

Swingers club appeals refusal of planning permission

The decision to reject the 'swingers' club' which opened at a Sighthill industrial estate will be reconsidered at a council meeting next month.

Cornucopia, the company which runs the self-proclaimed 'largest kink club in the Midlothian area', has accused the council of using a "moral standpoint" to reject the application, which was refused over concerns about its impact on "public safety".

Now plans will be reconsidered by councillors sitting on the local review body on June 14, following an appeal.

The local authority confirmed in October it was investigating reports that former Napier University offices at the Bankhead Industrial Estate had been converted into "playrooms, kink and BDSM areas" and opened to members without planning consent.

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

Cornucopia previously promoted events including several "mixed nights" on its web page, which states the club is the "best possible place to socialise and play with other members of the kink community".

Refusing the plans in January, officials said they deemed the proposal unacceptable "by virtue of its impact on public safety" and added the unit's use as a swingers' club "would

fail to encourage, promote and facilitate business and industry uses”.

In a bid to overturn that decision, a planning consultant acting on behalf of Cornucopia said in an appeal statement that operation of private adult venues “is unavoidable”.

However, they said allowing swingers’ clubs to “legally operate and allowing them to do so in an area that reduces risk to all parties as far as possible” was the “best option for ensuring this”.

They added: “Regarding public safety, we do not understand what the planning officer implies by the statement that there is a public safety issue.

“Is it the safety of the public from users of the club, or the safety of the club members from the public? This was not highlighted properly in the handling report, and as such we would like to have these comments removed.

“It is our opinion that the Planning Authority was using a moral standpoint in the rejection of this application, this is something that is not allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act.”

The appeal also highlighted the fact that the club was for “consensual adults with no sex workers employed”.

They said: “The club will be guest-only and will not have sex workers providing entertainment and members will all be consenting adults.”

It was also argued the decision to refuse planning permission “could be regarded as sexual discrimination” as the club “provides a safe location for members of LGBTQ groups to have meetings and social events” and the council’s local development plan “does not provide any allocated areas for

these minority groups to associate”.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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Sighthill Industrial Estate. Image: googlemaps