

# Changes to music school plans approved

**Changes to the plans to change the former Royal High School into a “world-class” music school and performance venue have been approved by councillors.**

The £55 million redevelopment of the A-listed building on Calton Hill converting it from a disused empty building into a National Centre for Music was first approved in 2017. Proposals returned to the council this week after alterations to the previously-agreed designs were lodged.

These included revised layout arrangements to the entrance, a new opening within the West Pavilion and the installation of glass panels on the iconic front porch area to introduce a “dramatic beam of sunlight” into the main foyer.

Further changes will allow more natural light into the building with reconfiguration of some classrooms at the east of the site. St Mary’s Music School will relocate to Regent Road from its current home in the city’s West End.

In addition, an ‘entrance pavilion’ has been added to the plans to give pupils attending the school a separate entrance into the building from the public and the number of car parking spaces has been reduced from 25 to 16.

Councillors on the development management sub-committee unanimously approved the alterations at a meeting on Wednesday.

Under the scheme led by the Royal High School Preservation Trust, the Thomas Hamilton-designed building will become the National Centre for Music with three public performance spaces and an auditorium accessed by the original external staircases.

Planning officer Elaine Campbell said: "It's a great conservation-led scheme that will preserve the iconic listed building in an enduring and sustainable use.

"It will deliver a sustainable and well-designed education and leisure facility that will contribute positively to Edinburgh's cultural infrastructure and economy."

Councillor Hal Osler, Convener of the development management sub-committee, added: "This is a really difficult site and anything we can do to bring this forward is a really good thing, because I know there's been a lot of work done on it."

Planning documents detailing the proposed changes stated: "The amendment includes revised layout arrangements, a new opening within the West Pavilion, and a proposed glazed floor light to the external portico."

And council planners said the development would "preserve an iconic listed building in Edinburgh's historic core."

Previous plans to convert the building which has lain empty for more than half a century into a luxury hotel were refused by the council, although the hotel developers had already entered into a lease of the building.

by Donald Turvill

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