

Hotel plans rejected after 'residents ignored'

The planning committee turned down proposals to transform an office block into a 157-bedroom hotel this week after accusing planning officers of ignoring residents' concerns over transport.

Officers had recommended the plans for Osborne House across the road from Donaldson's School for approval – but the authority's development management sub-committee rejected the scheme, saying it didn't meet five of its planning policies.

In a planning statement submitted to the council, developers said the proposed hotel would provide “an additional £2.8 million increase in visitor spending to the city every year, benefiting local businesses and the local economy”.

Developers wanted to add an extra floor and a rear extension to the prominent office block on Osborne Terrace. Planning officers told councillors the plans would have “no unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties” and “no adverse effect on the conservation area” to which the building sits next to.



Ruth Davidson MSP for Edinburgh Central

Scottish Conservative leader and Central Edinburgh MSP Ruth Davidson had sent a letter to planners, objecting to the plans of behalf of her constituents – pointing to fears over the increased height, extension and transport.

The current office block has 59 parking spaces – but the proposals saw this reduced to just two disabled parking spaces – to make way for the extension.



Councillor Joanna Mowat

Cllr Joanna Mowat labelled the plans “too much development on the site at the expense of amenity” and raised fears about proposals for an “outdoor beer garden next to someone’s house”.

She added: “These concerns have been raised by residents and nothing addresses them. There’s concern about having a hotel in the areas because of the impact other hotels have had in terms of parking, servicing and deliveries.

“The servicing requirements of a hotel is much greater than an office block. This is a site that currently has a servicing yard at the back of it. I’m astonished that we have got to this stage in the process.”

Cllr Mowat also quizzed officers about the suitability of HGVs travelling down cobbled side streets to service the hotel.

Transport officer Kofi Appiah said that no more than two HGV deliveries would be required each day to the hotel.

He added: "There's a sign at Stanhope Street that says the road is not suitable for HGVs. It's advisory and we can't enforce it.

"There's no coach drop-off provided but there's a suitable place. Looking at the nature of how busy that road is, maybe the side streets would be better than the main road."



Councillor Chas
Booth

Cllr Chas Booth backed calls for the proposals to be turned down.

He said: "The crucial issue here is residential amenity. The servicing and drop-off is not appropriate and will have a significant impact on residents in this area.

"This will negatively impact on the amenity of residents in this area. I'm not sure this is an appropriate development in a residential area. Much greater attention should have been given by the developer on how deliveries will work and how it should be serviced."

Planning convener Cllr Neil Gardiner pointed out some positives to the scheme, notably the links to Haymarket Station, but also supported the plans being refused.

He added: "I do have concerns about the impact of the vehicles in narrow residential streets."