

Council asked to take enforcement action to save the George Cinema

The council has agreed to have a look at the Art Deco George Cinema in Portobello after a local MP said he feared it would be “demolished by default”.

Edinburgh East MP Tommy Sheppard said: “Local people are understandably concerned about the George falling into dilapidation – going past the point where it could be renovated and ending up being demolished by default.

“This is a listed building in a conservation area. Planning enforcement officers need a clear steer from councillors here to act as the custodian. Why Labour and the Tories weakened a motion which would have given them this is quite frankly beyond me.

“I’ll be keeping up the pressure alongside local SNP councillor Kate Campbell – the George could have an amazing future if it can be saved.”

Mr Sheppard has a campaign running on his website to preserve the cinema designed in the 1930s by architect Thomas Bowhill Gibson who also designed the Dominion in Morningside.

Cllr Campbell had raised the matter asking for action on the building which has been empty for almost a decade. She said afterwards: “I’m glad we got a motion passed highlighting the

desperate need for enforcement action to save this precious building which means so much to the community.

“But I am really sad that Labour and the Tories voted together to water down the wording, ultimately leaving the decision on enforcement completely up in the air. Local people are really worried that the building is at risk, and getting the council to take action is urgent.”

Buckley Building UK Ltd lodged an appeal in January this year asking for the C-listed property to be delisted. But the Planning and Environment Appeals Division (DPEA) refused this saying that the owners had no legal right to ask Historic Environment Scotland to do so.

The Friends of the George said at that time: “It is sad and disappointing that the owner continues to allow the condition of building to dilapidate.”

But not everyone agrees it should be saved. A local who said they preferred not to be named said: “It has been an eyesore for the last five years and more due to a vanity project by a bunch of folk who have no realistic way of funding their fantasy.”

