

Brothers win fight for Airbnb licence despite objections from neighbours

Two brothers who turned a derelict building into an Airbnb property on a small steading have won their fight for a licence to operate it despite objections from neighbours.

Ruiraidh and Jamie Menzie bought the plot at Camptoun Steadings, at Drem, East Lothian, and converted it into a terraced home which they began letting two years ago.

However when they applied for a licence to operate after a change in legislation, East Lothian Council received five objections with neighbours complaining the high number of guests was damaging the close knit community.

A meeting of the council's licensing sub committee today heard claims from one neighbour that using the home as a short term let was against the deeds attached to all 14 properties at the steadings.

And she said the Airbnb was often let to workers who drove large vans into the rural development and "sit on the wall looking into my windows, drinking beer".

Among complaints from residents were claims children were being 'spooked' by Airbnb guests when walking to catch the school bus, concerns about strangers in the 'family centred' community, speeding traffic and noise and waste disposal.

However Ruiriadh Menzies told the committee while he was aware of one incident of speeding which was dealt with, the guests were no more offenders of speeding than the high number of delivery drivers who went through the development at "break neck speed".

He told the committee local residents had appreciated the work the brothers had done turning the derelict building on the site into a property and that his brother Jamie planned to make it his home at some point.

And he pointed out his brother was on a Whats App group with most of the residents so problems could be raised quickly with them at any time.

Councillors discussed imposing a temporary licence for a shorter time on the property to allow further monitoring of neighbours issues, however Mr Menzies objected to the suggestion pointing out the costs and time involved in making the application.

He said: "If you do not think a licence should be granted then do not grant it but if you think it should be then it should be for the full term. I'd feel a little unfairly treated to have gone through the application process and be given a reduced licence."

The committee agreed to grant the licence for the full three years and urged local residents to use avenues available to them to lodge any complaints about issues after their legal adviser reminded them they could call the licence back for review at any time if concerns were raised.

Ian Forrest told the committee: "If you grant a licence for three years it does not mean there is nothing you can do until the end of that period. You can call it in for review at any time if there are concerns."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter