

Jenners to be returned to former glory

Former Edinburgh department store Jenners is set to be returned to its “former glory” and reopen as a luxury hotel with a rooftop bar after plans were approved by councillors on Wednesday.

One of the city centre’s most historic buildings, Jenners occupied a space at the east end of Princes Street for 184 years. But having lain empty since last year when previous occupants Frasers Group shut up shop, the future of the former ‘Harrods of the North’ was for a time shrouded in uncertainty.

Ambitious plans put forward by AAA United A/S, the holdings company owned by Danish billionaire Anders Holch Povlsen who bought the store for £53 million in 2017, promised to retain the building’s early Renaissance style façade, whilst making way for new uses.

Welcoming the major project, City Centre ward councillor Jo Mowat said the “sensitively done” redevelopment will give the site a “new lease of life”.

Key aspects of the original Jenners store will be kept in place such as the central atrium and iconic outside signage, which the council ordered to be reinstated last year after it had been removed by Frasers Group.



Jenners sign

However, the building will undergo significant alterations as it takes shape as a boutique 96-bedroom hotel on the upper floors, with a new seventh floor being added to the 1905 extension on the corner of South St David Street and Rose Street which will make space for a gym, plant enclosure and roof terrace bar.

In the lower section, Jenners will remain in traditional use as a shop, with retail spaces and food and drink outlets from the basement to the first floor.

In a statement submitted with planning documents, AAA United A/S director Anders Krogh said: "We understand the scale of the challenge and are fully dedicated to honouring this building and its place within the future of Edinburgh. We knew that one day the Jenners building would be standing vacant, and we would have the moral obligation of bringing it back to its former glory. We do hope that we can build support to fulfil this highly important task.

"This project seeks to secure the future of the Jenners building for generations to come. The original Jenners

building will always stay and is the very DNA of our plans, with the redevelopment of a vibrant, sustainable and accessible department store being the heart of the project.”

Plans went to The City of Edinburgh Council’s Development Management Sub-Committee for final approval on Wednesday and councillors unanimously granted permission for the works as well as change of use and listed building consent.

Cllr Key asked about the green roof on the building – a biodiverse roof which is actually alive and pre-planted where “things will grow”.

Cllr Mowat said: “I have a deep affection for the Jenners building and I’m also in the position that I have seen the plan of all these buildings because I have been lucky enough to go up the Dundas monument previously and look down on it, so actually improving that is really important for the city.

“It is great to see a conservation-led project and the care and attention to open up the space and bring the light back.

“To have a building taken back to the use of natural light I think makes such an improved space and will allow that to shine, so I really welcome this project I think it looks very sensitively done and I think it will give that building a whole new lease of life.”

Cllr Neil Gardiner added: “I think the design sets an exemplar of how to reuse buildings like this, it sorts out the guddle it is at the moment of moving through the building. It really sets a clear direction of travel of how to value existing buildings and make them fit for the 21st Century.

“I’m also pleased to see this level of investment in Edinburgh city centre, obviously there’s been a retail downturn across the world and it’s good to see people are wanting to invest in retail in Edinburgh and shows the strength of the Edinburgh economy and people’s faith in the future of Edinburgh as

Scotland's capital."

Cycle parking will be provided in the basement of the building, and Cllr Booth asked whether this was planned as a double height rack. The total number of spaces is 29 without any obvious visitor parking, so new racks will be added outside in the public realm area on Princes Street and Rose Street. Cllr Booth pointed out that the Rose Street rack had been removed temporarily for the renovation of the building. There is a temporary rack further along the street on the other side of the entrance door to Marks & Spencer.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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