

# Edinburgh becomes first short term let control zone

**Short term lets in Edinburgh will soon require planning permission as the council bids to crack down on the number of properties let out for holiday rentals in the city.**

As widely promised when discussion first started about short term lets, Edinburgh councillors unanimously voted to make the capital Scotland's first short-term let (STL) control zone at a meeting of the council's Planning Committee on Wednesday.

Under the city-wide scheme, any property that is not principally a home being leased through any short-term letting will need the local authority's approval of a change of use. The scheme will apply to future operators and current hosts who do not already have planning permission.

The City of Edinburgh Council says this will help to manage "high concentrations of secondary letting" and prevent STLs being set up "where it is not appropriate".

The draft proposals will now go to Scottish Government ministers for final approval before being publicised for 28 days prior to taking effect.

The capital has become a centre of short term lets in the past decade – and despite numbers falling since 2019 it is still home to around a third of the holiday letting market in Scotland.

The rise of sites such as Airbnb – which experienced a drop in

numbers from 8,000 properties to just over 4,000 during the pandemic – has fuelled concerns about the impact of STLs on the city's housing market.

In January The Scottish Government told councils to set up STL licensing schemes by October, with whole properties being let out on a short term basis required to apply for a license by April 2023.

A report to the council in Edinburgh noted there has been “long standing concern from the council and residents of the city about the impact of STLs”.

Reporting the results of a statutory consultation on making Edinburgh a Short-term Let Area of Control, it added that 88 per cent of the 5,600 people who responded supported the introduction of the scheme.

However, the report noted there were “different degrees of support from individuals, community groups and other organisations”.

“All community groups were in favour of the designation and for the entire area to be included. There was a high level of support from individuals (89 per cent) both for the principle and for the entire area to be included (84 per cent).

“This contrasts with just over half of other organisations not in support of designation and 65 per cent opposed to the whole area designation.

“A small proportion of respondents (1.5 per cent) were unsure about the designation as they were uncertain that it would address issues; that there may be other means of control; unsure of what the effects might be on property rights; impacts on tourism and that impacts of the Covid pandemic were unknown.

“Three per cent were unsure about the inclusion of the entire

area for a variety of reasons including the administration of the scheme; need for more detail; and appropriateness including more rural areas.”

Planning convenor Councillor Neil Gardiner said: “Around a third of STLs in Scotland are in Edinburgh. They’re in every council ward in the city with concentrations in some areas. So, today’s decision is great news for people across the city and I’m pleased committee unanimously got behind the proposal.



Cllr Neil Gardiner PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter

“We worked hard calling for new legislation to help us have greater controls over STLs and we’re now in a position to move forward and ask government if the whole of the city can be zoned as a STL control area.”

“If approved by government, these new powers for Edinburgh will provide the clarity we need where planning permission is required for a change of use.

“Just now, if it’s reported to us that a property has changed its use without planning permission, our enforcement team has to look at each case individually. This is a very lengthy and time consuming process.”

Cllr Gardiner said the control area would “complement” the new licensing legislation, adding the two will “work tandem”.

"You'll need the right planning consent for your property when obtaining a licence," he said.

Vice-Convener Councillor Maureen Child, Labour, said: "We know short STLs are an issue for many of our residents across the city.

"The report we considered today highlights the growing pressures of the STL commercial market, which requires a cross-city approach to regulations.

"With high concentrations in central areas, there are commercial STLs in every council ward in this city. And during our consultation the vast majority of you from across the city favoured a whole city approach.

"In some areas STLs have hollowed out communities, put more pressure on the housing market causing prices to rise, and created other issues such as anti-social behaviour and noise. So, I'm delighted we're now asking for government approval to adopt this legislation for the whole of Edinburgh."

*by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter*

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