Dear Mr I Mowat,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING SCOTLAND ACT 1997
CHANGE OF USE, ALTERATIONS TO AND RESTORATION OF PRINCIPAL FORMER ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING AND PAVILIONS (ORIGINAL THOMAS HAMILTON-DESIGNED SCHOOL BUILDINGS), DEMOLITION OF ANCILLARY BUILDINGS INCLUDING THE FORMER GYMNASIUM BLOCK AND LODGE, NEW BUILD DEVELOPMENT, NEW/IMPROVED VEHICULAR, SERVICE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESSES, LANDSCAPING, PARKING, PUBLIC REALM AND OTHER WORKS TO CREATE A WORLD CLASS HOTEL OF INTERNATIONAL STANDING WITH ASSOCIATED USES (INCLUDING PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE BARS (PUBLIC HOUSE) AND RESTAURANTS (CLASS 3)). at NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE 5 - 7 REGENT ROAD EDINBURGH EH7 5BL
REFERENCE NUMBER: 15/03989/FUL (SCHEME: )

Notification of Decision

I am writing with regard to the above application to which you raised representations.

The City of Edinburgh Council has now determined that the application be Refused in accordance with the particulars given in the application. The decision with any conditions, reasons and/or informatives can be found on the other side of this letter. Full details of the final scheme, including the report assessing the application, can be found on the Council website at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning.

The reason for the decision was
The proposed change of use, alterations and extension of the Royal High School to create a luxury hotel would assist in addressing the demand for high quality hotels in Edinburgh. While planning can have no control over the type of hotel use, it is clear that a hotel of the very highest quality is proposed. There would be significant benefits to the city's economy and tourism resulting from this type of hotel. The existing building is not being used at present and is on the Buildings at Risk Register. The proposal would bring the former Royal High School back into sustainable long term use.
In relation to a number of aspects, such as neighbouring amenity, transport, archaeology, geology, culture, environmental health and infrastructure, the development is acceptable or its impacts can be successfully mitigated with the use of planning conditions or legal agreements.

The site contains a number of buildings that fall under a category A listing, the most important of which is the original building known as the Hamilton Building. The site sits within a dynamic urban landscape. It is highly sensitive, being highly prominent in the Edinburgh World Heritage Site, New Town Conservation area and the New Town Gardens Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscape. It is adjacent to the Site of Special Scientific Interest on Calton Hill. The Hill contains a series of monuments and buildings that are also category A listed. The impacts of the extensions and alterations to the building therefore need careful consideration in order to determine whether any harm these may cause would outweigh the benefit of bringing building into use.

The architectural appearance, of the proposed new buildings echoes the form of the nearby Crags. They are clearly modern additions, providing a striking contrast to the Hamilton Building and the nearby listed monuments and buildings. The materials and detailing would ensure a high quality elevation design. In relation to these aspects, the architecture proposed is a sophisticated response to the site's sensitive context. While the architectural design, through the elevational design and the stepped form, does mitigate, to some degree, the effects of the size of the extensions, the proposal would have a significant adverse impact on the character and setting of listed buildings, the character of the Conservation Area and the OUV of the World Heritage Site. The proposed does not meet the requirements of Policy Des 3 a) of the ECLP or Policy Des 4 of the LDP.

The intrusion into the landscape space that can be seen below and alongside the listed monuments and buildings on Calton Hill would erode their setting. The proposal does not comply with Policies Env 3 and Env 4 of the Edinburgh City Local Plan (ECLP), Policies Env 3 and 4 of the Second Proposed Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP) or the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP).

In respect of SHEP it is necessary to consider whether the proposed development is acceptable in order to determine whether demolition can be supported in this instance. Due to the adverse impacts of the proposed development, the demolition of two listed buildings within the site (the gymnasium building and the lodge) cannot be justified. The proposal does not comply with Policy Env 2 of the ECLP, Policy Env 2 of the LDP or SHEP.

In addition, the proposal's effects are detrimental to the character of the New Town Conservation Area and to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Edinburgh World Heritage Site. The proposal does therefore not comply with Policies Env 1 and Env 5 of the ECLP and Env 1 and Env 6 of the LDP.

While in general the development would accord with principles on accessibility and would have an economic benefit, these benefits are not outweighed by the harm to the historic environment. As such, the development is not sustainable development as defined by Scottish Planning Policy.

The development does not comply with the Princes Street Block 10 Development
Brief, due to the impact on the setting of the Royal High School.

The benefits to the City's economy and to tourism through bringing an at risk building back into a sustainable long term use are not outweighed by the very significant harm to built heritage and landscape of the city. In coming to this conclusion, regard has been had to the exceptional architectural and historic interest of the Royal High School and the quality of its surrounding environment. The development would cause permanent and irreversible damage. The adverse impacts on the character and setting of listed buildings, the New Town Conservation Area, the designed landscape of Calton Hill and the OUV of the World Heritage site would not be mitigated by the sophisticated design of the proposed extensions. Put simply, too much building is being proposed for this highly sensitive site.

If you have a specific enquiry regarding the application please contact Carla Parkes directly on 0131 529 3925.

Yours sincerely

Ann Lee

Customer Support Assistant
Determination of Application

CHANGE OF USE, ALTERATIONS TO AND RESTORATION OF PRINCIPAL FORMER ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING AND PAVILIONS (ORIGINAL THOMAS HAMILTON-DESIGNED SCHOOL BUILDINGS), DEMOLITION OF ANCILLARY BUILDINGS INCLUDING THE FORMER GYMNASIUM BLOCK AND LODGE, NEW BUILD DEVELOPMENT, NEW/IMPROVED VEHICULAR, SERVICE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESSES, LANDSCAPING, PARKING, PUBLIC REALM AND OTHER WORKS TO CREATE A WORLD CLASS HOTEL OF INTERNATIONAL STANDING WITH ASSOCIATED USES (INCLUDING PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE BARS (PUBLIC HOUSE) AND RESTAURANTS (CLASS 3)). at NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE 5 - 7 REGENCY ROAD EDINBURGH EH7 5BL

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15/03989/FUL (SCHEME: )

The City of Edinburgh Council has determined the application as follows:

Decision: REFUSED

Any condition(s) attached to this consent, with reasons for imposing them, or reasons for refusal, are shown below;

Conditions:-

Reason for Refusal:-

1. The proposal is contrary to Scottish Planning Policy relating to sustainable development, as it fails to adequately protect or enhance access to cultural heritage, including the historic environment, owing to the detrimental impact caused to the character and setting of the category A listed, principal school building, and to the character and appearance of both the Old and New Towns Conservation Areas, resulting from the excessive height, scale and massing of the proposed extensions at this highly prominent and sensitive site within the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site.

2. The development is contrary to policy Env 1 of both the Edinburgh City Local Plan and the Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan, in respect of the World Heritage Site, as it would harm the qualities which justified the inscription of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh as a World Heritage Site, which in relation to the application site comprise the outstanding set-piece of neo-classical architecture, the topography, the townscape and juxtaposition of Old and New Towns; and as a result would have a detrimental impact on the Site's Outstanding Universal Value.
3. The proposal is contrary to Edinburgh City Local Plan, Policy Env 2 and policy Env 2 of the Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan, in respect of Listed Buildings - Demolition as the buildings remain of architectural and historic importance and the merits of the proposed replacement buildings and the public benefits to be derived from the development would not outweigh the loss of the buildings to be demolished.

4. The proposal is contrary to Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Env 3 and Env 3 of the Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan, in respect of Listed Buildings - Setting, as the proposed extensions, which owing to their excessive height, scale and masing are visually dominant and detrimental to the character and appearance of the category 'A' listed, principal school building and detract from its setting.

5. The proposal is contrary to Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Env 4 and Env 4 of the Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan, in respect of Listed Buildings - Alterations and Extensions, as the proposed extensions which are visually dominant in relation to the category 'A' listed, principal school building, owing to their excessive height scale and massing, are incompatible with the character of the existing building and diminish its special interest.

6. The proposal is contrary to Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Env 7, and Policy 7 of the Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan, in respect of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes, as the proposed extensions by reason of their inappropriate height, scale and massing at this highly prominent and sensitive site on Calton Hill would be detrimental to the character of Calton Hill which is part of the Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes 'The New Town Gardens' and would have an adverse impact on views to, from and within this Inventory listed site.

7. The proposal is contrary to Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Env 11 in respect of Landscape Quality, as it has an adverse impact on the topographical and landscape feature of Calton Hill and views thereof, as a result of changes to the balance between the semi-natural hillside and the built features of the hill, as well as the appreciation of the profile of this prominent landscape formation.

8. The proposal is contrary to Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Des 1 and Des 1 of the Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan, in respect of Design Quality and Context, owing to the excessive height scale and massing of the proposed extensions and the failure of their design to draw upon the positive characteristics of the surrounding area, or to reinforce the existing sense of place at this highly sensitive and prominent location, within the curtilage of the Category 'A' listed building, in the New Town Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

9. The proposal is contrary to policy Des 3 of both the Edinburgh City Local Plan and Des 4 of the Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan, in respect of Development Design, as it would fail to have a positive impact on its setting, owing to the inappropriate height scale and massing of the proposed extensions, which are visually dominant and have a detrimental impact on the wider townscape, which includes the Old and New Town Conservation Areas and views thereof.
10. The proposal is contrary to Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Des 10 and policy Des11 of the Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan, in respect of Tall Buildings, as the proposed extensions which rise above the prevailing building height in the surrounding area, fail to enhance the skyline and would have an adverse impact on important views of the category 'A' listed, principal school building at this site, which is a key landmark, as well as impacting adversely on views of the landscape on Calton Hill and the listed monuments on this hill.

11. The proposal is contrary to policy Env 11 Second Proposed Edinburgh City Local Development Plan in respect of Special Landscape Areas, as it would have a significantly adverse impact on the special character and qualities of the Candidate Special Landscape Area at Calton Hill and views thereof, as a result of changes to the balance between the semi-natural hillside and the built features of the hill, as well as the appreciation of the profile of this prominent landscape formation.

12. The approved landscaping scheme shall be fully implemented within six months of the completion of the development.

This determination does not carry with it any necessary consent or approval for the proposed development under other statutory enactments.

18 December 2015