

Historic wedding venue told it cannot keep marquee

An historic castle which has become a popular wedding venue has been refused permission to carry on using its marquee ten years after it was first put up.

Melville Castle operators had asked Midlothian Council to extend the temporary marquee's lifespan for a further two years after it ran out in December last year.

However Historic Environment Scotland raised concerns about the continued presence of the giant tent which it said 'significantly compromised' the Category A listed castle itself disrupting its view.

Midlothian planners ruled that the operators of the castle had been given years to come up with an alternative solution to their wedding venue without success as they dismissed a request to extend its life to the end of 2025.

They said the arguments made by the applicants to justify the extension were, 'very similar' to those made over the last decade of the marquee's existence on the site by previous applicants.

And they said that while a previous extension had been given in 2022 which took the impact of the Covid pandemic into account the hotel knew at that point there were concerns and they would need to find another solution.

They said: "The applicant has been aware of these concerns

since at least June 2022 and so has had ample time to investigate a suitable, more permanent, alternative solution to the marquee.

“While there were some discussions around this time to find a suitable alternative, which indicated a commitment to finding a permanent solution and gave the planning authority some comfort that the issue was being taken seriously by the applicant who recognises the current situation is unacceptable as a long term solution, this has clearly not been furthered.

“This has not been done despite it being clear that the current situation was not going to be supported after the most recent application in 2022. The temporary marquee has now been in place for 10 years.”

The castle which is owned by the Hay Trust has been leased out as a hotel and more recently wedding venue since the Nineties and is currently leased by The Original Collection (TOC).

Agents for the applicants argued that under the new management of TOC there had been a wholesale refurbishment of the hotel with an investment of £3m by the firm.

They said: “It is clear the new operators have every intention of ensuring that Melville Castle becomes one of the premier destinations in the Edinburgh area for hotel stays, conferences and of course weddings, and it is equally obvious that the marquee plays a fundamental role in this offer.

“Post Covid it is essential Melville Castle is able to meet its commitments to host these events whilst TOC investigates a better more appropriated solution for the longer term.”

Refusing to extend the time for the marquee planners said: “The temporary retention of the marquee will have a significant adverse impact on the setting and character of the

A listed Melville Castle, the surrounding designed landscape, special landscape area and river valley."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter