will be a specialist piece of design, and will be substantial engineering elements in themselves. However, in scale and complexity they are no greater and no less feasible than similar temporary works undertaken for other projects work on the highest category of historic buildings in Scotland and elsewhere in recent years.

In section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School Proposals we illustrated the scheme undertaken at the category A listed Royal Museum in Edinburgh (Hoskins Architects with David Narro Associates) where new entrances were formed through the main ashlar façade to provide access into the original vaulted basement (where floor levels were lowered, supporting walls and sections of vaults were also removed). The work at the Royal Museum involved an equal scale & complexity of temporary support and permanent structure to that proposed at the Royal High School; ARUP use a photograph of this temporary work scheme as an exemplar on their figure C with their *Further Commentary* (Jun 2017). The work at the Museum was carried out without significant movement or damage to the retained facade.

A similar scale of temporary works has been undertaken at the Mackintosh Building of the Glasgow School of Art, where a 8m length of the west façade was supported 6 storeys above ground level while the fire damage masonry below was dismantled and rebuilt. Whilst requiring careful planning and programming, the temporary works were installed over just a 4 week period and dismantling of the masonry has proceeded without significant movement or damaged to the retained wall above.

This type of temporary works requires detailed design and sequencing. This process is fully understood by RHSPT's design team who have extensive experience in this field of engineering work, combining temporary work design with a detailed understanding of historic buildings & structures. At the detailed design stage we will draw on the expertise of specialist subcontractors, equally experienced in this type of large-scale temporary works, so the nature, complexity, cost and timescale are fully understood by all parties and stakeholders.

Notwithstanding the complexity and scale of the temporary work that would be required, the way that ARUP attempt to illustrate the temporary works on the sketches included in their *Further commentary* (Jun 2017) is crude and potentially overstates the requirements. For example, Figure E shows the temporary foundations for the temporary propping being taken substantially lower than the existing footings and rock head, for no clear reason.

Rock excavation

A range of excavation techniques have been identified in section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School Proposals. The method adopted will be specifically tailored to the nature of the rock to be removed, limiting vibration to within strict limits, and not involving blasting. There are a range of low impact minimal vibration techniques that can be used. A detailed investigation and assessment of the rock under footings will be required beyond that already carried out, with advice on techniques and sequencing of rock removal sought from specialist sub-contractors. Provided the right technique for the rock removal is identified, the process need not take a disproportionately long time or be overly costly.

Similar rock excavation exercises have been undertaken successfully, without damage, in the immediate proximity of historic buildings & structure of equal importance to the Royal High School. The fact that the Royal High School is founded on rock makes the excavation exercise to some degree less of a challenge compared to excavations immediately adjacent to historic building on much poorer ground, such as work being undertaken at the National Galleries on the Mound in Edinburgh (Hoskins Architects with David Narro Associates).

In section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School Proposals the importance of monitoring of the structure during the work is discussed. For similar temporary works and excavation exercises on historic building, detailed monitoring programmes have been established. A rigorous monitoring regime, plus detailed planning of the methodology and sequence of the works, can ensure that works proceed without excessive movement or damage to the retained historic fabric. If planned and executed in a totally controlled way, with the ability to halt the work at any point, significant remedial or emergency repairs can be avoided.

Construction Risks

All construction work on historic buildings involves some degree of risk of disruption to the existing building fabric. Good conservation seeks to identify the risk, and plan and detail the works so as to mitigate the risks. The construction risks for the proposed engineering work for the Music School scheme are fully understood by RHSPT's design team.

Through the structural scheme and the technical design stages, the construction risk will be re-assessed and monitored. This is a continuous process through the design and construction work. Decision making needs to identify ways to mitigate risks. This approach has already been identified and outlined in section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School Proposals. The process will involve optimising structural design to reduce risk; and simplifying the sequencing and method of working to reduce risks. Detailed investigations of the existing structure and ground will be needed.

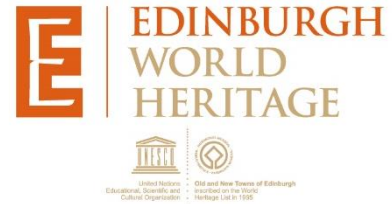
The risks profiles, presented by ARUP on Figure 3 of their *Commentary* (Feb 2017), seek to compare two different schemes. The risks associated with the Hotel scheme are not fully identified, specifically the risks associated with development of the large-scale buildings immediately adjacent to and adjoining the Hamilton Building, notably the deep basement for the Hotel scheme immediately adjacent to the east side of the Hamilton Building.

Residual Risks

We would not agree with the assessment of residual risks to the existing building fabric that ARUP present on figure A in their *Further commentary* (Jun 2017). We would comment specifically as follows on the statements made on Figure A.

- ARUP's interpretation of the dountakings for the Music School scheme overstates what is needed, specifically the supposed requirement to opening up the north façade to get large plant into the building and the complete removal of the balcony in the main hall to allow plant access. We do not see this as being required.
- There is not a high risk of excessive building movement and vibration provided appropriate plant and techniques are used for the work. There are many feasible engineering solutions than can be adopted to minimise these risks, and the work will be closely monitored throughout to ensure that excessive building movement and vibration do not occur.
- We do not accept that the reduction of level on both sides of wall requires the use of piled walls either as temporary or permanent support.
- We are baffled by the reference to removing the roof or ceilings. This has not been proposed or even suggested as being remotely necessary.
- We do not accept that the main basement space or adjacent stairs "cannot be achieved as drawn due to rock stabilisation requirements". The information submitted for planning & listed building consent has demonstrated the engineering feasibility of the Music School scheme and this has been accepted by the relevant authorities.
- ARUP's interpretation of the support structure to the portico, as being onto arching forms & "masonry arches", is not correct. This is not the proposal. ARUP's comments in this regard are therefore neither relevant nor valid.
- We do not accept that the openings below the portico "risk High movement". These opening are achievable and the new support structure can be installed without significant movement or damage to the retained fabric. A suitably design temporary support structure with appropriate monitoring will be required.
- We do not accept that the engineering scheme for Music School proposals for the Hamilton Building requires substantial amendment in scope and form to be achievable.

The summary of residual risk included on Figure A is based on a series of flawed assumptions and mis-interpretation of the Music School scheme proposals. This list ignores the engineering consideration and proposals set out in section 10 of the Design Statement for the Music School Proposals, where we have identified ways that risks to the historic building can be clearly identified, and how, through further investigation, design, working methods and monitoring, the risks can be contained or eliminated.



Dear Councillors

Old Royal High School and Calton Hill Hotel LP

This representation articulates the position of the three organisations that formed the Coalition of Objectors at the 2018 Public Inquiry into the refusal of planning and listed building consents for the development of Thomas Hamilton's 1825 Royal High School into an ultra-luxury hotel. The members of the Coalition comprise the Cockburn Association, New Town & Broughton Community Council and Edinburgh World Heritage. Coalition members attended the whole of the public inquiry and remain hugely grateful to the hundreds of Edinburgh citizens who donated over £40,000 to our appeal to be represented.

We have seen a copy of a submission by the Royal High School Preservation Trust in support of their proposals to reinstate the school as a school, for use by the St Mary's Music School. We agree with the position they set out so will not repeat matters here in the interests of brevity.

Good development in the World Heritage Site is about managing change – understanding, conserving and enhancing the heritage values that we all enjoy and benefit from. Had this been a proposal for the appropriate reuse of the Old Royal High School, which understood and creatively conserved and enhanced its heritage values, it would have had our support. Repeatedly, Coalition members argued that this development would cause serious harm to the World Heritage Site and to this building of international repute.

Outcome from Public Inquiry

Following the comprehensive dismissal of the hotel proposals by Scottish Ministers we can see no coherent argument for CEC to continue their arrangement with Calton Hill Hotel LLP, especially in the context of a viable alternative being available. We are glad that at last the developers now accept that their previous two schemes were 'overly ambitious'. However, they had an opportunity to scale back their scheme significantly after the first refusal of planning and listed building consent - which would have been consistent with the Development Brief at the time of the competition - but deliberately chose not to do so.

The Report stated that, "*Ministers conclude that the Proposed Development would not preserve the former Royal High School listed building or its setting and would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Area.*" Whilst Ministers agreed with the Reporters' findings that the Proposed Development would significantly contribute to the Edinburgh tourism sector and thereby to the city economy, "*they considered that the Proposed Development would have adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the Proposed Development.*"

Sustainable Use

In looking forward, we agree that the preminent objective is to secure a long-term sustainable use for Hamilton's masterpiece, recognised as one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the world. The proposed Music School, which has planning consent and is largely funded already, is one such possibility and one which we all support.

The Coalition believes that the route to achieving the Music School should be opened up as one of the most expedient opportunities to save the building and ensure the long-term use of the former Royal High School.

We do accept that there are public benefit issues that need to be addressed as well as specific contractual issues that might need to be put in place. We therefore advocate that the committee considers giving a short-term license or contract to the Royal High School Preservation Trust as a means of managing and expediting this process. Should it fail, then a wider procurement exercise could be initiated.

Assessment of Urbanist Hotel's extension request

Our detailed reading of the full Inquiry Report suggests major challenges for a hotel development even if scaled back to 75 bedrooms. The Inquiry heard evidence from the developers that the 127-bed proposal was the absolute minimum required to make the scheme economically viable. On the face of this evidence, it seems unlikely to be successful.

We note that Urbanist Hotels have made a submission to the committee pleading for a further three-year extension to the existing contract between it and CEC. We have several concerns with this, which we articulate below.

Firstly, it could sterilise other opportunities coming forward including the Music School proposal or any other proposals for that matter.

Secondly, Urbanist Hotels could simply lodge a planning application for an alternative hotel scheme without the need for any contract. As owner, CEC would be entitled to consider any suggestions for the former Royal High School building.

Thirdly, there is a lack of clarity on the role of Urbanist Hotels in this matter, despite them continually representing themselves as the contracting party. As we understand it, they have at most an indirect 1.5% stake in the project. The contracted party with the City Council is Calton Hill Hotel LP which is 97% controlled by an American Investment company (Oaktree Capital Management). Companies House lists only one 'person of significant control' – namely Oaktree Capital Management Luxembourg Epf lii S.A.R.L. We also understand that in March 2019, Toronto-based Brookfield Asset Management acquired 62% of OCM. Before any decision is made to continue the contract surely this deeply opaque arrangement of offshore companies should be adequately explained, so that it is clear who exactly the Council would be contracting with and who truly holds the reins (and foots the bills) of this enterprise.

Fourthly, we understand that Rosewood, the much-heralded luxury hotel operator has pulled out and that no alternative operator has been identified. The principle behind the existing contractual arrangements therefore seems to be eroded, if not invalidated. This also suggests that should the Council be persuaded to continue with a hotel use, a new procurement exercise should be initiated to allow other parties to come forward.

Fifthly, in February 2020, just before the city went into lockdown, the Edinburgh Hotels Association (EHA), which represents more than 50 providers in the capital, said that businesses have been left in a "fragile" state due to the addition of more than 5,000 new rooms over the past 10 years. It reported that hotels were unable to fill beds, even during peak periods. In an article in the Edinburgh Evening News of 16 February 2020, EHA stated, "Experts say an over-supply is already having a "negative impact" on occupancy levels and room rates, even before a string of proposed new developments across the city are either completed or come up for planning permission." It went on, "EHA spokesman Russell Imrie said the industry was experiencing worrying decline across several key indicators, including occupancy rates and the average daily

hotel rates as it also struggled with the lack of control over an “explosion” in the number of properties being marketed for short-term lets on sites like Airbnb.”

Sixthly, the Covid pandemic has left the tourism and hospitality in dire straits with hugely worrying prospects for existing businesses. We question whether further expansion of the hotel stock is in the interests of public policy.

Seventhly, much has been made about the Music School proposals and their impact on the fabric of the building. Whilst planning consent runs to 2023, listed building consent is still required. The significant amounts of detailed information on the building that emanated from the Inquiry can help inform this process and provide opportunities for revisiting aspects of these proposals.

Finally, we would remind the Committee that the City Council as planning authority has rejected the hotel development proposed by Calton Hill Hotel LP twice. The appeal has come at considerable expense to the public purse. It cannot be certain that a third bite at the cherry after almost 11 years of trying will result in a successful proposal.

Summary

On the basis of the information available to us at this point, the Coalition partners can see no merit in prolonging this ill-fated hotel scheme. In the interest of this iconic building of international importance and wider public interests of Edinburgh, we believe that the best course of action is for the contractual relationship between CEC and Calton Hill Hotel LLP to be ended.

Signed on behalf of the Coalition



Terry Levinthal
Director, The Cockburn Association

in agreement with

Carol Nimmo
Chair, New Town and Broughton Community Council

and

Christina Sinclair
Director, Edinburgh World Heritage

All correspondence in connection with the letter to:
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