

# Waverley beer garden dealt another blow

**A busy pop-up beer garden in Edinburgh City Centre has been dealt another blow after a bid to overturn the council's decision to reject a three-year extension was thrown out.**

A busy pop-up beer garden in Edinburgh City Centre has been dealt another blow after a bid to overturn the council's decision to reject a three-year extension was thrown out.

The 'Festival Village' which sits on top of Waverley Market could soon be forced to close after councillors rejected plans for it to continue operating for the second time, with one saying it was 'not good enough for one of the number one cities in the world'.

Owners argued the bars, food stalls and associated seating areas set up on Princes Street brought economic benefits to the capital however, whilst also contributing to the "vibrancy and vitality of the city centre".

They also warned shutting it down would result in over 400 jobs being lost.

Moorgarth Group's planning appeal was unanimously refused by the Local Review Body (LRB) on Wednesday (April 19). The applicant now has the option to take the case to the Scottish Government in a last-ditch attempt to reverse the council's decision, and has three months to do so.

The council first gave the go-ahead for the temporary structures in 2017 for a period of two years.

Smugglers Spirits and Secret Garden Gin are among the beer garden's current traders, whilst street food from Pizza Geeks, Say Cheese and Butcher Boy is also on offer.

And due to the Scottish Government's decision to relax planning rules for hospitality during Covid-19, the attraction was able to remain open beyond the expiration date during the pandemic when restrictions allowed.

Following Ministers' decision to end Holyrood's flexible approach to temporary developments last year, a bid for Festival Village to stay for another three years was submitted but rejected in December.

City planners concluded the beer garden was not in keeping with the area and harmful to the Edinburgh World Heritage Site. And they said any economic benefits provided "would not justify the harm being done".

Speaking at the LRB this week, Cllr Neil Gardiner, SNP, said: "The Waverley Valley is extremely important to Edinburgh and I have difficulty with this particular application.

"I just don't think it's good enough for the World Heritage Site and one of the number one cities in the world. We could do so much better and the idea of a three year temporary consent is kind of contradictory."

He said the space is meant to "maintain separation between Old and New towns," adding the Festival Village "jars completely and will be there throughout the year".

An objection was also raised by the council's environmental protection team, who said the applicant "has not demonstrated that noise from the proposal will not impact on nearby residential amenity".

They added: "Public representations objected to the proposal on noise impact grounds, largely in relation to impact of noise in the public realm and on commercial or office uses nearby."

In addition, Network Rail urged the council not to grant the extension, saying the structures block pathways to the train station's lift and attract anti-social behaviour. However, the police took the opposite view and supported the application, telling the council the attraction had reduced anti social behaviour in the area.

In an appeal statement sent to the council, Moorgarth Group said the Festival Village had "created a considerable number of employment opportunities" including "trades people and security staff, bar and cleaning staff, as well as musicians and sound engineers" – warning 425 jobs could be lost in the event of closure.

They continued: "Festival Village has now operated for a period of five years without receiving any complaints from neighbouring businesses or residents; in fact, there is now overwhelming support for the operation as it has matured and a variety of letters of support have been provided in support of the submitted application for planning permission, including from Police Scotland."

Councillors remain unconvinced however and upheld the previous decision to refuse a three-year extension for the operation.

Cllr Gardiner said anything being set-up in the space "needs to be extremely high quality".

He added: "I note there's a lot of empty property on Princes Street – let's see that reused for leisure uses and not this thing for three years. It's not good enough for the City of Edinburgh."

Cllr Lezley Marion-Cameron, Labour, said: "I do think in

recent times it's become over concentrated and has caused all these kinds of issues."

Tim Jones, Conservative councillor, added: "There's too many things wrong with this and I'm concerned about the access to the station and the impact that might have."

*by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter*

*The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency. It is funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector (in Edinburgh that is Reach plc (the publisher behind Edinburgh Live and The Daily Record) and used by many qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover news about top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.*

