

# **Swingers club holding grand opening – despite not having planning permission**

**A ‘swingers club’ claiming to be the biggest in Scotland is set to hold its grand opening in Edinburgh this weekend – despite having no planning permission in place.**

Planning officers confirmed they are investigating the club at Sighthill’s Bankhead Industrial Estate, which boasts multiple ‘playrooms, kink and BDSM areas’ plus a cinema and bar, following allegations it is operating without the council’s consent.

Applicants behind the plans for ‘After Dark’, a re-branding of the After 8 Club which has relocated from Spittal Street, explained they were told by consultants permission was not required to be in place in time for the opening night on Saturday.

But a local councillor said the club, which is advertised online as ‘one of the largest and best equipped in the UK’, is in an “odd and possibly unsafe location”.

“Due process needs to be followed,” Sighthill councillor Ross McKenzie said. “I hope the council will prevent it from opening on Saturday night.”

Swingers clubs around the UK exist as venues where couples will meet up and engage in sexual activities.

According to After Dark's website, the club will open on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and every other Thursday, with eight 'nights' planned over the coming weeks including several 'mixed nights' and a Halloween party at the end of the month.

The site also states: "Scotland's biggest swingers club has multiple playrooms, from private to group areas. No club in Scotland has better BDSM and Kink equipment than After Dark."

It adds it currently has a 'bring your own booze' policy with soft drinks and mixers available to members at the bar.

An application seeking change of use of the former industrial estate offices has been lodged with the council and city planners said a decision will be issued in December.

Blueprints for the west Edinburgh site show renovations to subdivide the 6,200 sq feet space into around 20 private rooms, which appear to have already been completed.

Plans said the members-only club will "all be consenting adults" with no sex workers involved in the scheme.

Graham Ludar-Smith, who is listed as the applicant but claims he only owns the building, said he was under the impression no planning permission was necessary to open.

"That's what I was told from the consultants, it was just a matter of 'get that planning application in' and it's all done and dusted," he told the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

"There's no external changes to the building, it's just simply internal partitions and stud wall which as far as I understand doesn't need planning permission."

He added that Edinburgh-based company Cornucopia is responsible for the application and running the premises, claiming After Dark will be one of several clubs set to utilise the new space.

Mr Ludar-Smith said: "It's more like a sports centre where the badminton club use it on a Tuesday evening and then the five aside uses it on a Wednesday and somebody else uses it on a Saturday and that sort of thing.

"It's a general use facility building of which the swingers club is one of the people who are going to be using it.

"They've been talking about a yoga group getting in there, a photography group; different days of the week different things."

A City of Edinburgh Council spokesperson said: "The planning application is still under review and a decision is due in December. We are setting up a planning enforcement investigation to look into the allegation that the business is operating without planning permission."

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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