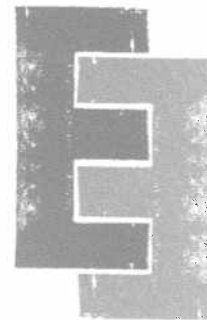


Jenny Bruce
World Heritage Site Co-ordinator
The City of Edinburgh Council
Waverley Court - G3
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh EH8 8BG



13th November 2015

Dear Ms Bruce,

**Former Royal High School
Reuse by St Mary's Music School**

Thank you for your request for EWH's initial views on the impact of proposals to adapt the former Royal High School for use by St Mary's Music School.

Recent planning history has established a series of principles regarding the relationship between this site and the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site. The key aspects of this are

- An outstanding set piece of neo-classical architecture
- Topography
- Townscape
- Juxtaposition of the Old and New Town.

This is neatly summed up in one of the reasons given for the inscription of the WHS:

"The World Heritage Committee accepted that [Edinburgh] had townscape and buildings of international acclaim set within a landscape of exceptional drama"

In discussions around the site we have focused these points on the views from the west and south: the planned nature of the New Towns is an important element of OUV, with views along principal streets terminating with either buildings in public use or handsome green spaces. The Royal High School is sited to reflect this, with Elliot's Waterloo Place terminating in the greenery of Calton Hill, and views along the Queen's Drive terminating with the extraordinary set piece of the Royal High School.

The proponents of the music school scheme have explained to EWH a layout which we understand is now informally labelled "Scheme H". This takes a landscape approach to the overall site, seeking to replace the gymnasium building with a lower building, wrapping around against the retaining wall to the rear of the Hamilton building. The subsidiary building that sits between the Hamilton building and the western pavilion will also be removed.

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The low lying new building will be barely visible from key view points around the World Heritage site. The loss of the gymnasium will create a visual separation between Regent Terrace and the Hamilton building. It will restore the setting of landscape setting of the Hamilton building. In essence it will support the setting of this outstanding set piece of neoclassical architecture, while also strengthening Calton Hill as a landscape, and enforcing the juxtaposition of the planned elements of the New Town with the more organic feel of the Old Town below. This strongly supports outstanding universal value.

The procession of views from the west will be unaffected by the proposals, as the impression of Waterloo Place opening out to the countryside will remain. The impact on outstanding universal value in respect of this procession of views will be neutral.

The approach proposed for interventions to the physical fabric is to only do what is necessary for the effective reuse of the building. New elements proposed are clearly of their time yet in line with Hamilton's thinking in the original composition, driven by the idea of procession. From the exterior it appears that these interventions will not be visible. These will be neutral in terms of outstanding universal value.

The proposed use for the building – as a school again – will be supportive of outstanding universal value, contributing to the city's intellectual and cultural life.

The sensitive reuse of the former Royal High School has become one of the city's major challenges and a test of our ability to manage outstanding universal value effectively within current systems of protection.

These proposals are shaping up to support outstanding universal value and create an exemplar as to how to handle the complex issues around reusing important, sensitive and difficult to adapt buildings. We have no doubt that there will be further fine tuning of the designs, but are deeply encouraged by the direction they are taking.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Wilkinson', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Adam Wilkinson
Director