

Report Title: Odeon Cinema Building, Edinburgh
Issue Date: 7th April 2008
Client/Developer:
Lead Designer: Make Architects
Local Authority: City of Edinburgh Council
Location: Edinburgh
Planning Ref: 08/00197/FUL
Details: Proposals for conversion of B Listed, former Odeon Cinema, Clerk St, Edinburgh to hotel / restaurant & studio space, café / gallery

7th April 2007

Make Architects
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Dear Sir

Edinburgh – Clerk Street – Odeon Cinema Building – Planning Ref: 08/00197/FUL

Thank you for presenting your revised proposals for the above at a meeting with A+DS staff on 28th February 2008. The Planning & Design Statement (Jan. 2008) and accompanying drawings that you left with us were discussed at an Internal Design Review meeting on 11th March 2008. We recognise the designs have developed since previously reviewed by A+DS in July 2007 and offer the following comments based on our views at that time, as per our letter to you of 7th August 2008, updated to address the changes that have been made.

The Odeon building on Clerk Street is a historic cinema that is an integral part of the urban quality of this part of Edinburgh. The loss of a building that contributes positively to the mix of uses in the area would be unfortunate. Notwithstanding the above, we find the proposals interesting in design terms.

The retention of the entrance foyer and frontage to Clerk Street, and introduction of a courtyard and two wings of accommodation in the centre of the site with a new building on Buccleuch Street, is supported. We note the proposed change in use from student accommodation to hotel / restaurant & studio space, café / gallery. In our previous letter we felt that the courtyard would be more successful as an active space if it contained an element of public use. We therefore welcome the incorporation of a public sculpture garden, with routes through from Buccleuch Street and access to public studio spaces, to help address this. The proposal to include community facilities within the existing foyer building in the form of a multi-functional space is also supported.

In our previous letter we felt that the proportions of the proposed courtyard space, relative to the accommodation that overlooks it, were unclear and we were concerned that the courtyard might become overshadowed and dark. We note that daylight and sunlight studies have been carried out to demonstrate the effect of the proposals on the neighbouring properties. However, there does not appear to be sufficient analysis to show the quality of light that would be achieved in the courtyard space, or the rooms that look onto it.

We do not see any particular merit in retaining the brick auditorium façade to the rear of the building and feel that the decision to keep this element may have hindered the development of the designs. We welcome a contemporary approach to the design of the Buccleuch Street elevation and recognise the improvements that have been made to its relationship with the adjacent property to the north, and the overall streetscape. We support the incorporation of a café / gallery space at ground floor level to help activate the street and the courtyard, and the provision of a new through route between Buccleuch Street and Clerk Street.

We trust that these comments will be of assistance. Please keep us informed of the progress of the planning application.

This letter has been copied to the City of Edinburgh Council and Historic Scotland.

Yours sincerely

Eric Dawson
Acting Head of Design Review