

Gullane neighbour row over holiday let

A flat owner who described living next to an Airbnb as 'unnerving' has a short term let flat in Fife himself, licensing bosses were told this week.

Martin Hopley, who lives in Brighton Terrace, Gullane, objected to his neighbour's flat continuing to operate as a holiday let saying the noise and disruption it caused was not acceptable,

And he said his experience of living next to the flat, which had been operating for a number of years as a short term let, reinforced why the properties should not share communal entrances and stairwells with residential homes,

However at a meeting of East Lothian Council's Licensing sub committee this week, solicitor Niall Hassard, representing the applicants, challenged the objections and pointed out Mr Hopley himself held a short term licence for a flat in St Andrews.

Urging the committee to consider how much weight it attached to "sweeping generalisations" made by the complainant over the use of holiday lets given his own position, Mr Hassard said: "The essence of Mr Hopley's objections seem to start and finish with the fact that a flatted dwelling is not appropriate to be used as a short term let.

"I have heard this many times as I have represented people

across the country. It is the first time, however, I have heard it from someone who has a short term let himself and it is a flat.”

However, Mr Hopley responded by telling the committee that while he was a landlord, his own rented flat was student accommodation in a block of similar properties.

He said: “The short term let licence was applied for so students are not forced to take accommodation during the summer and don’t have to pay for it.

“It is a first and second floor flat which is a student let above a ground floor flat which is a student let and next door is a student let and the other side is a bed and breakfast.

“They are not owner-occupied flats and do not share a common stairwell. Contrast that with Brighton Terrace, it is a residential property, which is owner occupied with a communal stairwell.”

Mr Hopley said that in a typical working day he would go to bed before the guests of the holiday flat come home after being out, causing disruption.

He said: “I have tried sound proofing my property but it makes no difference.”

Mr Hassard said the holiday let was owned by brother Joe and Robert Avent and their friend Stuart Haddow.

He said they invested £150,000 into the property to create a four bedroom and four bathroom holiday let aimed at the high end golf tourism market.

And he said while the owners did not live locally, they had a brother living nearby, who was on hand to deal with any emergencies.

He also provided a list of reviews on Airbnb from satisfied

guests who gave the property an average of 4.95 out of 5 stars.

Councillor Jeremy Findlay, local ward member, raised concerns that no professional manager was employed to oversee the flat.

He asked the committee to restrict the licence to operate the short term let to one year and add a condition that the owners take on a management company to oversee the property locally.

He said: "I appreciate the applicants say they have a brother who lives in the village but he is not a professional, he may not be accessible 24 hours a day.

"This is not saying anything about his character but I would like to see a professional management company appointed and the licence restricted to a year to ensure that is done."

His proposal was unanimously backed and a temporary licence issued for a year.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter