

Year round events venue approved at Duntarvie

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter

Councillors have backed plans by the owner of Duntarvie Castle near Broxburn for a year-round events venue in the grounds of the A-listed building despite objections from neighbours and planners.

Temporary planning permission was granted for a marquee at the castle to enable the owner, kiltmaker Geoff Nicholsby, to host weddings and parties. He had appealed a refusal of retrospective planning permission for what has already been built.

The planners' report to councillors who met Wednesday said the building had "an industrial appearance" with a solid roof rather than the canvas roofing expected of a marquee. It is also much brighter than had been specified.

Neighbouring farmer, Tommy Nimmo, said in an objection put before West Lothian Council's Local Review Body: "it stands out like a sore thumb during daylight hours and is extensively lit up all night. It, added to the already unsuitable buildings around the Castle, further degrades the amenity."

Councillors held a site visit to the castle which Mr Nicholsby

bought in 1992. The outbuilding is a rigid marquee style of building – dubbed all-weather – similar in appearance to an industrial shed. The site is visible from the motorway and the Edinburgh to Glasgow tramline.

The Nicholsons [market the building as a venue](#) for weddings and other get togethers. The aim is self finance the restoration of the castle, but it is the latest controversial scheme in the almost 30-year restoration project which is still far from complete.

West Lothian Council has already granted planning permission for holiday home developments in the grounds of the castle as well as a track for miniature tanks.



Cllr Stuart Borrowman

Councillor Stuart Borrowman pointed out that the committee was only being asked to decide on the latest plans before them and

said that there were marginal differences between what had been allowed and what had been developed, adding: "The judgement we are being asked to make is on the marginal disamenity between what has been erected and what would have been."

Provost Tom Kerr recommended backing the planners refusal saying he was disappointed that the experienced architects had strayed so far from the brief of what they had been allowed by planning advice.

Council leader, Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick said: "What we have before us is unusual. Someone is using event money to upgrade a category A building. I'm minded to go with the suggestion that we grant planning permission with the conditions offered by the planning officers as an alternative giving consent until 2023."

Referring to the incomplete restoration he added: "I agree, the applicant could have moved quicker but the only way the castle is going to be upgraded is to allow the applicant to go forward and finish the job. We should say this is your deadline, 2023, bearing in mind that we are in lockdown for the next six months."

Councillors voted five to three in favour of granting retrospective permission, there was one abstention.

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