

# Bar Hutte to close after planning refused

Bar Hutte set up in wooden shacks outside St James Quarter will be forced to shut after the council refused planning permission over noise concerns.

But the company behind the karaoke bar said they will appeal the decision – and will continue operating until the appeal is heard and a final decision is made.

The karaoke bar has been up and running since mid-November but must cease operations following a decision taken by councillors on Wednesday.

The festive village in St James Square, which includes a bar and two karaoke cabins, was given the go-ahead last Christmas with applicants Nuveen who own St James Quarter hoping that councillors would back the plans again.

However, officials told the planning sub-committee that the council's environmental protection team recommended refusal after an investigation found that noise levels were "in excess" of the local authority's standards.

They said that whilst the event last year did not spark noise concerns, the council has received "multiple" complaints from residents living nearby, mainly on the weekends, since the village started up again last month.

Planners suggested that councillors could approve the plans but order the operator not to play amplified music in the huts

or bar, however the committee's Lib Dem convener councillor Hal Osler said it was "one step too far" for the St James Quarter.

Members voted seven to three in favour of refusing planning permission, which means the council will order Bar Hutte to close down.

Conservative councillor Tim Jones, who supported the application, called the decision "a bit harsh".

Cllr Chas Booth said after the meeting: "This bar development has already been operating without planning permission for a number of weeks, and has created considerable noise and disruption for local residents.

"I'm glad my fellow committee members agreed with me that this was not appropriate in a location right next to people's homes, and refused planning permission.

"We should always listen carefully to concerns raised by city centre residents to ensure we get the balance right between the night-time economy and continuing to provide liveable conditions for people who call the city centre home."

A spokesperson for St James Quarter said: "We are understandably disappointed with the decision made today by the City of Edinburgh Council sub-planning committee despite the Planning Officer's recommendation for approval. We will be lodging an immediate appeal and plan to continue trading until that is heard in 28 days.

"We traded very successfully last year without any issues but as a precautionary measure for this year we added additional acoustic protection which was installed with local support.

"We have always taken the views of our neighbours on board, but as we have not been made aware of any noise complaints, we are understandably surprised by the reaction from some of the

planning committee members.”

by Donald Turvill

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