

Application for outdoor seating on The Royal Mile refused by planners

A bid to erect more outside seating on The Royal Mile has failed after Edinburgh City Council ruled it would be 'harmful' to the Old Town.

City Centre Indian restaurant Treacle applied for planning permission for a 'raised decking area' for outdoor dining, similar to structures that have popped-up on Cockburn Street, Victoria Street and The Royal Mile over the last two years.

The ten existing wooden huts, constructed after planning laws were relaxed to allow businesses to accommodate customers during the pandemic, were all refused permission to remain in place permanently earlier this year.

Councillors came to the decision after planning applications submitted by restaurants, bars and cafés were met with hundreds of objections from local residents, who complained the on-street seating is out of keeping with the area, have led to an increase in pavement parking, congestion and pose a fire risk.

The Old Town Community Council urged planners to reject the latest bid by Treacle for decking with a 'timber pagoda style roof' outside the restaurant at 30 High Street.

A spokesperson said: "The OTCC wishes to object strongly to yet another application for a timber structure on the High Street.

“Several conservation bodies are also opposed to such unsightly, badly designed pavement structures which also must be a health and safety and fire risk.”



Outdoor seating on Cockburn Street has led to many complaints
PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter

The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland (AHSS) said that whilst outside seating that can be put away each evening is acceptable on The Royal Mile, it described use of the huts as “fencing off of part of the public highway for commercial gain on an indefinite basis”.

It added: “They have no historic precedent prior to temporary Covid-19-related permissions, and the restrictions on eating inside which were the catalyst for this have now been substantially relaxed, so they are no longer a commercial necessity.”

The objection letter compared the huts to “an agricultural market pen”, saying they are “completely inappropriate in style, material, and location for this important street

location”.

“These units also create noise, nuisance and general disturbance by encouraging gatherings of drunken revellers through the night, to the detriment of continued use of surrounding residential properties.”

Planners from Edinburgh City Council concluded the proposals were “not acceptable in principle” and “harmful to the Edinburgh World Heritage Site and the Old Town Conservation Area”.

They added: “The proposal is likely to lead to an unacceptable impact on residential amenity and is not acceptable in terms of its impact on road safety.

It fails to comply with the Local Development Plan, associated guidance and the principles of sustainability as set out by Scottish Planning Policy.”

Paul Lawrence, the council’s Executive Director of Place, confirmed in February the ‘relaxed approach’ to outdoor seating will continue until October to give businesses the chance to continue using the seating “over the spring and summer”.

However, he added some huts in the Old Town may have to be dismantled ahead of the start of the Edinburgh Festival.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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