

Edinburgh Council rejects plans for the old Odeon

✘ The City of Edinburgh Council this morning rejected plans to partially demolish and convert the old Odeon cinema on South Clerk Street into a hotel with a bar and restaurant and artist studio.

The proposals from Duddingston House Properties (DHP) would have seen the B-listed building converted into a 231-bed hotel. The outer facade, including the foyer, would have been left in tact but the auditorium would have been removed.

There were lengthy discussions between Councillors regarding different reports including those from Royal Bank of Scotland and surveyors, Montagu Evans. Councillor Stuart Roy McIvor said:- “So much of this discussion seems to revolve around the credibility of the fittest, and it was said at one point that we were actually not required to look at credibility. I don’t know about you, but the only credibility that I would accept is cash on the table.

“My personal feelings are that in the last report back in May 2010 it said that all bids had not been properly explored. Well that was a year ago! I was looking through the papers for three hours last night, trying to get my head around it. They had one suggestion a little while back which was accepted, then a month later they tried to drop by, I think, several hundred thousand pounds so you can see where Duddington House Properties come from. The word, I hesitate to use, is timewasters.”

Councillor Eric Milligan said:- “In terms of what the market can support we’re doing pretty well on the cinema account. We’ve got more cinemas than we require, and at the end of the day the only reason the site is available is because Odeon

weren't interested in coming out of Edinburgh, they were only interested in coming out of that site."

"A lot of what has happened has been over the last 12 months, but the story has gone on a lot longer than that. For ten years we've agonised over this building as a council, and it's such a huge issue for us. We've agonised over whether it can be a club, or a hotel and I do actually think that we ought to look into what is going to happen to it."

The conclusion is a decision which will be welcomed by many local campaigners who are trying to save the building.

Marco Biagi, the Edinburgh Central MSP, said: "Local campaigners will be relieved at the committee's decision today. I stand full-square behind the local community, whose wishes on this building have been clear and unmistakable from the outset.

"The priority should now be to further preserve the legacy of the Odeon's iconic design and auditorium. DHP should now accept offers on the table at a realistic price so that early restoration work on the building can be performed as soon as possible. I look forward to the day when a vibrant and renewed Odeon can play its proper role at the heart of life on the Southside."

Further to this Mr Biagi submitted a motion to Parliament. It reads:- "That the Parliament welcomes the decision to reject the planning applications and recognises the importance of the building's famous art deco design and historic auditorium to the local community and praises the efforts of local campaigners who worked hard to save the building; acknowledges that such efforts, and their subsequent success, are a testament to the significance of Edinburgh's architectural history in the local and national community; believe that the continued presence of the building will play a part of this legacy, and look forward to the Odeon's restoration at the

soonest possible opportunity.”

MP for Edinburgh East Sheila Gilmore has welcomed the decision to save the art-deco cinema from demolition.

The building has fallen into disrepair since becoming disused in 2003 however the building does not require demolition on grounds of condition. Commenting on the result, Ms Gilmore said:-

‘Councillors voted against a demolition which was unnecessary. Part of Edinburgh’s heritage has again been saved, thanks to a long-running hard-fought campaign by the local community.

‘DHP lacks vision for this building and has had its third attempt to demolish knocked back. Locals and visitors see this building and wonder what will come of the former Odeon.

‘Whilst it has been empty the building has fallen into disrepair. Edinburgh Council now has to ensure that DHP keep the cinema in good condition and find a way to resolve this long-running issue’