

Illuminated 'W' for top of ribbon hotel refused

A bid to attach a giant illuminated 'W' sign to the top of Edinburgh's controversial ribbon hotel has been rejected by the council.

Planners ruled the feature would be 'too prominent' in the city's skyline and inappropriate in the World Heritage Site.

The five-star W Hotel at St James Quarter, which has earned itself nicknames including the 'Walnut Whip' and the 'Golden Turd' due to its conspicuous twisting spire, is set to begin welcoming guests this winter.

As the building nears completion, developers have asked the council for permission to proceed with the finishing touches – but a plan to install a large lit-up sign near the tip of the now infamous bronze-coloured façade, which critics say has damaged the capital's historic skyline, has run into problems. An application by owners Nuveen Real Estate for a 'halo illuminated 'W' on the elevation of the 12-storey hotel was refused advertising consent this week, with planning officers concluding it was "not acceptable" given the hotel's "prominent location" within the city centre.

"Proposals for illuminated signage have the potential to affect a number of important elements of the World Heritage Site's outstanding universal value," they said in a report.

"The proposal will be visible from various viewpoints along George Street. As such the introduction of the proposed advertisement at this level in the skyline would form a highly incongruous feature.

"Whilst there are examples of high level signage elsewhere

within the Edinburgh World Heritage Site, these are in less prominent locations and considerably less visible on the skyline.”

The [Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland](#) also objected to the proposal, writing that the upward spike of the ribbon cladding “draws attention to this hotel from viewpoints across the city”.

The heritage body said: “We object to the proposal to add a large upper case ‘W’ at high level. We consider that a large high level illuminated sign will neither preserve nor enhance the appearance of the conservation area and object.”

It added any signage “should be at the ground level entrance”. The luxury 244-room hotel, which will boast a three-storey penthouse restaurant with capacity for over 500 diners, is set to open later this year – three years later than originally planned.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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Walnut whip day. Image: Luma Visuals/Vauveen.