

Housing developer must restore Gothic doors

A housing developer who replaced the doors of a Gothic church hall as part of a conversion has been ordered to bring the originals back after carrying out the work without consent.

Midlothian Council issued an enforcement notice on Southfield Homes Edinburgh Ltd, after they converted the listed 19th century building into housing.

But the firm has appealed to the Scottish Government, insisting the changes have improved the look of the building and the surrounding area.

The church hall, which opened in 1843 as a home for the Free Church congregation, was put up for sale by the Church of Scotland three years ago.

Midlothian planners said the developers did not apply for Listed Building Consent before replacing the original storm doors and windows of the hall.

They said: "The works that have been undertaken are considered to result in the unacceptable loss of historic fabric of architectural importance."

They issued an enforcement notice demanding the removal of the new unauthorised storm doors and windows and replace them either with the original ones or replacements of 'similar

material, finish and detailing' as them.

In an appeal to Scottish ministers, the agents for Southfield Homes Edinburgh argue the changes were required to meet building regulations.

Their submission said: "There are few who would not agree that the appearance of the building as a result of the alterations undertaken have significantly improved the appearance of the building and the Conservation Area within which it is situated."

And they have accused the council of failing to serve the enforcement notice properly urging ministers to reject in on those grounds.

They said: "Insofar as we can establish, the council has only served a copy of the enforcement notice on the secretary of Southfield Homes Edinburgh Limited.

"Whilst Southfield Homes Edinburgh Limited are the owners of the application site which is subject of the enforcement proceedings to which this appeal relates, there are six directors of that said company, as noted below, none of whom have been directly served with a copy of the enforcement notice and all of whom have an interest in the building affected by it."

by Marie Sharp, Local Democracy Reporter

